

## **HOW WOULD QUESTIONING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY BY PICTURE BOOKS ENHANCING YOUNG CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE OF STORY RETELLING?**

**Feng-Fen, Huang**

Kindergarten Teacher, Affiliated Kindergarten in Chung-yun Elementary School in Kaohsiung City  
Taiwan, R. O. C.

**Jui-Ching Cheng**

Associate Professor, Department of Early Childhood Education, National Pingtung University  
&

**Mei-Ju, Chou (corresponding author)**

Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood Education, National Pingtung University

### **ABSTRACT**

The research aims to explore question proposal teaching in picture book through application of learning styles in order to raise children's understanding of the story. The research subjects are the children in preschool class in the researcher's kindergarten, with 16 boys and 13 girls, and totally 29 children. With adoption of action research, this paper conducted question proposal teaching for three months and aimed at three picture books to examine question proposal teaching process by means of video taking, recording, teaching retrospection, observation record, and interviews. The main conclusions in this study include: (1) Apply learning style to proceed picture book question proposal teaching to foster the children to search for the messages and diversified thinking in the picture books; (2) Picture book question proposal teaching is helpful to children's understanding of the stories.

**Keywords:** Picture books; learning style; question proposal teaching; action research.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Research Background and Motivations**

"Learning" is a present continuous tense without an end, and "reading" is the foundation of a lifetime learning. To develop the child with a reading habit is to provide a useful and good tool for him or her to employ for the rest of his life (Hung Lan, 2008). "Insufficient reading makes it difficult to learn any programs; since the foundation has to be established through reading, extensive reading becomes the starting point of the fundamental education" (Li Chia-tung, 2010). As a result, "reading" is a sustainably operating learning concept.

For improvement in teaching, the researcher has asked parents of the graduated children who had entered the elementary school for studying. They reflected that the children are good at math, but weaker in language. In order to improve the children's linguistic ability in class, the researcher has implemented part of reading plan continuously, such as (1). Read at least one picture book for the children every day; (2). Have the children borrow picture books to take back home for reading at least two days a week, among which one has been taken back to class for sharing; (3). Negotiate with the classroom teacher in Grade 6 for arranging big sisters and brothers' one-to-one story-telling activity once a week. With accumulation of reading experiences, it is expected that the young children can fall in love with reading, and obtain relative knowledge from reading.

In class, in addition to proceeding the just mentioned reading activities, the researcher also selected picture books "Brown bear, what are you reading?" to apply for storytelling and reciting for the whole class. Meanwhile, children were also invited to read the story to the researcher before borrowing the books back to home and read to their parents. In this case, most parents feed-backed that "we appreciated the teacher's thoughtfulness, and it seems that the child memorized the story from the beginning to the end, and if we picked up some plot in the middle of the story, he or she would be unable to follow". Upon such reaction from the parents, the researcher started to question whether the storytelling strategies in class had not been enough, and it seemed necessary to teach proper picture book reading in class in order to bring reading activities into a full play (Afflerbach et al, 2008).

Accidentally, during a study seminar, the researcher contacted the psychological functions, and developed them into "Mastery Type" (ST), "Comprehension Type" (NT), "Self Expression Type" (NF), and "Interpersonal Focus Type" (SF) (Translated by Tien Nai-ching, 2002) to work as the four dimensions for picture books' question proposal teaching. The researcher thinks that those four learning styles involve the understanding of the picture books' content and plot, profound thinking and creative performance, which are all suitable to conduct question proposal teaching for picture books, and attracted the researcher to put it into practice in the classroom for "endless cycling actions" (Adkins, 2005).

### **Research Purposes**

Based on the research background and motivations above, this paper intends to draw up the following research purposes by means of question proposal after reading picture books with the preschool children:

- i.** Discuss teacher's application to learning styles for proceeding of children's picture book question proposal teaching process.
- ii.** Analyze the teacher's retrospection on question proposal teaching for children's picture books by applying to learning styles.
- iii.** Discuss picture book question proposal teaching's influence on children's understanding of the story

## **LITERATURE DISCUSSION**

### **The Meaning of Picture Books**

Initially, "picture books" are the terms of category in the Children's Library in U.S. Library, which divides children's picture books into picture books, novels, and non-novels (Alfieri et al, 2011; Certo et al, 2010). In a broad sense, picture books refer to books with pictures; the pictures are the main body used to illustrate or introduce certain things. In a narrow sense, children's picture books signify the readings with delicate design specifically for children's reading, and each page or each version has an extensive picture with combine with simple text in the picture books for coordination to arouse children's interest in reading (Arthaud, & Goracke, 2006; Certo et al, 2010). In Japan, "picture books" are called "drawing books", where the drawings are the primary and the text is supportive or even without any text, only drawings. Such books particularly stress on the effect of visual conveyance, which not only have the effect of conveying the text, but also enhance the performance of the thematic content (Coffman, 1994; Dunn et al, 2010). As a result, from the literary meaning, "picture books" are explained as books with pictures; that is, they are story books to be represented by form of pictures-- the pictures are the main body, while the pictures are supportive. They show the creator's combination of visual art and literature not only composed by text that has

the plot, but also pictures that resemble the continuous story content in the movies, which can be regarded as hybrid of images and textual language.

### **The Educational Value in Picture Books**

Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) indicated that the highest value of picture books exists in generation of artistic experiences through the conceptual symbols of pictures and text, and such artistic experiences allow the readers to reconstruct and extend the past life as well as creation of a grand new experiential perception, which means that the content conveyed by picture books must generate response and message communication with the children's old experiences, and go deeper to construct a new perception, so that the readers living experience field can be expanded through the picture books.

