

Enhancing Children's Language Abilities through Gamified Teaching

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Abstract

This study adheres to the characteristics and patterns of language development in young children, guided by the "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6." It encourages preschool teachers to actively develop and utilize language games, gamify instructional content, and create an integrated "curriculum + game" teaching model. Through the construction of an Internet-oriented mindset, preschool teachers establish a game database, enrich game content, and improve strategies such as game question design. These efforts aim to strengthen children's listening and expression skills, as well as their reading and writing abilities. By steering away from the trend of overly formalizing education for young children, the study seeks to address the drawbacks brought about by the "Teaching too much too soon" trend. The focus is on creating a seamless transition from preschool to elementary school by enhancing the cultivation of key skills in young children, facilitated through the integration of curriculum and game-based teaching methods.

Keywords: Language Games, Preschool, Language Abilities

Introduction

The content requirements for the language domain in the "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" in China emphasize that preschool children should learn to listen and express themselves. They should be willing to speak and able to clearly articulate their intentions, engage in discussions with others, and attentively listen to teachers and others. Additionally, children should enjoy listening to stories, reading books, and possess preliminary reading comprehension skills.

Through literature review and telephone interviews, it has been observed that there is a weak awareness among preschool teachers regarding the development and utilization of games. Influenced by the trend of "Teaching too much too soon", many kindergartens are conducting fewer game activities aimed at enhancing children's language abilities. However, relevant policies require kindergartens, especially for children in the senior class, to prepare them for elementary school and acquire certain writing skills during their kindergarten

period. To a certain extent, this requires kindergarten administrators and teachers to balance the scale between primary school orientation and the smooth transition to elementary school.

The "Convention on the Rights of the Child" and other guiding documents for young children explicitly state that play is a right inherent to children, particularly in kindergarten, where language games play a crucial role. Language games create a positive atmosphere for children to express themselves linguistically. This atmosphere can inspire children to enhance their language abilities through interaction with peers and participation in various activities, allowing them to enjoy the pleasure of linguistic expression.

Problem Statement

In the "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" (2012), it is explicitly stated that children's listening and expression, as well as preparation for reading and writing, are the main components of the language domain. Therefore, implementing language gamification in teaching will significantly help preschoolers enhance their abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The period of 3-6 years old is a critical stage for language acquisition in children. However, the trend of "Teaching too much too soon" poses a certain obstacle to children's language learning, severely impacting teaching effectiveness and progress. Particularly for children in the senior class, it is imperative to excel in the transition to elementary school. To better adapt to primary school curriculum and instruction, children in the senior class should reinforce their oral language skills, written language skills, listening abilities, and semantic understanding. Playfulness is inherent in young children, and through the integrated "curriculum + game" teaching model, allowing children to engage in language instruction with game elements can effectively enhance language proficiency.

Research Objective

Through the gamified teaching of preschool teachers, integrating instructional content into games can enhance children's listening and expression, as well as reading and writing abilities. This approach is particularly effective for children in the senior class, as it can successfully achieve the goals of a smooth transition to elementary school.

Research Methodology

This article employs literature review, observational research, and telephone interviews.

Results

Characteristics and Patterns of Language Development in Preschool Children: Children aged 3 to 6 are typically in a stage where their physical and psychological development is not yet mature. Physiologically, they are experiencing rapid growth in physical strength and height. Psychologically, they are full of curiosity about the world around them. During this period, the language development of young children also exhibits a series of unique characteristics and patterns, which are crucial for a profound understanding of their language acquisition process.

Firstly, young children gradually grasp phonetic and grammatical rules, continuously enhancing their language skills through imitation and practice. They actively explore

language, taking the initiative to use speech and new vocabulary. The language development of young children is closely related to their cognitive abilities. As their cognitive levels increase, they can express more complex concepts and thoughts. There are significant individual differences, including the speed and manner of language development, making each child's language acquisition process unique (Xu, 2022).

Social interaction plays a crucial role in the language acquisition of young children. Interaction with family and peers helps children continually practice and develop language skills. The language development of children occurs in stages, including babbling, vocabulary explosion, and grammar development. They continuously expand their vocabulary, initially focusing on content related to their needs and interests, gradually broadening the range of topics. Additionally, language is used to express emotions, becoming an essential tool for emotional expression. These characteristics and patterns collectively form the basic features of young children's language development, and educators and parents need to deeply understand them to better support and promote children's language development.

Children aged 3-6 have relatively limited comprehension abilities. Therefore, using gamified teaching methods to integrate the required knowledge into their daily play has multiple benefits. The development of children's language follows certain patterns and stages. When guiding language games, teachers should progress gradually, following the developmental levels and patterns of young children. This provides a platform for children to relax both physically and mentally, allowing them to enjoy the satisfaction of successful play, gain joyful emotional experiences, and develop their social qualities.

