

The Theoretical Analysis of the Design of Preschool-age Children's Language Education Activities in Kindergartens

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Abstract

Language is a precious treasure of human beings and plays an important role in social communication. Language is also one of the important features of human cultures and helps with forming thoughts, which has been evolving until present days. Preschool education, as the starting point of life-long learning, is an indispensable part of a nation's educational system. As the main aspect of preschool education, language education plays an important role in promoting all-around development and lays a solid foundation for children's further study. Therefore, the article is about to analyse the content of Preschool-age children's language education activities and to construct theoretical design for Preschool-age children's language education in kindergartens.

Keywords

Preschool-age Children; Language Education Activities; Design.

1. Introduction

In China, preschool language education provides the language environment of Mandarin, cultivates children to speak Mandarin correctly, creates a free and relaxed language communication environment, cultivates children's language communication habits, improves children's language communication ability.[1] At the same time, preschool language education should guide and improve children's ability to read literary works, arouse children's interest in reading and writing. Children should be prepared for further study after entering primary school.

2. The Objectives of Language Education in Kindergartens

The Guidance of Kindergarten Education issued by the Chinese Ministry of education puts forward the following objectives in the field of language education for Preschool-age children:

- a. Be willing to talk with others and speak politely;
- b. Pay attention to the other person's speech and understand the daily language;
- c. Be able to say what you want to say clearly;
- d. Like listening to stories and reading books;
- e. Be able to understand and speak Mandarin. [2]

3. The Taxonomy of Education Objectives in Kindergartens

3.1. Listening

It is not only the behaviour of children's perception and understanding of language, but also an indispensable ability of children.

3.2. Expression

It is the behaviour of expressing and exchanging personal opinions with certain language content, language form and language application. [3]

3.3. Appreciating Literary Works

It is the necessary behaviour of perceiving literary works and feeling aesthetic characteristics of the language.

3.4. Early Reading

It is the pre-reading and pre-writing preparation for children's transition from oral language to written language. [4]

4. The Types of Language Education Activities in Kindergartens

4.1. Conversation Activities

It focuses on listening and talking to others in an appropriate way.

4.2. Narration Activities

It focuses on cultivating children's language expression ability, such as picture telling, composition telling, object telling, scene telling, literary works telling, life experience telling, etc.

4.3. Listening and Speaking Games

It focuses on learning to use active language through the game, such as Chinese string up puzzle, tongue twister, etc.

4.4. Literary Activities

Children's literary works education activity is a language education activity, which design and organise the activities with literary works as the basic educational content. Early literacy activities build rich language skills: vocabulary, self-expression, and understanding. [5] These skills help children make sense of printed words when they start reading.

4.5. Early Reading Activities

It focuses on giving children access to written language. Early reading is the pre-reading preparation and pre-writing preparation for children's transition from oral language to written language.

5. The Methods of Language Education Activities in Kindergartens

5.1. Imitation Method

Teachers provide children with model examples of language learning, so that children can naturally imitate the model and learn in a good language environment.[6]

5.2. Combination of "Seeing" and "Doing"

"Seeing" means that teachers provide children with specific object so that children can fully observe and narrate; "doing" means that teachers select a topic and provide children with certain imagination space, so as to help children to use more creative, coherent, rich and complete language for their expression.

5.3. Game Method

Teachers play games with children regularly to make the children to train and learn the correct pronunciation, enrich children's vocabulary and sentence patterns.[7]

5.4. Situational Performance Method

Teachers introduce or create vivid and specific scenes with certain emotions and images, children do a roleplay in this scene. The method is used to arouse students' interest and develop their psychological functions.

5.5. Practice

Teacher gives specific tasks to children, in which they can use and practice the language knowledge several times (such as pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence patterns, etc), or to train children's speech skills in a certain environment.

6. The Steps of Language Education Activities in Kindergartens

6.1. Analyse Preschool-age Children's Situation

The analysis of Preschool-age children's situation means the implementation of educational activities must correspond to the cognitive level of children and follow the developing orderliness of children's body and mind. Children's development involves various aspects, such as self-care aspect, cognitive development aspect, language development aspect, art development aspect, health aspect and social interaction aspect.

6.2. Set Language Education Activities Objectives

The objectives should be in accordance with the children's current development level and conform to the rules of children's language development. According to *the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education* issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education, the general objectives of language education for Preschool-age children in China are as follows:

- a. Be willing to talk with others and speak politely;
- b. Pay attention to the other person's speech and understand the daily language;
- c. Be able to say what you want to say clearly;
- d. Like listening to stories and reading books;
- e. Be able to understand and speak Mandarin.[8]

6.3. Select Language Education Activities Content

The content of language education activities should be selected according to the corresponding language educational activities objectives. Meanwhile, teachers should understand children's existing learning experience and establish a connection between the previous experience and existing experience.

6.4. The Evaluation of Language Education Activities in Kindergartens

6.4.1. In Terms of Children

- a. The evaluation of children's enthusiasm to participate in activities: the evaluation of children's enthusiasm to participate in activities is mainly used to investigate the degree of children's emotional involvement in learning activities. Meanwhile, the evaluator should analyse and evaluate children's interest and attention towards the learning activities.
- b. The evaluation of children's completion of language learning tasks in activities: it means the evaluators should evaluate whether children have acquired targeted language knowledge, whether they have mastered relevant vocabulary and sentence patterns, and whether they understand what kind of language environment is suitable for the use of specific sentence patterns or vocabulary.
- c. The evaluation of children's creative behaviour or unique opinions in activities: evaluators should analyse children's creative application of language knowledge and their unique views

or opinions during the learning process, as well as list children's behaviours that are different from other children's behaviours.

6.4.2. In Terms of Teachers

a. The degree of achievement of educational objectives: the purpose of language education activities is to provide children with language learning opportunities in a purposeful and planned way, it has clear educational objectives.[9] Different types of language activity has different corresponding objectives, which promotes each language activity towards a certain direction.

b. The suitability of educational content and form: evaluators should analyse whether educational content is consistent with the corresponding objectives which are chosen and set by teachers. Meanwhile, evaluators should also consider the following aspects: whether the educational content is scientific; whether the content difficulty is appropriate and conforms to children's cognitive level; whether the arrangement of activities highlights the key points, etc.

c. The coordination of internal elements of activities: language education is a process of interaction among teacher, children, educational content and language environment.[10] Therefore, as for the educational evaluation, we should analyse each factor and the interactional relation among them.

d. The educational effect of activities: evaluators should evaluate the educational effect that has been achieved by the activities, and analyse its shortcomings and improving solutions. Evaluators should not only analyse the children's learning effects but also the teaching effects of teachers, and find out the existing problems and put forward the corresponding solutions.

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