

The Impact of Multilingual Teaching on the Social Behaviors of Preschool Children

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Abstract. With the development of globalization, cross-cultural communication skills are becoming increasingly important. Some researchers have found that multilingual teaching has promoted learners' language proficiency and communication skills. However, existing research has overlooked the implementation of multilingual teaching in the preschool stage and paid less attention to its impact on social skills. Therefore, this study is the first to conduct cross-disciplinary research on "multilingual teaching" and "social behavior of preschool children", and based on the research results, a set of multilingual curriculum teaching plans has been designed. This study adopts the research methods of literature review and case analysis to investigate the above issues. Research has found that immersive multilingual teaching can, to a certain extent, cultivate children's language skills and social abilities. This article suggests that kindergartens, if capable, can cultivate these two important abilities of preschool children by introducing multilingual teaching.

1 Introduction

Language ability is one of the key elements in the development of young children. It can promote the development of their thinking ability, communication skills, teamwork ability, and so on [1]. Moreover, language can influence a child's comprehension and expression abilities throughout their life [2]. From this, the early childhood stage is a crucial period for individuals to develop language skills. Therefore, language education should be an important component of preschool education [3]. Young children have relatively strong abilities to imitate and learn. Therefore, systematically cultivating their language expression and logical thinking abilities at this stage can lay a solid foundation for their language development [4]. Generally, young children with better language skills tend to have more stable peer relationships, which has a positive effect on the development of their social skills. It is precisely because language learning plays such an important role in the growth of young children that more educators and parents have begun to explore the feasibility and value of introducing multilingual teaching in the preschool stage.

With the development of the times, mastering multiple languages has gradually gained more advantages. The global development of the world has made cross-cultural

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communication increasingly common. In such an era, the ability of cross-cultural communication becomes increasingly important. And multilingual ability is the core part of this ability. Multilingual ability can enhance an individual's understanding of different cultures, encourage them to explore their career development directions, and deepen their understanding of the world. Therefore, multilingual teaching, this new type of teaching method, has gradually been valued by people.

Previous studies have confirmed that multilingual teaching has a promoting effect on enhancing learners' language expression ability and their interest in language learning [5,6]. Some scholars also point out that people with a higher multilingual awareness have a greater ability to communicate across cultures [7]. However, the research subjects of these documents are mainly primary school, junior high school students, and even higher grades, and have not involved the research on the relationship between the implementation of multilingual teaching and the social skills of young children.

Language learning is a very important part of the early childhood stage. It can cultivate children's logical thinking ability, improve their language organization level, and thus enable them to communicate better with their peers. Moreover, the preschool stage is not only a critical period for language learning, but also an important time for the cultivation of social skills. Social skills are the core qualities that influence a child's lifelong sense of happiness and adaptability. If multilingual teaching can promote the development of children's social skills, its educational value is tremendous. This study is the first to conduct intersectional research on the emerging educational practice of "multilingual teaching" and the core developmental issue of "social behaviors of preschool children", aiming to fill an important theoretical and practical gap in the field of early childhood education.

This study will explore the characteristics of preschool children's social behaviors in an immersive multilingual teaching environment, as well as how to design classroom content to enable young children to better learn language courses. In theory, this study is expected to initially establish a connection between "multilingual teaching in preschool education" and "social behavior development", providing a new perspective for interdisciplinary research. In practice, this study aims to provide front-line kindergarten teachers and curriculum designers with a set of multi-language curriculum design principles and activity cases of reference value, promoting the deep integration of language education and social-emotional education. To explore these two issues, this paper will first adopt the research method of literature review, conducting a literature review and analysis respectively on multilingual teaching, social skills, and the relationship between the two. Then, by combining cases, it will explain how to better design language courses for kindergartens. Finally, the corresponding conclusion will be drawn based on this.

2 Literature review

2.1 A literature review and analysis of multilingual teaching

With the development of the globalization process, the concept of "multicompetence" has gradually been valued by people [8].