The educational values proposed by Dunn & Finley (2010) for the picture books include: i. Increase cognitive learning; ii. Enhance linguistic learning; iii. Provide life experiences; iv. Cultivate aesthetics; v. Better reading pleasures; and vi. Cultivate ability of creative imagination. Also, picture books can inspire children's creation and imagination, discover implication, plot, as well as visual variation from them, and further foster comprehension (Dunn, 2011; Eades, 2008). Moreover, suppose we can have the picture books recited by and discussed with the teacher, the effect will be even enhanced (King, 1994; Koski, 2009).

Dawnene (2008) held that picture books towards children's education have diversified functions, including (1) Help children's cognition and learning; (2) Enlighten children's image thinking; (3) Develop children's aesthetic quality; (4) Improve the linguistic ability; (5) Foster cognitive development; (6) Cultivate basic learning abilities.

From what mentioned of each scholar's description of picture books' educational value, to enhance linguistic learning, cognitive development, and artistic quality are educational values recognized by most scholars. By further extending application of picture books to living experience learning, reinforcing social adaptation, improve normal personality development and benign parent-child communication, better parent-teacher relationship, nurture reading interest, and the like, are the comprehensive content of picture books that deliver diversified educational values and got involve a variety of fields, resulting in picture books playing the role of optimal learning media and tool.

### **Learning Style and Relative Research**

Learning style refers to preference represented by the learner in the learning situation, which is characterized with individual exclusivity and consistency, including physiological, motivational, cognitive, social factors, and so on (Glazer, 1986; Kendeou et al, 2007; Patak, & Potenze-Radis, 2010; Siegler, & Jenkins, 2014). Under interaction between learning situation and learning process, the customary reaction and specific preference demonstrated by the students have considerably psychological traits (Eggen, & Kauchak, 2011; Eisenberg et al, 2010; Faggella et al, 2007). As a result, in the learning process, the individual will show his or her own distinctive and habitual personal reactions when he or she is affected by the environmental, social, cultural, and cognitive factors.

The U.S. Educational Consultants Silver and Hanson (1998) extended four learning styles—sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling that derive from the Swiss psychologist Jung. Among the four, "learning style with a focus on interpersonal relationship" (SF) and "mastery-based

learning style" composed by sensation and thinking (ST), "Comprehension-based learning style" by direct speculation and thinking (NT), as well as "Self-expression-based learning style" (ST) by direct speculation and experience have their own traits and uniqueness, as shown in Table 1 (Translated by Tien Nai-ching, 2002).

**Table 1: Summary of learning style and question proposal preference**

	Sensation-thinking type (Mastery) Learner	Intuition-sensing type (Self-expression) Learner	Intuition-thinking type (Comprehension) Learner	Sensation-sensing type (Interpersonal) Learner
Learning traits and orientation	1. Practical 2. Highly structured, focus on environment with mastery or facts 3. Prefer to following directions and assignment with an answer	1. Curious, imaginary, dreaming 2. Confident, able to express himself or herself differently 3. Sensitive to beauty, like creative and artistic work	1. Theoretic, knowledge-based 2. Logic, organizational orientation, work with plans and system 3. Think things by causal effect and deduction and seek for logic relationship	1. Friendly, social relationship 2. Love to be noticed and receive people's attention, and value feedback 3. Influenced by others' happiness and sadness.
Proposal preference	What or How questions	What would happen if.....	Why	Of what value is this to me?
Discussion direction	1. Want to know what he/she wants to do 2. Dislike open-ended questions, need right answers 3. Questions involving mastery of the teaching materials	1. Innovative solutions to questions 2. Prefer open-ended questions 3. Show himself/herself uniquely	1. Able to accept theories, love complicated questions 2. Like to analyze by logics and explore things all-dimensionally 3. Propose thinking orally or in written, good language ability	1. Love sharing and cooperation 2. Express value experiences and good at inspiring motivation

"Reading" requires to use the four learning styles to read the article's rich texture aloud. In reading, people will proceed some of the following mental activities:

1. Understand the theme of the article and the meaning of the words and sentences, which belongs to the "level of mastery".
2. Analyze the article after reading it, and look for the informational evidences in the article to support or challenge your own arguments to make the article "live", which is exactly the "Level of Comprehension".
3. Notice the aesthetic level in the article, look for images to express your viewpoints of the article to make it "live", which is the "Level of Self-expression".
4. Think from the relationship between the value perception and the article, which "Value the Interpersonal Level"

In the studies related to learning styles, it can be seen that the learning style's classification differs due to the researcher's demand of investigation. That is, the influence of the learner's different learning preferences on reading teaching is discussed from divergent aspects (Chiu Li-ya, 2008; Yang Chih-yun, 2010; Kutuk, 2007; Mason, 2004). The research have shown the correlation between learning styles and reading strategies. And, students with different learning styles vary in regard of the reading comprehension effect, while by learning style teaching integrated, raising students' learning strategies have benefit.

To apply for theories to activate reading question proposal teaching is not like other studies. Imbo & Vandierendonck (2007) exerted the four learning styles of Silver and Hanson (1998): mastery type, comprehension type, self-expression type, and interpersonal focus type to work as the direction to propose questions in "class co-reading" with the purpose of elevating the range of students' question proposal for reading the text and the ability of language expression in discussion. Based on research, it shows that the dimensionality of students' question proposal increases, and their language expression ability for the reading materials improves as well.

