

# Literature Review of Children's Language Education in China from 2000 to 2022

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**Abstract:** Children's Language education refers to promoting the development and improvement of children's language ability through systematic methods and strategies. The purpose of this review is to understand the research progress, main research directions and achievements in the field of children's Language education through reviewing and summarizing relevant research in the past 20 years from 2000 to 2022, we hoped this will provide reference for future related research. This research uses Cite Space to analyze the research trend, research results and research content of children's Language education activities, summarized the problems and put forward the following suggestions: first, form a correct concept of children's language education; second, teachers should enhance their learning of children's language implementation theory; third, provide appropriate reading materials; fourth, teachers should pay attention to supportive strategies in language education. To do this well, in terms of specific strategies, teachers should enhance their learning of children's language implementation theory in order to better help children learn language. Teachers should master the basic principles, characteristics, laws and methods of children's language development in order to better guide children's language learning. In addition, teachers should also take effective measures, such as creating a good language learning environment, adopting effective teaching methods, adopting effective evaluation methods and taking effective incentive measures, in order to better guide children's language learning.

**Keywords:** Children's Language, Language Education, Overview

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## 1. Introduction

Child language education is an important part of children's growth and development. Language education activities are not only beneficial to children's intellectual development, but also can promote children's good interpersonal communication, cognitive development, communication with peers and other social behaviors. At present, children's language education has attracted the attention of many educational researchers. In the research of children's language education in kindergartens for many years, reference can be made to children's participation, story creation, Chinese education, kindergarten situational teaching, total language education and so on. After reviewing the development of the past twenty years, the author makes a summary of the Chinese

literature on children's language education in kindergartens, hoping to provide reference for kindergarten teachers and researchers.

## 2. Research Tools and Data Sources

### 2.1. Research Tools

This study uses the visualization analysis software Cite Space developed by Dr. Chen Chao of Drexel University (Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA, 13) as the research tool. Cite Space is written in JAVA programming language, and integrates the basic principles of information visualization, bibliometrics and data mining algorithms to draw

visualization maps, establish the correlation between nodes, and analyze the co-occurrence and co-citation relationships between research objects. This literature review mainly uses the Cite Space visualization software to draw the keyword co-occurrence map and keyword emergence map to explore the hot topics and research trends of children's language education in China in the past two decades.

## 2.2. Data Source and Processing

Using the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database as the data source, setting the retrieval topic as "Children's Language Education", matching the "Precise" retrieval method, selecting the literature time from January 2000 to December 2022, manually eliminating notices, advertisements, news reports, conferences and other non-academic literature without complete research paradigms and literature irrelevant to the keywords, 311 relevant literature meeting the conditions were retrieved, the target literature was exported and transcoded according to the reference literature format required by Cite Space, and the sample database of this study was obtained.

## 3. Basic Information of Research Literature on Children's Language Education

### 3.1. Statistics of the Number of Research Papers on Children's Language Education

Through the retrieval of "Children's Language Education", the number of works in children's language education activities was counted. A total of 604 articles about "Children's Language Education" published by Chinese pre-school education researchers from 2000 to 2022 were classified, including 218 academic journals, 82 degree theses and 11 conference papers, And 293 featured journals. The analysis found that from 2000 to 2022, the number of Chinese children's language education papers overall showed an upward trend, as shown in Figure 1, the number of Chinese kindergarten language education papers rapidly increased from 2017 to 2019, reaching the highest value in more than ten years in 2019. The number of papers decreased in 2019-2020, but after 2020, it showed an upward trend again, indicating that the development trend of children's language education in China is getting better.

