

Research on the Application of Picture Book Reading in the Development of Language Ability for Early Childhood Transition

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Abstract

The transition from preschool to primary school is an important period for children's language ability to move from natural expression to structured and academic. Currently, a large number of children experience problems such as weak language structure, difficulty adapting to context, and insufficient ability to transfer expression during their transition from kindergarten to primary school. As a comprehensive educational resource that integrates images, language, and context, picture books have good language construction functions and practical transfer value. Based on the analysis of language development characteristics, this article outlines the core mechanism of picture book intervention in language ability cultivation and constructs a three-stage teaching model of "situational input structural imitation expression transfer". On this basis, the system analyzed the problems of detached teaching objectives, fragmented processes, and disconnection from home and school in current practice, and proposed a comprehensive improvement path for teaching design optimization, teacher professional development, picture book resource construction, and home school co education linkage. The research aims to promote the transformation of picture book teaching from resource utilization to system path construction, providing theoretical support and operational strategies for improving the effectiveness of language connection. The research results have positive significance for achieving a scientific transition in language ability and promoting the development of children's comprehensive language literacy.

Keywords

Transition from kindergarten to primary school; Language proficiency; Picture book reading; Teaching strategies; Expression transfer.

1. Educational Anxiety During The Language Transition Period and The Practical Necessity of Picture Book Intervention

In the new stage of basic education with good nurturing and excellent teaching in early childhood, the transition from preschool to primary school is a critical window period for children's language ability to move from natural expression to academic expression. Language ability, as a core competency, directly affects the quality of children's adaptation to school^[1]. However, during the transition from kindergarten to elementary school, there are many problems with children's language development: rich oral expression but loose structure, weak sentence organization ability, lack of contextual adaptability, and difficulties in written language expression and systematic reading after entering elementary school. This language proficiency gap can affect classroom participation and subject learning, and even trigger emotional problems in children. Meanwhile, picture books are regarded as high-quality carriers and connecting tools for language education^[2]. It integrates images, language, and plot, with the

advantages of "situational, visual, and interactive", which can stimulate children's interest in language, guide them to understand language connotations, imitate sentence structures, and help bridge the gap in language ability.

However, from the perspective of early childhood transition, picture book teaching has problems such as systematic deficiencies, vague practical strategies, and detached educational goals. Part of the teaching emphasizes plot retelling over language transfer, some activities lack expression practice and ability construction, picture book resource selection lacks coherence guidance, and parents also lack professional guidance^[3].

Therefore, this article focuses on the language education function of picture book reading based on the needs of language development in the transition from kindergarten to primary school. It explores its educational value and practical mode from the aspects of teaching mechanism and implementation strategy, and provides guidance for related teaching and parent-child reading.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Mechanism and Development Logic of Integrating Picture Book Reading into Language Connection

2.1. Key characteristics of language ability development during the transition from preschool to primary school

The transitional period from natural generation to functional expression in children's language is the stage of transition from early childhood to primary school. The development of their language abilities presents significant characteristics such as "diverse forms, hierarchical changes, and a shift in expression goals". According to relevant research, the language expression of preschoolers in the senior class is usually based on emotional statements and oral descriptions, lacking structural awareness and organizational skills. In contrast, children in the lower grades of primary school are required to be able to complete basic written language tasks through more complete narration, retelling, explanation, and Q&A. Cai Meiqin (2023) further pointed out that although large class children have basic vocabulary and language sense reserves in language ability, there are significant deficiencies in the three dimensions of "listening comprehension, logical expression, and language transfer", especially the ability to transform from story listening to expression structure has not yet been formed^[4]. Therefore, language cohesion is not only a transformation of expression media, but also a transformation of thinking patterns and pragmatic abilities, which must be supported through a systematic educational path.