In this research, we adopted the three learning styles of Silver and Hanson (1998)-- the mastery type, comprehension type, and self-expression type to coordinate with the question proposal direction of question proposal teaching for preschool children's picture book. Since putting emphasis on interpersonal-based learning style requires thinking from the opposite party's angle of value, it does not suit the preschool children with strong egocentrism for having already exceeded their cognitive development concept. Consequently, this research merely employed mastery-type and comprehension type question proposals to understand the content of picture books. Through question proposal by the self-expression type, the children also showed their own distinct opinions, and obtained integrally diversified messages from the peers' discussion with mutual question proposals.

### **Research related to Question Proposal Teaching**

The ancient Socratic debate relates making good use of the question proposing skills to guide the students to propose their own questions, define the questions, and think and solve the questions, which is called question proposal teaching (Mason, 2004; Siegler & Jenkins, 2014; Taylor et al, 2002). Question proposal is a kind of teaching strategies exerted by mutual questioning and answering between the teacher and the students to achieve the goal of teaching. In such case, the teacher can prepare various kinds of written or oral questions to propose for the students to answer in words or verbally, and then conduct common or individual correction (Maloch & Beutel, 2010). In King's perspective (1989), self-questioning instructional strategy aims at important content during the student's reading for himself or herself to ask himself or herself and then answer the questions. With such questioning, the student can examine whether he or she can grasp the general idea in the text (Zucker, & Piasta, 2009). Consequently, question proposal teaching is composed by the teacher's as well as the student's questioning-- they ask questions based on the content of teaching or the picture book before discussing and answering the questions together to achieve the learning goals.

By reviewing studies relative to application of questioning and discussion teaching to reading the text, it is found that question proposal applied to the reading activities in the text produces obvious learning effect in reading comprehension, reading motivation, character education, life education, writing ability, and etc. Besides, although there are question proposal teaching

related studies in respect of preschool students' picture books, they are just a few in amount. As Medina (2010) utilized the picture book "Sector 7" to conduct studies on question proposal teaching, she observed the teachers who intended to do the wordless picture book teaching, and found that the way to arouse motivation is diversified, and the skills to propose questions for story discussion are "attention-oriented", the responding skills for discussion focus on "reiteration" and "explanation", the skills to tell a story uses "the third person", the method to proceed the story telling involves that "the teacher discusses the plot with the children directly", and the extended activities are primarily "art/craft activities" and "sharing and discussion". This is a very complete story teaching research result. However, it is obtained from what the researcher had observed rather than taking part in teaching, so the subtle teaching skills and difficulties are hard to experience and perceive. It is thus that the researcher expects that this study can grasp the first-hand data through personal implementation to assist her growth in teaching profession.

Liu Fang-hsiu (2004) led the preschool children in her class personally to conduct action study on group discussion skills. The research results clearly illustrate the notice items and related work before, during, and after discussion. Nevertheless, owing that this study focuses on group discussion in the process of teaching activities instead of the question proposing discussion on the picture books, so the 6W (who, where, when, what, why, and how) indicated in the study could not be fully utilized. And, since it took more time dealing with children's normal rule management, the researcher had to take more attention to such issues.

Research (Ton, 2007; Mercer, & Sam, 2006; Morrow, 1984; Weiner, 1990) proposed questions, clarified, and summarized the reading teaching strategies to conduct action study on children's reading comprehension. The research finds that children have changed from inability of questioning to proposing questions aiming at the illustrations or the text without actively taking advantage of clarifying strategies nor constructing the complete summary, and without confirmation in regard of reading comprehension. Tsai Ting-jen (2010) also chose 17 Kindergarteners to conduct picture book reading teaching by taking pretest and question proposing strategies. The question proposal dominated by the teacher was converted to be done by the children actively, where the new direction of questioning was found from the book titles and illustrations. It is therefore learned that children's question proposing skills can be trained, and the purpose of reading picture books also involves having the children understand the content to achieve message absorption and integration.

To sum up, the researcher hopes that by means of Silver and Hanson's learning styles of mastery, comprehension, and self-expression type as the questioning directions, on one hand, children can understand the picture book's content when they propose questions, on the other hand, they can combine the content with their own experiences to proceed thinking from different directions to make the questioning activities in teaching more diversified. Due to information from the peers varies for personal learning preference and experiences, the messages will differ as well, leading to the children's receiving various kinds of information and diverse messages from their classmates.

## **RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN**

### **Research Methods**

This research adopts action study that can better control the experiences in teaching practice and the whole process of the event. The researcher serves the main instructor, and takes part in actual questioning instructional strategy activities. After telling the story to the children,

she exerted Silver and Hanson's (1998) three dimensions of the learning style to integrate into questioning instructional strategy in order to collect data related to discussion on children's question proposal in the teaching process for analysis, and make retrospections of what is required to improve by consulting the relative literature. Then, she continued to ponder at how to make improvement when proceeding questioning instructional strategy in the cycling exploration of the next picture book.

## **Research Site and Subject**

The research site is the kindergarten class where the researcher is teaching, and the research subject are the 29 five-year-old children in her class.

## **Research Program Design**

### **i. Preparations before teaching**

#### **1. Selection of picture books**

Selection of picture books should meet the children's physical and mental demand. In addition, picture books should be able to be unfolded for the children to read and discuss, and the content must be rich and concise. Therefore, after discussing with the instructor, we decided to adopt three picture books published by Kang Hsuan Educational Publishing Group-- "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", "the Most Special Birthday Gift", and "The Wish of Prince Forest".

