

Practical Strategies for Enhancing Language Expression Skills of Middle-Class Preschoolers through Gamification-Based Teaching

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Abstract: The main educational goal of preschool education is to enlighten young children's intelligence and physical fitness. It is a relatively free stage in the entire education system and has an important impact on children's growth. Traditional language teaching activities for middle-class preschoolers often adopt the indoctrination teaching method, resulting in many children being unwilling to express themselves actively and having chaotic language logic. Gamification-based teaching activities are one of the best choices for teachers to improve the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers. Based on this, this paper briefly analyzes the teaching value and application status of gamification-based teaching in cultivating young children's language expression skills, and discusses the practical strategies for enhancing the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers through gamification-based teaching.

Keywords: Gamification-based teaching; Middle-class preschoolers; Language expression skills

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1. Introduction

In the preschool education stage, gamification-based teaching is a common teaching model. From games, young children can gain fun, making learning activities no longer boring and promoting the synchronous development of their physical and mental health. Therefore, in teaching activities aimed at improving the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers, teachers should actively explore innovative strategies for language expression teaching activities based on gamification-based teaching, helping young children build a bridge connecting concrete experiences to language expression.

2. Teaching value of gamification-based teaching in cultivating young children's language expression skills

2.1. Stimulate young children's interest in language expression

Games are the basic form of preschool education and an effective carrier for young children to cognize the world

and interact with the outside world. As a teaching model emphasizing fun, gamification-based teaching can arouse young children's interest in language expression through entertaining activities, changing the previous relatively passive teaching model in which young children only recite nursery rhymes and listen to stories with teachers in the cultivation of language expression skills ^[1]. In gamification-based teaching activities, teachers create game scenarios such as "word chain challenge" and "small animal role-playing", allowing young children to speak up in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere and naturally use language during the game. This teaching model that conforms to young children's cognitive characteristics is also consistent with Piaget's game theory, which states that intrinsic motivation is the core driving force for young children's learning. In games, young children do not regard language expression as a task but take the initiative to express themselves because they want to play the game well.

2.2. Improve young children's language expression skills

Organically combining language education with game activities can not only subtly impart language knowledge and skills to young children but also help improve their communication abilities. Therefore, when designing game activities, teachers should be in line with young children's life experience and cognitive level ^[2]. For example, making phone calls is a very familiar scenario for young children in daily life. Teachers can create a "phone chat" game, allowing young children to try to use polite language and interrogative sentences to "make phone calls" with classmates and complete communication and interaction in specific scenarios. This can not only exercise the clarity of young children's oral expression but also enhance the logic of their language expression. In addition, diverse game scenarios can enable young children to accumulate relevant vocabulary for specific scenarios while completing games, and gradually develop from single-word expression to coherent sentence expression, making their language expression more accurate and complete.

2.3. Enrich the content of young children's language teaching

Compared with traditional language expression teaching, game activities are more inclusive and free. Well-designed gamification-based teaching activities can cover multiple language expression teaching dimensions, such as vocabulary accumulation, sentence pattern application, and emotional expression, allowing young children to experience better language learning content ^[3]. At the same time, different types of games can more effectively meet the learning needs of young children with different language expression levels, further deepening the depth and breadth of young children's language teaching content. For example, create an "emotion small theater", allowing young children to use the basic sentence pattern "My current mood is..., because..." provided by teachers to guide them to imitate sentence-making with the emotional vocabulary they have mastered ^[4]. Such game activities can enhance the emotional dimension of young children's language expression on the basis of improving their vocabulary and sentence pattern expression, thereby enabling them to express themselves more actively and coherently in daily life and learning.

3. Application status of gamification-based teaching in cultivating language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers

3.1. Lack of targeted game design

At present, many preschool teachers pay more attention to game forms and ignore the educational nature and hierarchy of teaching content when carrying out gamification-based teaching activities for language expression.

Some teachers directly apply ready-made game plans to the classroom without adjusting the details of the plan according to the characteristics of middle-class preschoolers who have limited vocabulary and sentence pattern mastery and are prone to word order reversal. As a result, young children are often in a passive listening state rather than active expression during the game, making it impossible to achieve the teaching goal of improving their language expression skills^[5]. In addition, the language development levels of middle-class preschoolers are different: some children can clearly narrate a complete event, while others cannot express themselves clearly. If preschool teachers design “one-size-fits-all” game activities, children with strong language abilities will feel bored, while those with weak language abilities will experience a sense of frustration, which is not conducive to improving young children’s language expression skills.