2.2. The Mechanism of Picture Book Reading in Language Ability Construction

As a multimodal text carrier that integrates language, images, and plot, picture books have educational functions far beyond "storytelling". Research shows that reading picture books can deeply promote the improvement of children's language abilities through the following mechanisms:

1. "Scenariosization and Visualization of Language Input": Picture books use a combination of images and text to transform abstract language content into concrete situations, which helps children understand word meanings and master usage in real contexts^[5].
2. Modeling and Repetition of Language Structure: Repetitive sentence patterns, dialogue structures, and logical hierarchies often appear in picture books, which can provide a "imitation blueprint" for language output in a subtle way, promoting the generation of sentence patterns and the coherence of expression in young children.
3. "Situational orientation" of language transfer: Through retelling, continuation, and role-playing of picture book characters, children can achieve language reconstruction and expression transfer in specific contexts, transforming input into output.

4. A "safe medium" for emotional expression and social language development: Especially in emotional and ethical picture books, children can use character emotional experiences to learn emotional expression and social language, such as functional language such as request, persuasion, empathy, etc.

In short, picture book reading provides a triple support mechanism of "visual context, structured language, and experiential expression" for language ability cultivation, and is an important educational tool to meet the language requirements of kindergartens and primary schools.

2.3. Theoretical support for education: the practical logic from "development zones" to "scaffolding"

The application of picture books in language education not only conforms to the cognitive laws of children's development, but also has solid educational theoretical support:

1. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" theory. This theory emphasizes that under the guidance of adults or more experienced individuals, children are able to complete tasks that cannot be accomplished independently. In picture book reading, teachers stimulate children's language expression potential and expand their language development boundaries through questioning, dialogue, guidance, and other methods, which is the embodiment of the "zone of proximal development" in language education^[6].

2. Bruner scaffold teaching theory. Bruner proposed the concept of "scaffolding teaching", emphasizing that teaching should provide children with phased and hierarchical support. From picture book selection, question design to language output, teachers can design "scaffolding" tasks to gradually guide children through the entire process of language input, understanding, and output, enhancing their expressive abilities.

3. Constructivist language learning perspective. Language is not a singular memory, but is constructed through interaction with others in specific contexts. Picture book reading precisely provides such an "interactive construction field", where children gradually construct a meaning system through teacher child co reading, role-playing, and graphic decoding.

2.4. Preliminary Construction of Language Development Path Model

Based on the above research and theory, this study preliminarily constructs a three-stage path model for picture book intervention in language connection:

Phase 1: Language perception (contextual input), image+story activation of children's language interest and attention, forming a language immersion experience.

Phase 2: Language comprehension (structural imitation), where the teacher guides vocabulary recognition, sentence observation, and plot retelling to form a language template reserve^[7].

Stage 3: Language output (expression transfer), where children complete language practice and transfer through story continuation, character interpretation, and picture book adaptation.

3. Pain Points and Practical Deviations in The Use of Language Connection in Current Picture Books

Although picture books have been widely used in kindergarten and primary school classrooms, their educational function has not been systematically utilized in language teaching between early childhood and primary school, resulting in a deviation between "high usage rate" and "low teaching effectiveness".

On the one hand, teachers often fall into a linear process of "telling stories, asking questions, and ending" in their teaching, neglecting language structure, contextual expression, and transfer application training, resulting in floating teaching objectives and limited effectiveness. In some classrooms, picture books are only used as tools for "emotional comfort" or "warm-up

before class", lacking systematic language goal design and expression task arrangement, making it difficult to achieve language coherence value^[8]. On the other hand, the allocation of picture book teaching resources and the selection criteria are vague, and the themes are disconnected. Kindergarten book selection often relies on teacher experience or market recommendations, lacking systematic consideration of connection goals. Some picture books have high language difficulty or interesting content but lack repetition of language structure and progression of plot, which is not conducive to children's learning. At the family level, although parent-child co reading is popular, parents lack scientific strategies and often use "finished reading" as the standard, ignoring language interaction and guidance, making it difficult to transform into a pivot for extending language abilities^[9].

In summary, current picture book applications face bottlenecks such as detached teaching objectives, fragmented processes, loose resource systems, and inadequate family cooperation. It is necessary to reconstruct teaching design, clarify connection goals, and construct family support mechanisms in order for picture books to play a bridging role and promote the transition of children's language abilities from "being able to speak" to "being able to speak" and then to "being able to write".