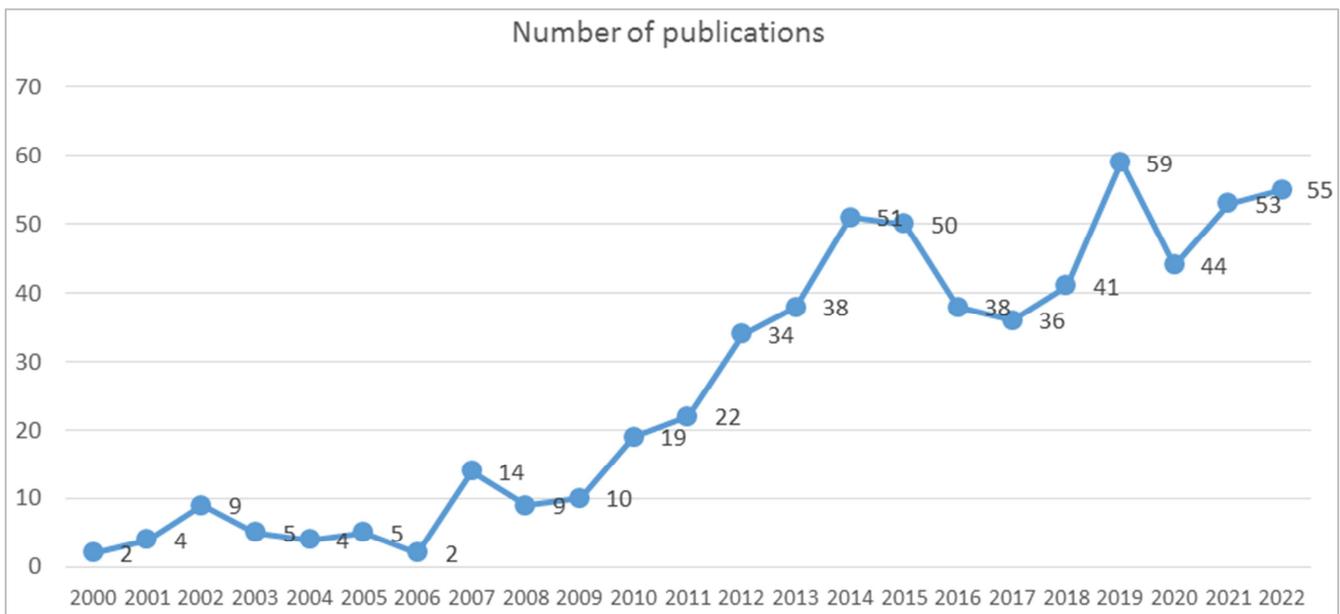


Figure 1. Trend of Children's Language Paper Publications from 2000 to 2022 in China.

## 3.2. Analysis of "Children's Language Education" Hotspots

### 3.2.1. Key Words: Collinear Atlas Analysis

Using the Cite Space literature analysis software to conduct keyword clustering analysis on 604 articles related to "Children's Language Education", keywords are presented as nodes and connected by straight lines when mutually related. The higher the frequency of appearance of a keyword, the more it indicates the research's popularity to some extent, which is the hot topic in this research field. Based on the keyword map, each keyword is positioned and adjusted according to its frequency, and category lines are drawn for

the keywords by their frequency. Keywords associated with the category are placed nearby, making it clear that the main focus of research in the last decade in Children's Language Teaching has been on language development, children's literature, teaching methods, story creation ability, among other aspects.

### 3.2.2. Keyword Frequency and Centrality Analysis

There is a close relationship between the size of keyword frequency and the size of betweenness centrality. Betweenness centrality is a reference value used in Cite Space to judge the importance of nodes in the network. Generally, nodes with betweenness centrality greater than 0.1 are

relatively important in the visualization network, and corresponding research related to the content of the node is more, and the role of connecting different fields is stronger. There are four keywords with betweenness centrality greater than 0.1. Because the analysis is about children's language education, the first four centralities are language education, preschool children, pre-school children, and children's language. Going down further, we can see language education development, teaching methods, situational teaching, early childhood transition, Chinese education, etc. See Table 1 for details.