3.2. Insufficient teacher guidance ability

On the one hand, due to the large number of young children, some middle-class preschool teachers may let things drift or intervene excessively during gamification-based teaching. If young children are in an unordered state of free interaction for a long time during the game, their language expression will focus on daily communication, making it difficult to expand their vocabulary and exercise their sentence pattern expression. In addition, some teachers require young children to express themselves according to preset language models to complete specific language teaching goals, which is not conducive to stimulating their enthusiasm for language expression and violates the core concept of “learning through play” in gamification-based teaching. On the other hand, the language expression of middle-class preschoolers is imaginative. During the game, they often have new ideas, questions, or needs that require teachers to respond, ask follow-up questions, or expand in a timely manner^[6]. However, some teachers fail to capture these educational opportunities in time, missing the chance to guide young children to improve their language expression skills.

3.3. Relatively weak teaching resources

Preschool teachers mainly rely on traditional teaching materials such as picture books, hand puppets, role-playing props, and word cards to cultivate the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers, lacking interactive information-based teaching resources. The lack of highly interactive information technology teaching materials is due to the limited funds of kindergartens, which cannot keep up with the times to purchase digital teaching tools and equipment such as intelligent voice interactive toys and smart whiteboards, which are somewhat monotonous and boring for young children living in the network era. At the same time, teachers need to further effectively use existing teaching resources to carry out interesting game activities^[7]. With the current limited digital teaching resources, teachers should combine the existing resources of the kindergarten and adopt various methods to create interesting language games suitable for the age characteristics of middle-class preschoolers, allowing young children to actively explore and learn in games and develop their language expression skills. However, most teachers still use outdated teaching methods to make young children passively accept knowledge, making language teaching lose its due vitality.

4. Practical strategies for enhancing language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers through gamification-based teaching

4.1. Create situational games with both fun and knowledge

The ultimate goal of carrying out language expression game activities for young children is to promote the

development of their language abilities. Therefore, gamification-based teaching activities must be based on young children's age characteristics and have both fun and knowledge. By combining life scenarios familiar to middle-class preschoolers, such as supermarket shopping, hospital visits, and outdoor play, teachers create corresponding situational games to better exercise young children's language abilities ^[8]. For example, teachers organize young children to carry out a "community supermarket" game, arrange the kindergarten activity room into a supermarket, place simulated goods such as toys and daily necessities, attach price tags to each of them, and prepare toy cash registers, allowing young children to independently choose to play the roles of salespersons or customers. Next, teachers should assign role tasks to each "little actor": salespersons need to take the initiative to recommend products to customers, and customers need to clearly express their shopping needs, allowing young children to actively use the learned vocabulary and sentence patterns to communicate and interact in the game such as introducing the uses of products and asking about product prices, stimulating their intrinsic motivation for language expression.

Game activities should also be effectively combined with on-campus life, learning, group activities, etc. For example, teachers can create a "today's news anchor" activity, allowing young children to take turns acting as "little anchors" to broadcast the day's learning courses and activity arrangements to other children every early morning, while other children act as the audience ^[9]. In this game activity, when young children act as "little anchors", they can not only understand the concept of time sequence and the content of course activities but also exercise their speech ability. When acting as an audience, it is a process of reviewing and consolidating the above content, which is very beneficial to improving the coherence and logic of young children's language expression.

4.2. Design hierarchical and inspirational language games

Middle-class preschoolers can already express their ideas and needs relatively accurately, but the development of language expression among different children is different. Therefore, when designing language games, teachers should set up step-by-step game activities based on the actual learning situation. For example, in the "story creation" game, teachers can divide the language game into basic level, advanced level, and expansion level according to young children's vocabulary, sentence pattern mastery, and expression fluency. In the classroom introduction stage, provide all young children with time, place, and character information. Then assign different story creation tasks to students with different language levels ^[10]. For the basic level, teachers can provide young children with some adjectives and plots, allowing them to complete story creation in the form of "fill in the blanks with selected words"; for the advanced level, require them to independently think and continue the subsequent story plots based on the background information; for the expansion level, encourage them to diverge their thinking, conceive a complete story, and tell it.