#### **2. The Sequence of Teaching the Picture Books**

The researcher invited the children in her class to read the three picture books, and asked them to express their opinions of them. 65.52% of them show "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House" was the one easiest to understand, and 52.63% of them thought it was because of "less text", while they held that "The Wish of Prince Forest" was the most difficult for 63.64% of them considered it had "more text". Therefore, it can be seen that children's standard of judging the picture books is based on the amount of the text. After inquiring the children's opinions, the researcher decided to respect and accept their thought, so the order of reading the picture books in the question proposal teaching this time is "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House" → "the Most Special Birthday Gift" → "The Wish of Prince Forest".

#### **3. Question Proposal Teaching and the Cycling Action**

The order to practice this study includes: the teacher tells the story → questions and answers about the content of the picture books according to the story's structural elements → implements picture book questioning instructional strategy based on the three dimensions in the learning styles → proceeds questioning and answering the picture book's content according to the story's structural elements → Teaching retrospection and modification

For this action study, it totally took three months' picture book question proposal teaching for the children to obtain the messages conveyed in the picture books from feeling strange to the questioning methods, groping through them, to getting familiar with them and proceeding the discussion. As for the teacher, she also made retrospection and modification and raised her own expertise regarding questioning instructional strategy continuously.

**RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****(I). The process and retrospection of applying learning styles to proceeding children's picture book questioning instructional strategy**

Adopting "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", "the Most Special Birthday Gift", and "The Wish of Prince Forest" to explore questioning with the children, and what follows will describe the teaching process and modified results step by step.

**i. Questioning instructional strategy and retrospection of "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House"****1. Ideas and planning before teaching**

Questioning of the first picture book followed the teacher's modeling, and allowed the children to dominate the questioning content gradually. The arrangement of the seats applied square surrounding, but in considerations on the space of the classroom and the 29 children in class, it had exerted two circles of seats to employ questioning instructional strategy.

**2. The process of questioning instructional strategy**

The duration for children to concentrate is shorter, so the researcher took around 15 to 20 minutes to discuss in every session, and it had been divided into 12 sessions in regard of "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House".

**2.1 Children's questions and answers for the story structure**

After the teacher finished telling "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", and felt like understanding how well they had learned about the content, she proposed questions about the story's structure. In the process, she found that the children would imitate or follow the precedent child's answer, so that it was hard for the teacher to realize the actual condition, but this also triggered the children's curiosity about the answers. "Teacher: the second question now is... C3 laughed and said, 'Announce the answer, teacher!'" (Teaching/1001101). In such situation, one of the functions of questioning is to inspire curiosity and desire for knowledge seeking, where it is always hard to satisfy one's curiosity, for learning is limitless (Translated by Hung Bi-hsia, 1987). Here, since children in class were eager to know the answers due to their curiosity, yet failed to get the answers, their learning dynamics were thus boiled, which set up the ground for their enthusiastic participation in the questioning activities afterwards.

**2.2 Mastery-type questioning instructional strategy****① "Who" Question-- To guide by alternatives**

By zooming out the text on each page in the picture book and posting them below the illustrations for the children to see alternation of "Grandma Mai" and "the who", in the beginning, the researcher used the questions in the picture book as an example-- "T: 'in Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake, repace 'Grandma Mai' with 'who', and it will become a question. Let me ask you first for you to answer...'" (Teaching/1001108). The children could answer without efforts because of the simplicity of questions. However, if we aim to develop the children's self-questioning ability, we have to train them. Regarding this picture book, C14, C11, and C23 had learned self-questioning successfully. "C14: 'Who opened a sweet cake house?'" (Teaching/1001108). The effect will be even better by continuing to guide after teaching.

**② "Where" Question--Guiding practice of the complete questioning sentence**

At first, the researcher considered that "who" and "where" is something to do with replacement of nouns, and to proceed as a series is easy for the children to understand. However, in contrast, children felt confused about them. Therefore, with immediate reaction, the researcher circled the places in the story with a blue pen, and proposed questions one by one according to the circled names. At last, only C14 questioned successfully, and the remaining students all needed help. Even for C14, he just proposed an interrogative sentence,



"where to post?" without the subject, so the researcher asked him to add "Grandma Mai" and re-proposed the question. "If a question becomes unable to understand because of ill expression, it fails to develop its function" (translated by Hung Bi-hsia, 1987). Therefore, teachers should try their best to guide the children for representing a complete interrogative sentence.

### ③ "What" and "how" questions should be done integrally

At first, the researcher meant to guide the children for "what questions" before leading them into how questions. However, after seeing them excitedly answer the questions, she followed the story plot for discussion, for it would be more smooth in this way-- "T: 'What problems' did Grandma Mai meet? C26: She opened a sweet cake house, and the neighbors all came to buy, only those who live far away did not come. T: Great! What else are involved in the story? Who can be the little teacher to ask? C5: Grandma Mai made a poster as advertisement, so everyone rushed to buy cakes".

### ④ "When" questions-- guide the children to find out the answers in the picture book

About the "time" in the story's structure of "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", it was hard for the children to learn. Therefore, the researcher put it after the white questions, expecting the children with the previously questioning and answering experiences can enter into such questioning situation more smoothly with her assistance and guidance. "T: When does Grandma Mai think of making a sign for the sweet cake house? C8: It is the mouse jumping upon the table to tell Grandma Mai" (Teaching/1001110) Under such circumstances, children can find the correct answer in the book.

## 3. Deduction-based questioning instructional strategy -- "Why" questions

It seems easier to represent this type of interrogative sentences; it just takes a little guidance or hints from the peers for the questioner to say "why" sentences. "C24: The business is still bad after posting a sign. T: We should add... C26: Why? C14: Why is the business still poor after posting an Ad sign?" (Teaching/1001111) Since children can represent such questions better, the researcher further modified their interrogative sentences for them to learn more complete questioning sentences.