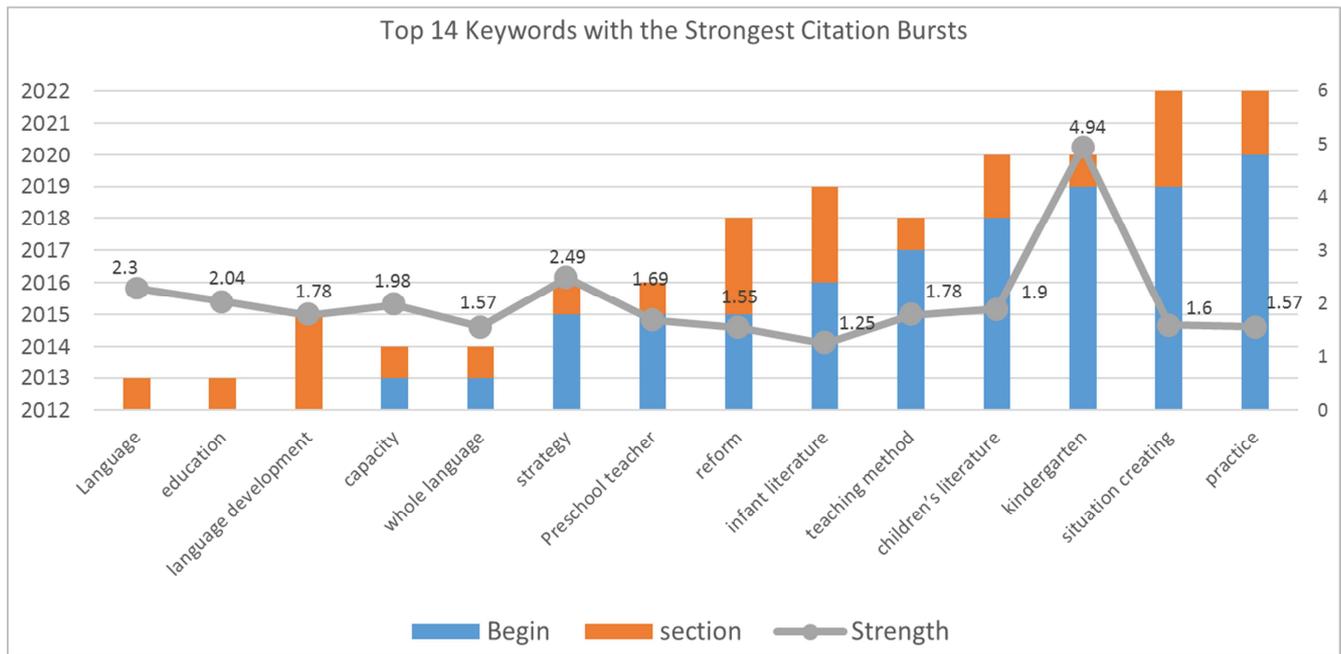
*Table 1. Centrality analysis of children's language keywords.*

Count	Centrality	Year	Keywords
178	0.61	2012	Language education
150	0.26	2012	Child
51	0.18	2012	Preschool children
8	0.13	2013	Children's language
22	0.08	2012	preschool education
5	0.08	2013	Children education
11	0.06	2015	Application
5	0.05	2015	Preschool teacher
24	0.04	2012	Kindergarten
20	0.04	2012	Language
12	0.04	2012	Children
11	0.04	2012	Language development
6	0.03	2013	Teaching method
5	0.03	2015	Situational language learning
4	0.03	2012	Early childhood transition
3	0.03	2013	Guidelines

Count	Centrality	Year	Keywords
13	0.02	2012	Education
6	0.02	2013	Whole language
5	0.02	2014	Language ability
5	0.02	2015	Reform
4	0.02	2017	Teaching
3	0.02	2015	Secondary vocational school
2	0.02	2016	Chinese language education
2	0.02	2012	Parent

**3.2.3. Research Frontier Trend Analysis**

One of the features of Cite Space is its Burst Detection technology, which identifies the forefront terms of a research by extracting "bursting terms", that is, terms with sudden increases in frequency in a certain time period, reflecting the focus, research interests and changes of hot spots in the field of scholars. The second column of Figure 2 indicates the time when the node appears, and the literature retrieval is set from 2012 to 2022. The third column of intensity refers to the intensity of the burst, the start refers to the start of the burst, and the end refers to the end of the burst. The blue and red lines in the sixth column indicate the years, and the red lines indicate the burst time period. Figure 2 is sorted from the farthest year to the nearest year in the burst time period. From the chart, it can be seen that the current research frontier and attention intensity are focused on language education ability, full language, strategies, children's literature, situational creation, etc.



*Figure 2. Advanced trends in child language research.*

**4. Overview of Research Contents of Children's Language Education**

By clustering keywords, conducting centrality analysis and researching the frontiers of trends, the content of children's

language education research over the past two decades can be divided into the following categories. First, teaching methods such as situational teaching; second, the concept of full language teaching; third, children's literature in terms of course content; fourth, the cultivation of children's language ability such as story creation; fifth, early childhood education transition.

#### **4.1. Situational Creation Teaching**

Research in the field of children's language education generally focuses on the creation of scenarios for teaching, which is of great interest to scholars. Students at the kindergarten stage are relatively young and have weak self-restraint ability, so there are great challenges in classroom control [1]. In addition, their memory and observation capabilities are also imperfect, so teachers need to create certain scenarios to promote children's language learning. The research of scenario-based teaching is mainly divided into three aspects: First, the contextualization of the activity content. For preschool children who love to imitate and like games, teachers should first make reasonable selections [2]. Second, research on the context of activity methods, such as teachers can present the teaching content in the form of games, that is, research on language education game-based [3]. Third, research on how to create a relaxed psychological environment and a rich aesthetic environment, stimulate children's creativity and motivation, and promote the development of language expression ability [4]. In modern times, with the emergence of multimedia, teachers usually use multimedia to create situations, highlight key and difficult points, and activate the classroom atmosphere to carry out situational creation teaching. Therefore, using multimedia for situational creation teaching is also the focus of teaching methods [5]. However, keeping up with the times also requires teachers to establish correct multimedia teaching concepts and choose multimedia courseware based on teaching content.

