Manifestation of Creative Clay in Kindergarten Language Courses

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Abstract—**Due to the love for art and demand for courses, a group of nursery department students from a university of science and technology have found that most kindergarten language courses commenced in kindergartens guide children through learning with the use of Chinese phonetic symbols or text-based flashcards. However, the combination of art and language will enable children to engage in hands-on art creation to achieve language learning in a pleasant manner. Therefore, the process of incorporating clay creation in language learning and teaching involves entering the kindergarten teaching site to implement specific aesthetics practices. With middle-grade children from a kindergarten in Tainan City as teaching targets, 60-minute clay creative language teaching was commenced every week. The teaching topics include: I Am A Teeth Model, I Am A Healthy Child, Collect Trees and Do It Together, which were implemented for a period of four weeks. Of the twelve children in total, nine were boys and three were girls aged between four years old and before the age for entering elementary school. The action research, coupled with the research and education site were adopted to continue to reflect on actions, act on the reflections, and explore the clay creative intervention of language teaching. In addition, feasible courses were planned to deepen children's impression of language learning through clay creativity. With the identities of the homeroom teacher and the observer actually involved in teaching activities, through observations, records, reflective notes, and other methods, the course of teaching was recorded by incorporating clay creativity and children language teaching in order to fully present the actual course of teaching. Research results show that during the process of language learning, the children fully turned their ideas into action through hands-on clay play and freely created the faces of vocabulary created out of their own imagination, thus enabling the children to quickly familiarize and understand the vocabulary, enhancing their memory for the language, eliciting the children's creativity, enabling them to improve hand flexibility and observation, and further inspiring their art talent and giving them a sense of honor from works created. It is a type of aesthetic teaching that is both educational and entertaining.**

Keywords-creativity; clay; language; kindergarten

I. RESEARCH MOTIVATION AND PURPOSE

Language is one of the most important tools of interpersonal communication. Mastery in a language is the only way to effectively express thoughts and emotions and achieve successful communication with others. During language learning, children also use the language to learn to communicate and think. If a child has a solid foundation in language learning, the child will be able to apply the fundamentals to learn language skills that fall under a higher level. In kindergartens, clay is children's favorite creative material. Clay is a safe, colorless, and odorless material that can be preserved after it dries. By incorporating clay into kindergarten language courses, children's creativity, observation, and hand flexibility can be trained. Children can also freely create "the face of a word" based on their internal imagination, thereby inspiriting children's unlimited creativity and artistic nature. Based on the above, the main research purposes are as follows:

1. Understand children's change and growth through creative clay teaching incorporated into children's language courses.
2. Discuss the researcher's growth and reflection through creative clay teaching incorporated into children's language courses.

II. CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE LEARNING

To learn a language, the language is used to learn. This is very important for children, as they need to socialize, communicate, and think effectively to learn a language. On the other hand, while a language is being learned, the language is used to learn. Early "nativism" states that children are born with a mechanism to learn a language. Given proper stimulation, the brain can sort the language absorbed to form natural language information and quickly absorb its complexity (1). However, many cases have proven that the language ability of children who are severely neglected by their caretaker tend to fall short compared to other children the same age, thus giving rise to the "pragmatic-interactionist mode" that believes although humans are endowed with a language learning mechanism, a great deal of acquired environmental stimuli must be available to develop ideal language proficiency (2).

Children's language learning possesses three characteristics: ease, accumulation, and penetration. Among them, penetration refers to engaging in learning at any time (3). That is, children's language penetrates various types of knowledge in daily life. Children can subconsciously acquire the experience of a large amount of vocabulary and comprehend expressions (4). Therefore, children in an environment with external stimuli can engage in language courses through clay creativity activities. By providing them with a small amount of information, children will be able to acquire various language experiences through creative clay activities.

Children can achieve learning through a variety of picture books, storybooks, teaching aids, etc., all of which give

children the hands-on experience(5). Through diverse learning stimuli and the provision of various learning methods, children's willingness to learn a language can be enhanced. Studies on children's brainwaves have shown that children's brains are conceptualized by creativity. Exposure to and operation on toys or games at a young age, children's eye-hand coordination and fine hand movements can be developed. During thinking reasoning process, the brain's cognitive region has also shown obvious activation (6). Therefore, operating on creative thinking-eliciting toys and games is a way to provide rich environmental stimuli, and clay is a very good teaching material.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

The action research method was adopted in this study. In the study, the education site was included to enable the researcher to reflect on his actions and act on his reflections. It is expected that the research results be implemented in teaching situations. At the same time, the action research reflects teachers' course of their own class management in order to enhance the researcher's teaching expertise. The researcher had the identities of the homeroom teacher and the observer actually involved in the activities. Additionally, observation records, reflection notes, or video recording were adopted to record the course, through which the teaching course of creative clay teaching incorporated into children's language course teaching was explored.

B. Research Site and Participating Personnel

The researcher adopted one kindergarten in Tainan City as the research site. The kindergarten has 11 teachers and 10 classrooms. The kindergarten environment is spacious, with children teaching classrooms, a library, an audiovisual classroom, a music classroom, and a large outdoor playground that offer diversified teaching. The middle-class of the kindergarten was adopted as the research participant. 60-minute clay creative language teaching was commenced every week. The teaching topics include: I Am A Teeth Model, I Am A Healthy Child, Collect Trees and Do It Together, which were implemented for a period of four weeks. Of the twelve children in total, nine were boys and three were girls aged between four years old and before the age for entering elementary school. The majority of the children's parents had high socioeconomic standing. The communication between the parents and the teacher was smooth, with a sound parent support system.