4. Teaching Design and Classroom Strategies for Improving Language Ability through Picture Book Reading

Building a clear and structured teaching design path with clear objectives is the key to effectively connecting language abilities in response to the structural deviations in picture book teaching. This path is divided into four core steps: situational introduction, co reading analysis, expression output, and language expansion, forming a closed-loop language ability development chain, supplemented by scaffolding strategies for hierarchical guidance^[10].

Situational introduction involves mobilizing children's existing experiences and establishing a preliminary connection with the content of picture books, such as guiding children to talk about their Spring Festival memories before reading "Reunion". Co reading analysis utilizes teacher questioning, finger pointing, and other methods to guide children in understanding vocabulary and mastering sentence structures, and to reinforce language structure internalization through repeated sentence patterns in picture books. In the stage of expression and output, children complete the transition from understanding to application through forms such as retelling and performance, achieving the transfer of "input recombination output". Language expansion extends learning to daily life through creating picture books, extended reading, etc., enhancing language flexibility and persistence.

The key role of a teacher's "scaffolding" is to use tools such as language task cards to help children of different levels obtain expression templates and enhance their ability to independently construct language. Meanwhile, emotional and cultural themed picture books can balance language training with emotional and cultural understanding. Practice has proven that this structured design can significantly enhance children's vocabulary reserve, expression logic, and transfer ability. The next step is to expand teaching forms, enrich picture book types, optimize evaluations, and promote picture book teaching towards a systematic, effective, and integrated approach^[11].

5. Optimizing the System Path and Support Mechanism for Picture Book Reading Language Teaching

To effectively assist in the development of language skills for early childhood transition through picture book reading, it is necessary to build a comprehensive system support from multiple aspects, rather than just optimizing teaching content and processes^[12].

At the teacher level, it is necessary to strengthen professional abilities. Some teachers currently have the problem of "emphasizing explanation over guidance", and it is necessary to carry out practical training with "language development goals - picture book teaching design - expression task organization" as the core. The three-step design method of "multidimensional perception introduction language practice activity expression feedback evaluation" can be used as a reference to enable teachers to form a child centered teaching logic, while mastering skills such as book selection, problem design, and situational creation.

At the family level, establish a collaborative mechanism of "home school co education - picture book co reading - language feedback". By jointly building reading plans, setting parent-child dialogue tasks, and using family reading feedback cards, we aim to enhance children's reading persistence and language usage frequency. The park can also hold related activities to stimulate family participation[13].

In terms of resources, it is necessary to establish a themed, graded, and localized library of picture book resources. Classified by language development goals, local picture books are preferred, and digital picture books and voice interaction software can also be introduced[12].

In terms of evaluation, improve the multi-dimensional and process oriented system. Change the traditional evaluation method, design multiple evaluation tools based on children's performance, form a multi-agent evaluation model, and track language ability development.

In short, reconstructing picture book teaching strategies requires teachers' professional competence, parental cooperation, resource matching, and scientific evaluation, and the construction of a diverse and integrated teaching support system, making picture book reading the core path of language integration education[14].

6. Conclusion: Focusing on the Effectiveness of Language Connection and Promoting The Transformation of Picture Book Teaching from "Resources" to "Paths"

The transition from preschool to primary school is a critical period for children's language abilities to shift from being able to speak to being able to express themselves, and from natural language to academic language. Research has shown that picture books are not only a language input medium, but also a comprehensive platform for language understanding, expression transfer, and communicative practice, which can effectively connect the language development chain between preschool and primary schools[15].

At present, it is necessary to break through the shallow mode of "storytelling" in picture book teaching and shift towards "task-based teaching based on expression", to help children construct language in context, apply language in transfer, and achieve a leap in expression ability.

In the future, picture book teaching should be deepened from four aspects: strengthening cross stage curriculum collaboration and integrating teaching objectives; Encourage teachers to participate in the development of localized resources and program optimization; Explore the integration path of "picture books+disciplines"; Build a regional home education platform to integrate picture book reading into daily life[16].

Promoting picture book teaching from "resource provision" to "path construction" and from "language media" to "ability system" is an important direction for achieving precise, scientific, and systematic language connection, which can lay the foundation for children's lifelong language development.

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