#### **4.2. Whole Language Teaching**

Whole language is an educational concept and method, which aims to comprehensively cultivate children's multilingual ability and intercultural communication ability. It emphasizes learners' language proficiency in various language environments, as well as their understanding and respect for multiculturalism. Chinese scholars have made full use of the whole language teaching concepts and methods in the research of children's Language education, such as the exploration of the construction of the whole language curriculum. In order to promote children's cognition, whole language, and comprehensive development, some scholars have constructed children's language courses based on cognitive theory. They propose that children's whole language teaching should not only build diverse teaching content in the classroom, but also be influenced through experience, permeated in life, and strengthened in practice, promoting the formation of children's whole language and promoting their comprehensive development [6]. Furthermore, it is the application in kindergarten education, using whole language to conduct practical research on children's autonomous reading ability, exploring the hierarchical development goals of children's autonomous reading ability, fully developing and utilizing reading resources inside and outside the kindergarten, and exploring effective ways, approaches, and methods to cultivate children's autonomous reading ability [7]. Full language teaching has changed the traditional language

separation: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Modern language is viewed as a whole communication system to promote the comprehensive development of children's language ability.

#### **4.3. Children's Literature**

Children's literature originated from the needs of children's education and was produced and developed in response to the requirements of children's education. However, in the long-term development process, Children's literature gradually broke away from the scope of education and established its own independence. Children's literature has a wide variety, including children's songs, novels, stories, fairy tales, dramas and other genres [8]. These works usually attract and guide children's reading and mental development with simple and understandable language, vivid and vivid plots, and imaginative story situations. The goal is to express children's inner world through words, convey positive values and emotional experiences, and also stimulate interest, cultivate reading habits, and cultivate artistic appreciation abilities. For children's literature works, the translation from the perspective of children, the aesthetic of the works, are all the focus of research in children's literature.

#### **4.4. Children's Language Ability**

Research on the development of children's language ability is the goal and destination of children's language education. In terms of education, children's language abilities include narrative ability and subsequent language proficiency. Research on children's narrative language can understand children's language ability out of context and predict their future reading and writing ability, such as basic words, grammar, appropriate connectors, clear referential language, etc. [9]. In terms of scientific tests, children's learning of new words is dependent on stimulus frequency, and language ability has a significant impact on children's rapid incidental vocabulary learning. Therefore, language skills can be trained in some flexible forms [10]. There are also studies on the impact of external conditions on children's language ability, such as for children with developmental delays. Through intervention training in an integrated educational environment, the motor ability, language ability, and communication skills of Xiao Zhi (pseudonym) are cultivated. After conditional intervention training, the language expression ability of this developmental delay child has improved and can communicate smoothly with teachers and classmates; Improved communication skills, able to establish good partnerships with some of my classmates around me [11]. In addition to research in the field of written language, Chinese scholars also have a strong interest in the language of various disciplines, such as mathematical language ability [12]. Compared with literary language, mathematical language ability is characterized by accuracy, rigor, abstraction and conciseness. Now there are also many studies on the language ability or Chinese ability of autistic children, disabled children and minority children. Create a variety of suitable

environments to promote the development of children's language ability.

#### ***4.5. Transition from Early Childhood to Primary School***

In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued the "Guidelines for Preschool Education (Trial)", which proposed that the educational content of kindergartens can be divided into five fields: health, language, society, science and art, and each field can penetrate each other to promote the development of children's attitudes, abilities, knowledge and skills [13]. As one of the five fields, language has a large proportion when entering compulsory education.

If there is no good language connection between early and young children, it will lead to poor adaptation of students in language connection, the contradiction between strong expression desire and weak expression ability, the coexistence of insufficient listening and weak listening ability, the dilemma of turning writing willingness into writing ability, and directly related to children's current and future development in various aspects of basic education [14].