C. Research Processes

1) Preparation Stage

After finalizing the research project topic of "creativity, clay, and language", relevant literature data was collected and discussed to clarify the problems, formulate specific research directions, research scope, and research purposes, and determine the research methods. Teaching plans and class language teaching course activities were subsequently designed.

2) Implementation Stage

The problems observed during the preparation stage employed "clay language teaching plans" as the bases. The teaching methods and diverse activities were incorporated into the class. During the course, based on the general action research model involving steps such as: planning, action, observation, reflection, and revision, reflections and corrections continued to be made based on the data collected.

3) Sorting Stage

During the class commencement period, the daily class process and children's responses were promptly recorded. Additionally, all the literature data, work sheets, transcripts, and voice recording were encoded for data analysis. In addition, comparisons continued to be made, and the triangulation method was employed to carry out accuracy and effectiveness assessments.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Unlimited Creativity

After four teaching classes, the children showed remarkable improvement in terms of work shaping. Through different teaching materials such as paper clay, oil clay, color pens, and drawing paper, diverse teaching methods were provided to enable children to have hands on clay experiences. From conservative uses of materials to increasingly being able to accurately maneuver clay, the children were able to express works through their imagination and using different materials, without being greedy and wasteful. The children managed to express their creativity using limited resources, which meant the children showed improvement.

The children linked with the language course content through clay creation. When the children had ideas about their ongoing learning, they immediately used clay to express them. It was the most unique and highly creative manifestation of their clay works. Since it was only natural for children to be "unrestrained and vigorous", even the shy children were able to express their ideas through clay. They introduced their works to everyone in a "premeditated way", which further enriched their language learning result.

B. A Dialogue between Clay and Language

With clay intervention in language learning, the children had a deeper impression of "words" learned through clay maneuver, as they not only saw with their eyes and listened with their ears, their hands-on participation proved to be more effective than onlookers. For example, when guiding a child to learn about teeth, in addition to giving them an insight into teeth structures through flash cards or storybooks, clay material was used for the children to engage in hands-on teeth production to deepen their impression and understand the fact that teeth come in different sizes, whether they are healthy or

decayed, the mouth structures consist of gums, teeth, tongue, etc.

Therefore, during the search process, it was found that clay incorporated into language learning has a major impact on the children, as it greatly enhanced their cognition, creativity, and memory, allowing the children to not only develop a keen interest and a sense of participation, but also achieve joyous language learning through "D.I.Y.".

V. ABUNDANT HARVEST

A. *The Catalyst of the Birth of Creativity*

Children are born with a wealth of "unrestrained and vigorous imagination". Although they have a small head, their "creativity" is far more abundant than that of adults. Through clay material, they can freely express their creativity and learn words and knowledge. Works they create are always in line with course topics, and they are able to explain the creative concept and language topic, which are considered the most perfect creative expressions. 。

The course of the four teaching sessions time and again showed that the works created by the children took everyone by surprise. They successfully turned their unrestrained and vigorous ideas into specific implementations, and every work created was unique and in more numerous quantities. The children became increasingly accustomed to this approach, an indication that the children indeed incorporated clay into language learning. When motivated, the children started from the knowledge they had and recalled old experiences and knowledge. The children's learning contents were further extended, such as teeth. The children had to first understand what teeth are, as well as basic concepts about teeth peripherals, including gums, teeth, and other organs.

Once the basic concept was established, the children were guided to develop new ideas, thereby eliciting their curiosity and the willingness to try new things and turn their ideas into hands-on creation. Extended from general and common concepts, unexpected aspects were derived, such as "Other than human teeth, tell me about the teeth of canine and feline. How about the teeth of whales, zebras, and eagles? Do aliens have teeth? The children were guided to imagine teeth they rarely encountered in daily life. The rarer the examples, the better they were able to elicit children's creativity. The children were provided a safe space to create, so that they could freely create things out of their imagination, without having to worry about what others think, or whether they were "right" or "wrong". Through guidance and encouragement, the children managed to complete works according to their own ideas. Unique elements were also added into the works produced by the children that amazed us. It was super creativity of infinite possibilities in this world.

B. *Challenges of Creative Teaching*

The teaching methods have to be more open and clearer. By making slight changes, children's learning process will be greatly influenced. The language course content can be complemented to actually experience clay exploration. This way, children's observation of the surroundings and their ability to express their ideas can greatly improve, which will make them truly happy and actually learn. This is what creative teaching is all about.

The choice of the kindergarten in search is one approached in the past. The kindergarten is warm, but it overlooks the most important part, the children. Although getting along with the children during the teaching process and spending quality time with them were not a problem, the teacher and children clearly kept distance due to the teacher's unfamiliarity with the children's level and personality. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers take the initiative to interact with children to understand them, so as to more effectively grasp the teaching situation during the teaching process and achieve sound learning quality.

The implementation of creative teaching involves fostering children's love towards things they perceive in daily life in order to create rich aesthetic experience. In addition to teaching creative skills or knowledge; more importantly, children's sensitivity and love towards things perceived should be cultivated in order for them to experience and understand things, emphasizing personal reflections and interactions with the surrounding environment. Furthermore, by diversified means, children can express their own ideas and create a diversity of works without being limited to traditional media. Composite materials, digital materials, body movements, and so on may be applied to enable children to personally experience people, matters, and things around them, giving them a wonderful childhood.

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