2.1.1 Thoughts and achievements of multilingual teaching

In terms of teaching approaches, first and foremost, teachers should teach multiple languages simultaneously in one course. This is aimed at fostering the flexibility of multilingual learners and enhancing their overall language proficiency, thereby enabling them to naturally switch between languages in different contexts for communication [9]. Learning different languages

that emerged in various cultures simultaneously can prompt learners to better understand the different languages in the world and their development backgrounds, thereby better shaping their worldviews. Secondly, in the process of multilingual teaching, comparative teaching of grammar, word formation, and other aspects among different languages can be carried out [9]. Moreover, both inside and outside the classroom, students should be encouraged to engage in multilingual communication and other activities to enhance their language application and integration abilities [9]. Such a contrastive teaching method can help students master the core parts of different languages better and faster, and can also enhance their sensitivity to languages. In the process of multilingual communication with peers, students can more clearly understand their mastery of the learned knowledge, which in turn prompts them to consolidate and practice the knowledge they have not mastered proficiently. Finally, teachers can appropriately use students' native language in the teaching process as an auxiliary means to help them better understand and master the foreign language knowledge taught by the teacher [9]. At the initial stage of learning a foreign language, students usually adopt the approach of translating the target language into their native language to aid comprehension when learning a new language. Therefore, during the teaching process, teachers can also appropriately insert some explanations in the students' native language to help them learn the target language better.

In terms of teaching outcomes, scholars Hopp and Thoma found in their research that multilingual teaching is suitable for all foreign language learners [5]. Moreover, this teaching method can enhance learners' grammar proficiency and vocabulary acquisition ability [5]. However, these studies mainly focus on the primary and secondary school stages, while neglecting the preschool stage. Young children have good imitative and learning abilities [4]. Therefore, systematically cultivating their plurilingual awareness at this stage can lay a solid foundation for their language development [7]. Existing research has placed more emphasis on exploring cognitive advantages, while paying less attention to the social and emotional aspects. Social skills are equally important as learning abilities because the former is a core quality that influences a child's lifelong happiness and adaptability.

2.1.2 The process and application of multilingual learning

In terms of the learning process, learners may have a certain impact on their native language during the acquisition of a second language [8]. For instance, Chinese, which belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, and English, which belongs to the Indo-European language family, have significant differences in grammar, word formation and other aspects. Then, learners whose native language is Chinese will be influenced to some extent by their English learning when understanding their mother tongue. The author believes that early exposure and learning of a foreign language can effectively reduce this impact, such as during the early childhood stage. This is because at this stage, children's learning of their mother tongue is still in its initial phase, and they are still using relatively primitive ways to learn language, such as imitating the sounds they hear.

In terms of the application of multilingualism, multilinguals can switch between different languages according to different situations and their own needs to communicate with others [8]. In the same situation, people from different cultural backgrounds may use different ways of expression to communicate. At this point, knowing how to use appropriate language can effectively prevent misunderstandings caused by language barriers. Multilinguals may blend the knowledge of different languages they have acquired in their interactions with others [8]. For instance, some specific words, when used directly, convey meanings more concisely and accurately than when translated from other languages.

2.2 A literature review and analysis centered on social skills

2.2.1 The definition and components of social skills in preschool children

Social skills refer to a set of abilities that enable individuals to communicate effectively with others [10]. This ability is very important because it may to some extent affect an individual's sense of happiness in life. Social skills can be cultivated and exercised through nurture, and targeted training in a certain skill for young children will have a certain impact on the development of their corresponding social skills [10]. Therefore, guiding young children to develop their social skills is both feasible and highly meaningful. According to the Social Skills Improvement System-Rating Scales (SSIS-RS), social skills encompass seven domains: communication, cooperation, initiative, responsibility, empathy, participation, and self-control [11]. Among them, communication, cooperation, initiative and participation are some abilities that are relatively easy to be demonstrated in the process of interaction between individuals and their peers; while responsibility, empathy and self-control require further observation and analysis to draw a conclusion.