Language Games Play a Vital Role in Promoting Preschool Children's Language Development: According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, play is considered a right inherent to children, and as such, they should have the opportunity to engage in age-appropriate game activities. Particularly in kindergarten, language games play a crucial role as a key activity. These games not only stimulate children's active participation in various kindergarten activities but also help them bravely engage in language communication with peers, overcoming shyness and breaking through various barriers to language expression. The "Guidelines for Preschool Education (Trial)" explicitly state that to promote children's language expression abilities, teachers should actively create a conducive environment, guide children to actively attempt communication with others, and stimulate their desire for language expression. Language games play a significant role in establishing a positive atmosphere for language expression in children. This atmosphere can inspire children to enhance their language confidence through interaction with peers and participation in various activities, enjoying the pleasure of language expression.

Children's language development is an acquired process, and even in the early stages of language development, they possess remarkable language learning abilities. During this critical period, teachers can greatly enhance children's language abilities through the use of language games. Therefore, preschool teachers should carefully design diverse language games to encourage active language communication and learning in an entertaining way. This approach subtly improves children's language abilities, promotes intellectual development, and cultivates excellent language and moral qualities. This not only contributes to the individual growth of children but also benefits their integration into

society and better interaction with others. Therefore, in preschool education, language games are regarded as a powerful educational tool that can drive the comprehensive development of children.

(1) Enhancing Preschool Children's Listening and Speaking Abilities

Listening and speaking abilities are major components of preschool children's language skills. Only by improving a child's listening and speaking skills can they accurately comprehend important information during communication and provide appropriate feedback in conversation. This enables children to establish dynamic interactive relationships with others, allowing them to better adapt to societal communication. Therefore, the language expression level of preschool children mainly benefits from their educational level, providing children with more language stimulation during education and teaching, thus enhancing their desire and ability to express themselves.

In the process of gamified teaching in kindergarten, teachers should focus on cultivating preschool children's listening and speaking abilities as a core educational goal. Teaching should be conducted by creating scenarios based on constructing story games, allowing children to accumulate language organizational skills as they understand the development of the story's plot. This method increases opportunities for language communication through gameplay, enabling children to establish a more systematic language system.

For example, preschool teachers can guide children to participate in the "Story Chain" game activity, where the teacher initially begins telling a short story and then encourages a child to continue the story's plot. Other children continue in turn, each using their words to continue the narrative. This game stimulates children's listening skills and expression techniques while fostering their creativity. Secondly, teachers can improve listening and expression skills by having children retell a short story based on their understanding. This helps to enhance listening and expression skills while reinforcing their comprehension. These games are designed to cultivate children's listening skills, boost their expression abilities, and ignite their enthusiasm for language and communication learning.

(2) Enhancing Preschool Children's Reading and Writing Abilities

Reading is an activity that can bring endless enjoyment to preschool children. It is also a learning method that broadens their horizons and knowledge. Reading ability plays an irreplaceable role in preschool education and independent learning. "Guidelines for Learning and Development of Children Aged 3-6" states that conducting diverse and colorful reading activities is an important means of enhancing preschool children's reading literacy and language expression abilities. Preschool picture book teaching activities can promote the formation of children's written language awareness and behaviors, as well as the development of independent reading abilities (Jiang, 2023).

Planning and organizing early reading education activities for preschool children is an important task for kindergarten teachers. One challenge teachers face is how to effectively implement early reading activities through the use of diverse teaching and organizational strategies. Teachers can create gaming scenarios that encourage children to respond to reading content in a playful manner. Through these scenarios, children experience the joy of reading, which enhances their engagement in reading.

For example, preschool teachers can use the "Letter Puzzle Game" to help children recognize letters and create simple words by assembling letter puzzles. Teachers provide letter puzzles, and children need to combine them to form words and attempt to write these words. This helps them practice spelling and writing skills. Through the "Reading Role-Play" game, teachers let children choose their favorite storybooks and then act out the roles from the stories, retelling the story plot using appropriate language. This helps improve their reading comprehension and oral expression abilities. These games not only make learning more fun but also enhance preschool children's reading and writing abilities, while encouraging their active participation in the process of language and literacy learning.

Implications and Suggestion

(1) Gamifying the Curriculum: Creating an Integrated "Curriculum + Game" Teaching Model

The curriculum content is gamified, integrating tasks seamlessly through nursery rhymes. Nursery rhymes are one of the most beloved teaching methods for young children, as phonetic training can often seem dull. Through singing nursery rhymes, children can engage in pronunciation practice in a fun and enjoyable way. Nursery rhymes themselves have unique rhythms and beats. Compared to the traditional teaching methods of teachers, children prefer learning through nursery rhymes, which is not only more easily accepted but also helps train their language expression abilities and correct pronunciation. When designing games, considering the age characteristics of young children, teachers should ensure that the game rules are clear and easy for children to understand. In a joyful teaching environment, children can more attentively participate in games while acquiring relevant learning content and knowledge. Teachers can combine subject education with game design, integrating subject courses with language game activities. This establishes a connection between theory and practice, enhancing the overall abilities of young children.

Currently, with increasing attention to education at the national level, improving the teaching quality of game activities has become a crucial task. To achieve this, teachers should strengthen the development and full utilization of performance game learning resources in the educational environment, stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning, ensure the objectivity and effectiveness of game design, enhance interaction with children, and thus ignite a strong interest in learning.