The answers to the deductive questions may or may not be in the picture books, since they are the kind of answers that require deduction. Therefore, if the answers can be found in the picture books, children can respond very quickly. "C16: Why can the mouse jump up? C8: He wants to jump up to tell Grandma that the sign is not hung" (Teaching/1001111). However, when the children encounter the questions which answers are required to be figured out outside the picture book, they will confine themselves to the book, and demand definite modeling for them to get rid of such situation.

## 4. Self-expression type questioning instructional strategy by triggering the children's expression with pictures

When the children question, it is easy for them to replace the nouns successfully, such as "if I were the mouse", "if I were Grandma Mai". However, when it comes to "what" or "how", they need to be reminded in order to make a complete question sentence. For example, "C3: if I were Grandma Mai, I would have seen the pamphlet falling out. C6: You have to add 'how'! C3: if I were Grandma Mai, when I would have seen the pamphlet falling out, how would I do?" (Teaching/1001114). In such case, children need practices to make a more complete question sentence.

"Self-expression type" questioning demands the children to answer the questions based on their own opinions without being restricted by the story. However, focusing on this discussion, the researcher found that their answers were still surrounding the content of "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House, so she had them draw what's in their minds. With the topic that "if I were Grandma Mai, how would I have designed the sign", the children could fully exert their creation and design abilities and express their own viewpoints.

## **RETROSPECTION AND MODIFICATION**

### **1. Example of questioning should be modified according to the children's reactions**

Initially, "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House" was supposed to proceed the whole process of questioning by the researcher and then discussed with the children. However, during teaching, it was found that the questioning of "who" and "where" was replacement of the nouns in the question sentences for the children, which was easy for them to successfully substitute. As for "why" questions, children could also use them correctly for daily and frequent use. Therefore, the three kinds of questions were used as aiding and guiding the children, and having them propose questions by themselves, with the researcher staying aside to guide a complete sentence and the skills to answer and discuss.

### **2. Questioning the story structure before and after teaching should proceed on the basis of personal methods**

In this activity, the researcher found that the children would imitate one another and said the same answers blindly, so that it was hard for her to tell the children's understanding of the story. As a result, she changed to proceed interviews regarding the story structure with the children one by one.

### **3. Too many students in class led to class disorder easily**

By means of the whole class taking part in discussion, it is expected that the children can absorb different messages from peer learning. However, it was found that too many people's questioning and discussing led to longer waiting time, so the children lost their patience and forgot what they wanted to express. In addition, the quieter kids tended to be ignored easily, so the researcher considered to modify the number of participants. As Spence (1993) indicated, the number of participants in small group discussion should be controlled around 3-14 people, so that the students can talk, interact, interpret, clarify, and exchange ideas more (translated by Ku Rei-mien, 2004). In questioning instructional strategy of the next picture book, the researcher will divide the class into two groups-- No. 1-15 is Group A, and No. 16-29 is Group B. Two groups will conduct questioning instructional strategy by turns to enhance the quality of questioning and discussion.

## **Questioning instructional strategy, retrospection, and modification of "the Most Special Birthday Gift"**

### **i. The process of questioning instructional strategy**

Since the class was divided into two groups, times and duration were increased relatively, with a total of 24 sessions.

#### **1. Mastery type questioning instructional strategy**

##### **① "Who" questions-- most children could question and the discussion participation degree was high**

With the experience of questioning of the last picture book, Group A could enter into "who" questions right away, and most of them could say a complete sentence, while some could serve as the little teacher to ask others and encourage expression. In such way, it totally conducted 23 rounds of questioning and answering with four questions repeated, so it was

totally 29 questions proposed. As for Group B, it needed more help and guidance from the researcher, so it totally conducted 16 rounds with four repeated questions, resulting in 12 "who" questions, 6 questions less than Group A, which shows some difference in both groups. In order to remind the children of what they were not unaware, in teaching afterwards, the questions would be proposed in the other for both sides to learn what is conveyed in the picture book.

#### ② "Where" questions--children would question according to the text and illustrations

It was found that children would question according to the text, and some would jump out of the text to question by illustrations. Therefore, when answering questions, the former would have fixed answers while the latter would have divergent opinions. When children in Group A began to ask questions, they asked with their own viewpoints, "C10: where did Chi take the hangers?" (Teaching/1001130), which originally means "Chi took out all the hangers at home", showing the children made improvement in questioning.

#### ③ "What" and "How" questions-- require improvement

In the first picture book, such questioning was modeled by the researcher, so she tried to have the kids question and lead discussion. It was found that children made mistakes in the beginning, because what they said were all descriptive sentences, "C5: They met and talked under the big tree", "C14: Met Grandma Dolly walking in front of the cake" (Teaching/1001201). The students needed the researcher's modeling of questioning-- as long as the researcher questioned, they would be eager to answer, seemingly overly dependent on what she questioned, so it was necessary to guide the children of self questioning.

#### ④ "When" questions--Group A performed better than Group B

For Group A, when the researcher showed the cue cards, they replied immediately, "when?" (Teaching/1001201), and started to question without any modeling. As for Group B, the children waited for the researcher to set the example and started to question and discuss. In the process, only C19, C23, and C29 asked questions, "C19: when is Grandma Dolly's birthday?" "C23: When will we make cake?" "C29: When will we take Grandma Doly to the big warehouse?" (Teaching/1001201) After discussing the three questions, and asking the children to question again, all started to look at the researcher quietly again. It can be told that Group A's kids were more active than Group B's.