Language is the bridge of communication between people. The level of language ability in the transition from kindergarten to primary school accounts for a large proportion. In the stage of basic education, language activities will become Chinese language courses, and learning will be more systematic. Therefore, it is necessary to lay a good foundation in kindergarten. How to better let children quickly adapt to basic education and do a good job in the transition from kindergarten to primary school is also the focus of research in children's language education today.

## **5. Problems in Children's Language Education**

### ***5.1. The Development of Language Education Courses Is Less, and Most of Them Are Picture Books***

Recent research tells us that the key period for children to learn early reading and writing is between 3 and 8 years old. Educators should seize this opportunity to develop children's oral language while preparing them for written language learning [15]. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the content and methods of language education courses, and vigorously develop children's reading and writing abilities. At present, most courses come from picture book teaching, which develops children's reading ability through picture book reading, and develops children's language ability through course language teaching, which is more traditional than speaking, telling and composing.

However, compared to most courses in other fields such as science, art, and society which focus on generative courses, existing research literature has always argued that the formulation of goals for children's language education activities should be combined with children's interests and educational goals of pre-school education. In order to meet the development needs of children, children's language education

activities should be carried out around the children's real life, finding a balance between the Outline and educational activities to reflect the diversification of professional language education guidance in pre-school education. For the development of courses, children's language courses can be generated through various ways in children's life. With the rich resources of Chinese civilization for five thousand years, for example, creating a Dragon Boat Festival course, most teachers only introduce traditional festivals as a scientific cognition, or focus on the following painting, handicrafts and other art activities. However, I believe that these resources can be developed in an interesting way, not just as an introduction.

### ***5.2. The Content of Language Education Is Single***

In 2012, the Ministry of Education's "Guidelines for the Learning and Development of 3-6 Year Old Children" pointed out that the development of children is a whole, emphasizing the mutual penetration and integration of fields and indicators, so as to promote the comprehensive and coordinated development of children's body and mind, rather than pursuing the development of one or more aspects unilaterally [16]. In children's language education, single content is a common problem. Firstly, most of them only focus on the ability of language sub-branches, such as improving children's writing ability, cultivating children's reading interest, etc. But we should pay attention to the multi-faceted development of children, and be able to penetrate the knowledge of multiple disciplines in language education, which is also the requirement of pre-school education. In the process of language education, the educational content is not limited to literary works, but can also penetrate science, mathematics, society in language education, so as to increase the precision and logic of children's speech.

Secondly, in today's society, many kindergartens still insist on Chinese as the main teaching language, neglecting the importance of other languages. This single language education model makes it impossible for children to access more languages and to master multiple languages better. In addition, this single language education model also affects children's thinking ability, making it impossible for them to think from different perspectives and to better understand different cultures. Therefore, in order to better cultivate children's language ability, kindergartens should change the single language education model, introduce more languages, let children access more languages, master multiple languages better, and thus better develop their thinking ability.

### ***5.3. The Way of Development Is Not Diverse Enough***

Currently, the ways of language education in kindergartens are not diversified enough. Most kindergartens adopt traditional teaching methods, which mainly focus on classroom teaching and lack of innovation and diversity. This teaching method cannot effectively stimulate children's interest in learning and improve their language ability. The education of children's language picture books mainly focuses on reading, speaking and creating, so that children's language

ability can be developed. Most of them are listening and reading, and strategic reading. Children's reading is a process of local dependence on the whole and whole dependence on local interpretation and learning cycle, which needs to be repeated. In order to improve children's language ability, kindergartens should adopt more diversified teaching methods, such as games, activities, role-playing, etc. [17], so that children can learn language in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Teachers should guide children's learning and development through various ways, such as language guidance, questioning and arousing children's interest, but due to the single form of teaching, children are easily bored, which affects the learning effect. In fact, the development state of each child is different, and it may not be able to attract the attention of children only through guidance or storytelling.

#### ***5.4. Teachers Have Little Research on the Implementation of Children's Language Curriculum***

Research shows that teachers are generally in agreement with the new curriculum regulations and the overall language curriculum of the kindergarten, and are actively implementing them. However, they find it difficult to put some of the theories into practice. It is necessary for teachers to strengthen their professional ability in language education [18]. As long as teachers are in agreement with the language curriculum being implemented, they will be full of enthusiasm and thus promote the implementation of the language curriculum. Researchers should provide strategies to teachers to strengthen their professionalism in language curriculum implementation.