At the same time, to better improve the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers, teachers can also organize students to carry out inspirational language game activities such as word chains and sentence jigsaw puzzles. For example, carry out an "animal" themed word chain game, allowing young children to take turns saying the animals they know, which requires them to actively think of animals that previous children have not mentioned. In the "sentence jigsaw puzzle" game, let young children form simple sentences with vocabulary in logical order, guiding them to build initial language logic ^[11]. For example, teachers show young children pictures of "sky, bird, big tree" and let them make sentences with the words. At this time, some children will say, "A bird flies from the big tree to the sky.>"; some children will say, "The bird flies around in the sky, looking for a beautiful big tree." Through inspirational language games, young children can continuously diverge their associative and imaginative thinking in the process of solving problems and exercise their language expression skills.

4.3. Carry out interactive and collaborative dialogue games

Cultivating the language expression skills of middle-class preschoolers is to further improve their communication and social skills. Therefore, teachers can carry out interactive and collaborative dialogue games, create relaxed and practical dialogue themes for young children, and allow them to effectively improve their language expression skills through dialogue. For example, organize young children to carry out a “phone game”, allowing them to simulate being at home and share their weekend life with classmates. It should be noted that although teachers cannot directly tell young children what to say, if young children fall into simple repetition or have nothing to say during the game, they should guide them to continue the dialogue from multiple dimensions, such as topic extension, sentence pattern application, and emotional expression ^[12]. For example, when young children only conduct short Q&A, such as “What did you play?” “I played with building blocks.” Teachers should prompt them to ask each other if they encountered any challenges while playing with building blocks, guiding them to extend the topic, improve the quality of the dialogue, and prolong the dialogue time.

In addition, teachers can also organize young children to carry out a “cooperative painting and storytelling” game, allowing them to complete a painting in pairs and create and tell a story based on the content of the painting ^[13]. During the painting process, teachers should guide young children to determine the content and details of the painting through language communication, such as “Let’s draw a big tree, and birds can build nests on it.” “I want to draw a rainbow so that the sky will be more beautiful.” In the storytelling session, when one child is telling the story, the other child should listen carefully and supplement the plot based on the other’s narration, such as “Later, the bird met a little hedgehog in the forest and helped it carry fruits.” This kind of dialogue game can not only let young children learn to express their ideas clearly through collaboration but also cultivate their communication habits of listening to others and respecting different opinions.

4.4. Create a safe and comfortable game environment

Improving young children’s language expression skills based on gamification-based teaching is inseparable from a safe and comfortable game environment. This requires teachers to focus on stimulating young children’s innovative thinking and desire to express themselves when creating a game environment, guiding them to combine feelings, cognition, and creation, and express their thoughts and feelings with accurate and coherent language, thereby achieving the educational goal of improving their language expression skills ^[14]. The effective development of language game activities also requires kindergartens to build a good outdoor and indoor environment. When creating an outdoor environment, teachers should ensure the safety of various outdoor infrastructure to support young children in carrying out outdoor language game activities safely. Therefore, teachers should actively participate in the creation of a safe kindergarten environment. Once potential safety risks are found in outdoor facilities, they should be repaired and improved on time. The creation of indoor language game activities requires teachers to use various tools, including but not limited to hardware facilities such as tables, floor mats, and wall decorations, as well as teaching software such as online teaching platforms and MOOC websites ^[15]. For example, teachers can arrange a “language corner” on the classroom wall, posting story paintings created by young children in games or recording interesting language expression moments of young children, allowing them to see their own achievements at any time in daily activities and enhancing their sense of accomplishment in language expression. In addition, teachers should also ensure that the indoor lighting is soft and comfortable and the air is circulating during game activities, allowing young children to actively participate in language games in a physical and mental pleasure environment, daring to express themselves and being willing to express themselves.

5. Conclusion

In summary, gamification-based teaching, as a vivid and intuitive teaching model, is very in line with the cognitive level and learning needs of middle-class preschoolers. Through teaching practices such as situational games, language games, and dialogue games, teachers can effectively stimulate young children's desire to express themselves and improve the accuracy and logic of their language expression. In addition, creating a safe and comfortable game environment also helps to better organize and implement language expression game activities, thereby promoting the healthy growth and all-round development of young children.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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