## 2. Deductive Questioning instructional strategy -- Collect, combine, and integrate questions

In the questioning discussion on the last picture book, "why" questions had proceeded more smoothly, and the children had participated very positively and actively. They questioned a lot, and discussed and answered a lot. Some of them tended to get distracted for chatting, and some repeated the same content for imitating other kids' response, so it took longer for the discussion to proceed and get concentrated. To solve this problem, the researcher and the children decided to collect "why" questions before discussion. In such case, Group A proposed 43 questions, 14 ones repeated; and Group B proposed 22 questions, with 6 repeated. In order to avoid the difference in the two groups, the proposed questions had been integrated first, so that all could notice what had not been found in the picture book.

## 3. Self-expression type questioning instructional strategy -- children got rid of the restriction of the book content to express their own opinions gradually

Before proceeding such questions, we designed a question first-- "If I were Ting, what would I have designed for the bottle?" for the children to create and share. "C19: Here is a house, a country road, a big tree, grassland, sky, and sun" (Teaching/1001206). The term "country

road" was used due to that C19's parents were teaching personnel, so he got more stimulation of wording. Besides, C19 had his own unique views about expressing the last picture book (he added colorful bulbs to the signboard design of Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House), so it is obvious to see his strengths here.

The children could exert "if I were" clue in the sentences, but most of them were descriptive sentences, which required assistance and guidance to turn them into questions. In discussion, the children were introvert and dared not express their own viewpoints at first. However, through conversation sharing model, they delivered their own opinions very actively without any framework of the standard answers.

## **TEACHING RETROSPECTION AND MODIFICATION**

### **i. Collect, combine, and integrate the children's questions to make the question discussion even more focused**

Children could gradually control the questioning skills, and could find more hints from the picture book to propose questions, so the questions became more and extensive. However, without integration, they tended to be in a mess. As Chang Tien-chou (2000) pointed out, during discussing the content of the picture book, the teacher should invite the children to propose questions for deleting or maintaining the proper thematic questions before discussing with them together. After collecting the questions from both groups, the repeated and similar ones should be combined to arrange them systematically. For example, for the deductive questions, they could seek for the answers in the picture book first and then discussed the questions not involved in the book. Therefore, the questioning instructional strategy in the third picture book would be modified as collecting the questions first and then continued to conduct answering and discussion.

### **ii. There is distance between learning conditions in two groups, Group Odd and Group Even**

According to the seat no., the whole class was divided into two groups. It was found that Group A could control questioning and discussing skills better, but Group B needed assistance and guidance more. As Burman and Booth (2008) studied the school-age children, and found that in girls' brain, the activation degree of areas processing language was higher than the boys (quoted from Huang Mao-chih, 2008). After the researcher discussed with Mr. Huang, the girls and boys in class were classified equally, which could be divided by odds and evens as the groups in the next picture book.

### **iii. Proper seat arrangement raises questioning and discussing quality**

Children sat on the floor with square surrounding. In hot discussion, children that were more agitation sat closer to the front, and obstruct those who obeyed to the rules. Besides, they got distracted for playing with the picture books. Therefore, the researcher re-arranged the seats by having the students sitting around the meeting table. Regarding the seat arrangement in class, it could only accommodate 15 children, which became the place to conduct picture book reading activities.

## **(III). Questioning instructional strategy and retrospection of "The Prince Forest's Wishes"**

### **i. The process of questioning instructional strategy**

Since the class was divided into Group Odd and Group Even, and each group was composed by 8 boys and 6 girls, with one more girl in Group Odd, so there were totally 29 children to conduct 27 sessions.

**i.1 Questioning instructional strategy for mastery type questions****① "Who" questions-- children could seek for questioning messages to raise their knowledge**

In this regard, children's questioning had been complete and extensive. For example, the leopard only taught Tai to jog in the picture book, but C4 could ask, "who ran fast", so it only took 10 questions to discuss the role structure in the picture book, for the children found the messages related to questioning so as to increase up to 20 questions and enhance the breadth of discussion.

**② "Where" questions-- The children could propose complete question sentences gradually**

In the beginning, when the children questioned, they put "where" in front of the question sentences. "C11: Where to carry out Tai's wishes" (Teaching /1001222). With the researcher's reminding, they could put the nouns in front of "where", "C14: Where did Chichi help Tai cheer. C20: Where did Tai jump" (Teaching/1001222). Afterwards, the children's questioning would show more complete question sentences.

**③ "What" and "how" questions-- more concrete and extensive**

Through leading the children to add the place into the question sentences, the discussion was more focused. In addition, by proposing more question sentences, 31 questions were proposed other than the original 7 questions without addition of place. After integration, 7 were raised to 17 questions, two times of those without adding place and event--showing that the children's questioning had become more extensive.

**④ "When" questions-- the children knew to seek for the timing in the book to prove their own opinions**

Like "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", "The Prince Forest's Wishes" has weaker timing, so the children would seek for the messages in the book to verify their own answers. In addition, so-called timing is unlike what we say about today, tomorrow, or birthday; rather, it is based on one event. "T: it was asked by C14 that when did Tai started to receive jogging training? C8: I know, it was when Tai went climbing and found he was weak physically, so he received jogging training" (Teaching /1001229).

**ii. Deductive questions' questioning instructional strategy -- Children proposed questions actively**

Like "who" questions, "why" questions are ones that the children got familiar first. They could enter the questioning activities as soon as the teaching was about to being carried out. Group A had proposed 74 questions, while Group B 65 ones. The children had to publish, "C15: I have more". C7: Teacher, the last one" (Teaching /1001230). Generally, if the children required, the researcher would let them question more, yet her analysis would show them there had already been many repeated questions, so it needed to come to the end. From the children's active questioning, we could tell their progress from the shy performance at first, to eager to express currently, showing that questioning discussion can enhance children's ability of delivering opinions.