2.2.2 Key factors influencing the social skills of preschool children

The preschool stage is a crucial period for cultivating children's social skills [12]. The development of this ability in young children is related to the children themselves, their families, the schools they attend, and their social background [12]. Young children have a strong ability to imitate and learn, so the environment has a profound impact on the development of their social skills and the shaping of their personalities [4]. This study focuses specifically on the relationship between the educational environment in kindergartens and children's social skills. Young children spend most of their time in kindergartens, so the educational environment in kindergartens is of great significance for cultivating their social skills [12]. Children who have received high-quality education in the preschool stage tend to have better social skills in the early years of primary school [13]. The cultivation of many skills in social ability requires an environment where one can communicate and interact with peers. Kindergartens provide an important context for this need. In the teaching process, adopting small-class teaching and hiring teachers with more teaching experience can help young children improve their social skills [12]. In classes with fewer students, each child can receive more targeted guidance and assistance from the teacher [12]. Teachers with more teaching experience can respond and solve the problems that occur when young children interact with their peers more flexibly, and can also interact with children in the classroom more effectively [12].

2.2.3 The relationship between language ability and social skills

Early language education plays a crucial role in the development of children's social skills [14]. Children with strong expressive ability, comprehension ability and language integration ability can often communicate and interact with others more effectively [14]. In the process of communicating with peers, children need to first accurately understand the other person's meaning, then integrate the language to respond to their peers in their minds and finally express their own thoughts. Language ability and social skills are complementary to each other [14]. Children with better language skills tend to be more proactive in social interactions with their peers, and their social abilities will also be enhanced accordingly. Conversely, children with good social skills will also have their language abilities exercised in the process of socializing with their peers.

3 Analyze the relationship between multilingual teaching and social skills

The author's research focuses on the characteristics that preschool children's social abilities will present in an immersive multilingual teaching environment. In this study, immersive teaching refers to a teaching method in which one teacher speaks the target language while another teacher aids in the students' native language during the class. Firstly, teaching multiple languages in one course enables young children to be exposed to languages from different cultural backgrounds simultaneously [9]. After understanding the cultural background of these languages, young children can better understand and master the cultural differences among different languages in the various situational dialogue practices designed by teachers. This can enable young children to better learn how to communicate with peers from different cultural backgrounds and lay a solid foundation for them to form a worldview.

Secondly, multilingual teaching can effectively enhance children's language integration ability, and children with a stronger ability in this regard can communicate better with others [9,14]. Cultivating young children's language integration ability can enhance their language organization ability and logical thinking ability, and thereby improve their language expression ability. Language expression ability is also one of the important factors in evaluating children's social skills [14]. The improvement of this ability can prompt young children to communicate and cooperate with others better and participate more actively in teamwork.

Furthermore, when teachers guide young children to compare the word formation, grammar, and sentence structure among different languages, it can help enhance their sensitivity to language and stimulate their interest in more in-depth learning and exploration [9]. This contrastive teaching method can inspire young children to try to recognize and learn new things, thereby enhancing their initiative. As children's language sensitivity improves, their ability to understand sentences will also be enhanced. Comprehension ability is one of the core elements that influence the development of children's social skills [14]. This is because the prerequisite for effective communication is to accurately understand what others express.

Finally, immersive multilingual teaching can increase the interaction frequency between teachers and children, allowing children's language skills and social abilities to be fully exercised. More interaction between teachers and students can help teachers better identify and address problems that children have in terms of social skills [12].

4 Construct a multilingual teaching curriculum framework that promotes social skills

General language learning begins in infancy, so it is very necessary to carry out multilingual teaching in kindergartens. The author believes that an indispensable step in learning a language is to learn the culture of that country. Therefore, in the first stage of the course, children should be taught about the culture of the target language. Behind different languages lie different cultural roots. At this stage, children's interest in further learning can be fully stimulated by having them watch easy-to-understand content in the target language, such as cartoons and reality shows. In terms of cultivating social skills, by having young children learn relevant cultural knowledge, their sense of responsibility and empathy can be developed. After young children have mastered the cultural backgrounds of different countries and the historical origins of their languages, they can better understand and appreciate the charm of different cultures around the world. This can enhance children's empathy. By learning about these cultural backgrounds, young children can better recognize that there are many cultures in the world that are different from their own. This can cultivate a sense of responsibility in

young children. In language learning, comparing the cultural similarities among different languages during the teaching process can facilitate learners' progress in mastering the target language [7]. After fully understanding the cultural background of the target language, on the one hand, it can stimulate children's interest in learning, and on the other hand, it can help children initially form a cognition of different cultures and languages in the world. This lays a solid foundation for the individual to build a language system subsequently.