## **6. Comments and Prospects**

### ***6.1. Forming Correct Concepts of Children's Language Education***

In order to strengthen the teachers' understanding of the language field in the Outline and grasp its essence and key points and ideas, teachers should pay attention to the children's language use ability, which includes the cultivation of a series of abilities such as children's expression, communication and social behavior. Teachers should also create a relaxed language environment to support and encourage children's expression. Paying attention to children's language communication and use will not focus on whether children can say the words prescribed by the teacher, but ignore the process and pay more attention to the form, which can promote children's initiative in language and interest in communication. Once these very specific contents are prescribed, teachers will design and organize activities to complete the task, and the teaching focus will not be on encouraging children to express their thoughts about the scene and content.

Secondly, language education pays attention to the life experience of children's learning. Language education cannot be separated from children's current experience, which requires teachers to choose things related to children in terms

of content; when organizing language activities, teachers must make it clear where the connection between the story and theme and the children is, so as to promote children's understanding of the theme content; in language education, attention should also be paid to the creation of context, such as the quiet and childish atmosphere of the reading corner, the language symbols on the wall to attract children to read and explore, and all closely related to children's interests.

Finally, with children as the main body, facing all children. In today's kindergarten life, teachers' curriculum arrangements and leisure activities are closely related, which may make it difficult for teachers to pay attention to all children in collective teaching activities. But facing all children, teaching according to their aptitude is the responsibility of teachers. Teachers should take children as the central topic, leave more opportunities for children to speak, and give every child the opportunity to express themselves in language.

### ***6.2. Teachers Enhance Children's Language Implementation Theory Learning***

In order for teachers to systematically master the relevant theories and processes of language activities, they should know the objectives, contents, methods, evaluation and extension of the language activities. In this way, they will not be confused in the design of teaching plans or in the implementation process, and will not lack the core theme knowledge. At the same time, teachers should also handle their own roles in the implementation of language activities, support and guide children in activities, actively cooperate and communicate with other teachers, actively learn, and enhance the theoretical implementation of children's language.

First of all, teachers should master the basic principles of children's language development in order to better understand their language expression ability. In addition, teachers should master the characteristics of children's language development in order to better guide their language learning. In addition, teachers should also master the laws of children's language development in order to better guide their language learning. Finally, teachers should master the methods of children's language development in order to better guide their language learning.

Teachers should take effective measures to enhance children's learning of language theory. Firstly, teachers should create a good language learning environment in order to better stimulate children's interest in learning. Secondly, teachers should take effective teaching methods to better guide children's language learning. In addition, teachers should also take effective evaluation methods to better test children's language learning outcomes. Finally, teachers should take effective incentive measures to better stimulate children's enthusiasm for learning.

In conclusion, teachers should enhance their learning of children's language implementation theory in order to better help children learn language. Teachers should master the basic principles, characteristics, laws and methods of children's language development in order to better guide children's

language learning. In addition, teachers should also take effective measures, such as creating a good language learning environment, adopting effective teaching methods, adopting effective evaluation methods and taking effective incentive measures, in order to better guide children's language learning.

### 6.3. Provide Appropriate Reading Materials

Reading corners are a hot spot in language education activities. The provision of reading materials mainly includes three aspects: selection of books, display methods and quantity. In most studies, it mainly examines the creation of reading corner environment, the provision of reading materials and the support strategies of language activities, so that teachers have the opportunity to learn support environment and material strategies to promote children's development. Reading materials are not only found in literary works and reading corners, but also can make wall decorations become children's reading opportunities. Reading materials are generally suitable for reading environment. Creating a good reading environment is an important way to cultivate children's early reading. Teachers need to arrange wall decorations to make every wall in the kindergarten speak, subtly influencing children's language reading ability, stimulating children's reading interest in the process of watching wall decorations, which requires teachers to arrange attractive wall decorations. In the reading corner, pay attention to arrange a relaxed, pleasant, bright and quiet reading area, and put children's interested picture books and literary works.

### 6.4. Teachers Attach Importance to Support Strategies in Language Education

Teachers should improve their supportive behavior strategies in children's language learning. In children's language education, teachers should have high knowledge ability, and strengthen the recognition and understanding of children's language through reading books and newspapers. In the lifelong learning system, teachers should maintain a curiosity to observe everything and a new attitude of active support. When dealing with children's language and literature materials, teachers should pay attention to the value of environment creation and delivery. Children are teacher oriented, so teachers should pay attention to their attitude towards children's language learning, exert subtle influence on children with exemplary role, remain sensitive to children's behavior, timely capture children's development trends and interests, and give positive feedback to children. To sum up, teachers should strengthen their own quality, improve environmental innovation, use correct strategies to guide children and improve their learning ability.

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