**iii. Self-expression questioning instructional strategy -- Diverse answers from the peers enhanced different thinking directions**

At first, during discussing the answers, it was found that the kids would be influenced by the picture book at hand, so the researcher took it away to ask them to exchange the roles that led to very creative answers. "C5: I would give Tai a pair of bounce shoes to jump over the big stone. C15: I know. Ask him to stand on the bounce bed and jump over it directly. C19: Haha! He will jump up to the sky. Ha..." (Group A Teaching/1010105). By means of making good use of the questioning skills, the teacher could improve the students' creative thinking ability (Chang Yu-chen, 1984).

#### **iv. Teaching retrospection and integration of picture book's questioning instructional strategy content**

From mastery type questions to self-expression type ones, from convergent thinking to divergent thinking, it seemingly that the children's thoughts had jumped out. Suppose we ended the courses here, it would lack of integration. From literature discussion, it was found that exertion of the story structure teaching could enhance children's understanding of the picture book's content, and elevate their comprehension ability (Hung Yi-ling 2008; Liu Yu-jing, 2008; Wu Shu-yun, 2011; Chang Li-jieh, 2011; Wang Jung-man, 2011). As a result, in the last book, "Prince Forest's Wishes", the researcher utilized the story structure's elements to design the content as posters for integral questioning & answering activities. In this process, it was found that the children could tell the story structure's points, particularly the kids with better literary abilities. They could answer the questions definitely and read aloud the posters' content to other kids, representing the interactive learning among peers. "T2: It differs from the first book significantly, you made progress in understanding the story's content" (Interview T2/1010109). The coworkers' approval had drawn an end to the research activities this time. Since the action study was in present tense, the researcher would still go on sharing the pleasure of reading with the children.

#### **(II). Picture book questioning instructional strategy 's influence on children's understanding of the story**

##### **i. Understanding of children's reading reaction before teaching**

"Before implementing a program and learning goals, to understand a specific group of students that are about being taught is very important" (translated by He Hui-ling, 2002). Before questioning instructional strategy, the researcher understood how the children in her class recognized the story's content as consultancy in teaching. By adopting "Grandma Mai's Sweet Cake House", she invited the children to tell the story to the researcher, and discovered that their story telling performance could be classified into three types: the first one is to read the whole text word by word by pointing at text in the picture book, totally 8 kids with limited knowledge of the story; the second type of children tell the story through watching the pictures and add their living experiences; and the third type need the teacher's guidance to tell the story by watching the pictures, totally 12 kids.

##### **ii. Questioning instructional strategy for the children's understanding the story**

###### **1. Word by word readers' understanding of the story**

There were 8 children-- C5, C7, C11, C14, C17, C23, C26, and C29, who could complete reading the whole picture book without very good understanding of the story. Here, analysis and interviews would be conducted after telling the story and proceeding questioning instructional strategy for "the Most Special Birthday Gist":

(1) Understand the roles: The main role made significant difference before and after questioning. All kids knew the main character was "Grandma Dolly". For the supportive role, except C23 would look for the answer, the others paid less attention to that. However, after teaching, the kids could find even the "adult" showing up only once, proving the effect of questioning instructional strategy.

(2) Understanding the story's time: Time element in "the Most Special Birthday Gist" is quite definite. After telling the story, half of the kids (4) knew the story took place on Grandma Dolly's birthday. After questioning instructional strategy, all could grasp the time in the story.

(3) Understanding the place: After the teacher told the story, only C11 and C14 perceived the birthday party was held in the big warehouse. After questioning instructional strategy, all could know Grandma Dolly's birthday party was held in the big warehouse.

(4) Understanding the main questions: After telling the story, only C11 and C17 knew Mai met Grandma Dolly's birthday party. After questioning instructional strategy, children could

express that in Grandma Dolly's birthday party, Mai's problem involved with "celebrating Grandma Dolly's birthday" (C29, 11), wanted to surprise Grandma Dolly (C14, 17, 23, 26), wanted to make a big cake for Grandma Dolly's birthday (C5, 7). Therefore, the children had already known the story is about Mai's intention to hold a surprising birthday party for Grandma Dolly.

(5) Understanding problem shooting: After the teacher told the story, only C11 and C17 perceived the picture book is about Grandma Dolly's birthday. After questioning instructional strategy, children could know the story is about Mai's intention to hold a surprising birthday party for Grandma Dolly. Therefore, they could talk fluently about the process of making a cake and living birthday.

(6) Understanding the ending: Only C29 mentioned "Grandma Dolly is happy" after telling the story. After questioning instructional strategy, all children can talk about the ending.

From 8 children who read the whole text word by word, we can tell their ability of questioning instructional strategy can enhance understanding of the story after telling the story and questioning instructional strategy of "the Most Special Birthday Gift".

## **2. Understanding the story of those who tell the story from the pictures after questioning instructional strategy**

(1) Understand the roles: All kids knew the main character was "Grandma Dolly" after telling the story; all children know the main role after questioning instructional strategy, and 17 ones could say the supportive roles. It therefore shows questioning instructional strategy helps kids know the roles in the story.

(2) Understanding the story's time: Only three children knew Grandma Dolly's having a birthday after telling the story; after questioning instructional strategy, all knew Grandma Dolly's having a birthday.

(3) Understanding the place: after the teacher's telling the story, no children learned living a birthday in the "Big Warehouse"; after questioning instructional strategy, 20 kids knew a birthday is living in the "Big Warehouse", one in "Warehouse". It therefore shows questioning instructional strategy helps kids know the place in the story.