After mastering the cultural background of the target language, teachers should start to further train young children in all aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Because young children have a strong ability to imitate, in the second stage, emphasis can be placed on training their listening and speaking skills [4]. In the early stage of this phase, teachers can fully exercise children's listening and imitating abilities by organizing activities such as having them role-play segments of animated shows in the target language and conducting situational dialogues in the target language. In the later stage of this period, teachers can allow young children to try to design dialogues for designated scenarios (such as teaching scenarios, travel scenarios, etc.) with their peers on their own and perform them. These activities can fully exercise children's oral language skills. In terms of the cultivation of social skills, this stage can enhance children's communication skills, cooperation abilities, and problem-solving skills, and strengthen their initiative and willingness to participate. At this stage of language learning, children can not only learn and accumulate basic vocabulary of different categories in an interesting way, but also improve their language expression ability and logical thinking ability.

After having a certain vocabulary foundation, in the third stage, it is possible to start guiding young children to read picture books. The selected teaching materials should have the characteristics of practicality and interest [3]. This is because the content closely related to children's lives can provide valuable contexts for children's language learning [3]. At this stage, some group discussion sessions can be designed, where teachers guide children to explore the stories told in picture books together with their peers. In terms of the cultivation of social skills, this stage can enhance children's communication and cooperation abilities. In terms of language learning, at this stage, apart from allowing children to accumulate more vocabulary, they can also learn some simple grammar knowledge, laying a foundation for subsequent writing training.

After laying the foundation in the first three stages, in the fourth stage, children's writing ability can be developed. In the early stage of this phase, teachers can lead children to sort and organize the learned vocabulary according to different scenarios, such as daily greetings, transportation, weather, and food. During this process, teachers should encourage children to share the vocabulary they have sorted out with their peers. In the later stage of this period, teachers can guide young children to do simple sentence-making exercises and record their daily lives. In terms of the cultivation of social skills, this stage can enhance children's initiative and foster their desire to share. At this stage of language learning, young children can acquire more grammar knowledge and master a greater number of words, laying a solid foundation for more in-depth language learning in the future.

The author believes that after practicing these teaching contents, children's language ability and social skills can both be greatly improved.

5 Conclusion

This study finds that immersive multilingual teaching can first enable young children to communicate better with peers from different cultural backgrounds. Secondly, this teaching model can effectively cultivate young children's social skills, such as communication, cooperation, and empathy, with their peers. Finally, it can enhance children's language skills, such as language expression and language integration, and thereby facilitate more effective

communication between children and others. Based on the above research findings, this study also constructed a multilingual teaching curriculum framework that can promote young children's social skills for educators' reference. Immersive multilingual teaching enables young children to systematically learn languages from various aspects, such as culture, vocabulary, and grammar, in a comprehensive way. It can help young children better understand the cultural differences behind different languages, thereby enhancing their comprehension ability. It can also enhance children's language organization skills, logical thinking abilities, and other skills closely related to social skills.

Language learning and the cultivation of social skills are both very important parts of the preschool stage. The main contribution of this study is to initially establish the connection between "multilingual teaching in preschool" and "social behavior development", and to explore the framework for constructing related courses. This article aims to offer some important suggestions to researchers in preschool education during their research process on language teaching.

The current research is merely a summary and analysis based on some existing research results and thus has limitations in terms of conclusions. As mentioned in this article, in an immersive multilingual teaching environment, preschool children's abilities in communication, cooperation, empathy, language integration, and language expression can all be cultivated to a certain extent. Multilingual teaching could be implemented in kindergartens in the future, and the impact of this teaching model on children's social behaviors could be further observed to facilitate in-depth research on this topic.

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