For example, before designing language games for young children, teachers can observe children daily, discover and create games based on things that interest them. Teachers can introduce novel teaching tools based on the developmental characteristics of young children to stimulate their enthusiasm for participating in language games. In such a teaching environment, children can more effectively cultivate their interest in learning, actively communicate with peers during games, and thereby improve their language expression abilities and promote overall physical and mental health growth.

(2) Emphasize Question Design and Strengthen Classroom Interaction

In language game activities for young children, teachers should conduct in-depth research on relevant instructional theories, comprehensively analyze the requirements of instructional materials, and deeply interpret the "Guidelines for Learning and Development of 3-6 Year-Old Children." Using the "Guidelines for Learning and Development of 3-6 Year-

Old Children" as the guiding document for language game teaching, teachers should pay special attention to question design during the initiation and implementation of language games. By using interactive methods, teachers can stimulate students' interest and passion for learning, enabling them to grasp language skills more quickly.

Questioning is crucial in language games conducted by early childhood educators because it can inspire children's thinking, encourage their participation, and promote their language development. Teachers should primarily use open-ended questions, such as "What do you think will happen to the main character in this story?" or "Can you tell me about the characteristics of this animal?" Additionally, guiding questions can be used to assist children in participating and thinking about the game content, such as "Why does the main character behave this way in the story?" or "If you were this character, what would you do?"

Furthermore, teachers can pose situational questions, like "Where do you think this story takes place?" or "Can you give a name to this scene?" These questions can be adjusted based on the age and language proficiency of the children, aiming to enhance their thinking and expressive abilities. Through cleverly designed questions, teachers can guide children to engage more deeply in language games, ultimately improving their language skills.

(3) Develop an Internet-Minded Approach and Enrich Game Content

Contemporary early childhood educators should adopt a new Internet-oriented mindset and leverage big data technology to dynamically create a game resource database, comprehensively capturing and supplementing game resources. To achieve this, educators can employ the following strategies:

First, educators can use their existing knowledge of Internet technology to establish a game resource database. Through extensive research and interviews, they can collect relevant information about games, including their names, rules, gameplay, historical origins, and regional cultural aspects. Collaborating with game enthusiasts, traditional game custodians, experts, and scholars allows educators to gain valuable experience and knowledge. Using various platforms and smart devices, they can store game resources in multiple formats such as text, images, graphics, audio, and video. As game resource development progresses, it's essential to continuously update the database.

Secondly, educators can open up and share these resources with peers, organizations, or individuals. By creating an online platform, they can make the game database accessible to users, offering features like browsing, searching, and downloading, thus facilitating easy access to game-related materials.

Lastly, promoting the game database actively can attract more game enthusiasts and researchers to contribute. Regular updates and additions to new game materials keep the database fresh.

In addition to these measures, educators can employ the following strategies to enrich game content: Innovate and adapt traditional games, introducing new elements and variations to meet children's developmental needs and interests. For instance, educators can organize language game activities around beloved animated characters and themes to achieve more profound educational outcomes.

Incorporate traditional language games into modern language teaching, enhancing the effectiveness of language education. For instance, educators can engage children in activities such as "idiom chains," "opposite speech," and "riddle solving." These language games are known for their high level of engagement, allowing children to appreciate the rhythm and fun in speech sounds and words, further strengthening the language logic and expressive abilities of preschoolers.

Design scenarios and role-playing activities to foster children's imagination, creativity, and cooperation skills. By integrating other subjects and merging game environments with language, mathematics, science, and other fields of knowledge, educators can create a multidisciplinary gaming environment.

In conclusion, embracing an Internet-oriented mindset and enriching game content are essential for enhancing young children's language abilities. These approaches, combined with thoughtful guidance and active participation from educators and children, enable the progressive improvement of language skills through gamified activities.

Conclusion and Discussion

In summary, to enhance young children's language abilities, the use of multimedia teaching and diversified game activities is indispensable. Teachers should skillfully guide young children to think more deeply and observe life more closely. Additionally, teachers should significantly enrich and expand young children's game activities to better utilize methods that children are willing to accept, thereby increasing their enthusiasm and proactivity in participating in games. Encouraging young children to actively express their emotions is crucial. It is only through the combination of well-crafted guidance from teachers and active participation from children that young children can progressively improve their language skills through "gamified" activities.

Contribution

This study addresses the research gap in the field of kindergarten game-based teaching, exploring the "curriculum + game integration teaching model." It effectively assists preschool teachers in understanding the benefits that games bring to young children, adhering to the characteristics and laws of children's physical and mental development. The study innovates game teaching methods and rectifies the drawbacks of current kindergarten game implementation in curriculum teaching.

By providing a more effective game teaching model, the study aims to help preschoolers enhance their listening and expression skills, reading and writing abilities, and overall language proficiency. This, in turn, will aid young children in better adapting to elementary school learning. In other words, the research contributes to the improvement of the current level of preschool education.

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