(4) Understanding the main questions: after the teacher's telling the story, only two children knew it was Grandma Dolly's having a birthday and people are making a cake for her.

(5) Understanding problem shooting: after the teacher's telling the story, three kids mentioned sending Grandma Dolly a cake. After questioning instructional strategy, all could answer the question, 14 could say the detail of making a cake, and 7 simply described how to make a cake to celebrate Grandma Dolly's birthday.

(6) Understanding the ending: after the teacher's telling the story, only two kids knew the ending; after questioning instructional strategy, all children knew Grandma Dolly is happy. It therefore shows questioning instructional strategy helps kids know the ending of the story better.

In short, for those who can read the whole text word by word and tell a story from pictures, after applying the three dimensions in the learning styles, it shows the effect of helping them further understand the story in the picture book.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### (I). Conclusions

#### 1. Findings from application of learning style to proceed questioning instructional strategy for children's picture books (

**1. Mastery and deductive type questioning instructional strategy cultivate the children's looking for messages in children's picture books:** The questioning content includes who, when, where, what, how, and why that cover the plot development of the whole picture book. At first, the children just questioned according to their impression and prior experiences, after proceeding the second and third picture books, they could utilize the one in hand to seek for the questions and answers, and developed their exertion of the messages to discuss with the peers, and further understand the story's content.

**2. Self-expression type questioning instructional strategy enhance children's diversified thinking and creative ideas:** In this action, the researcher investigated from children unknowing how to answer in the first picture book, getting surrounding the plot discussion in the second picture book, to getting rid of the story framework of the third picture book and freely expressed how they thought with the peers or even sharing role play of "wishing stone" through dancing the wish dance. All unique ideas made the children feel diversified ideas and show creative performance.

**3. Coordination with proper teaching strategies made questioning instructional strategy went on smoothly:** In order to make the preschool students control their questioning and discussing skills, the researcher constantly made retrospection and modification in collaboration with some teaching strategies, including modeling, guidance, and practice, which helped instruct the children to conduct questioning and discussion. In addition, use if clues enhanced children's questioning skills. With everyone had a picture book, the child sought for the questions and discussed messages, and collected, integrated, and combined questions for systematic discussion and for the kids' showing their own creative ideas.

**4. Proper number of children and seat arrangement enhanced their questioning discussion participation** After the second picture book, it changed to proceed teaching by groups. When it came to the third picture book, due to children's intimacy raised, it was found that those were quiet or dared not express themselves also said what they thought under influence of the peers.

**5. Make the story structure elements turned into integral activities for questioning instructional strategy , so the questioning instructional strategy activities can become even more complete.** After proceeding the third picture book, since the last one had shown the effect in structure, the researcher generalized this one and discussed with the children in form of posters to work as the last integral activities in questioning instructional strategy . It was found effective, not only the children could systematically questioned and discussed, they could also focus on the points for the children to discuss by the posters after the class ended, making the whole questioning instructional strategy activities even more complete.

#### ii. Picture book questioning instructional strategy 's influence on children's understanding of the story

1. For those who could read word by word, picture book's questioning instructional strategy could raise their understanding of the story. From children's questioning and answering the story structure, it could be found that the students became more clear about the place, questions, and solutions, and they were allowed to comprehend the content more subtly.

**2. For those who told a story by pictures, they needed questioning instructional strategy even more:** It could be found that after questioning instructional strategy , children could say the story structure even more correctly, so it could be seen that questioning instructional strategy could enhance their understanding of the story. Besides, the children that understood



the story by pictures could obtain limited messages concerning the picture books, so they required more questioning instructional strategy to further comprehend the plot.

**3. Questioning instructional strategy for the picture books can help the children understand the story practically:** No matter it was those who understood the story by pictures or finished reading word by word, they could answer questions of the story structure after questioning instructional strategy. Some could even talk about the plot smoothly, showing it helps children understand the story through applying learning styles to questioning instructional strategy.

## **(II). Suggestions**

### **i. For the teachers in teaching**

1. Regarding proceeding questioning instructional strategy, children cannot learn the questioning and discussing skills immediately. It takes mutual agreement of questioning discussion, so that they can notice the story's messages and explore to understand.
2. According to the children's reactions, the teacher applied proper teaching strategies: Questioning instructional strategy must rely on children's reactions in the activities to work with proper teaching strategies like clues, one book for one child to make the teaching process more smooth.
3. Integrate more picture books into teaching: Selecting a single book to conduct questioning and discussion aim at understand the picture book. It can coordinate with the program to use picture book for discussion and enhance the richness of the program.
4. Play the role of guiding children to read: Questioning and discussing the world in the picture books can also be conducted at the learning corner. Teacher can guide them as long as they are reading to help set up basic reading abilities, attitudes, and habits.

### **ii. For the research in the future**

1. The picture book discussion can be led by groups. It is suggested the whole class divided into several groups for each kid to dominate questioning discussion and activate the real implication in discussion.
2. Convert the research methods: This research has adopted action study for questioning instructional strategy, so the subjects are limited to children in class. It is suggested that quantitative method can be used in the future, targeting at the children's learning effect and their progress to get developed into the tests, questionnaires, or scales to realize their learning conditions.
3. Discuss the influence of the children's learning styles on question teaching in picture books. This time, the researcher meted the learning styles into picture books for teaching. It is suggested that the future research can explore the children's learning style's impact on questioning instructional strategy for picture books, and analyze how the children's learning styles influence learning to work as consultancy for the teacher in teaching.

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