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## Metaphor Analysis of Pre-preschool Teacher's Play for Children with Disabilities

**jihye choi**

eulji university, South Korea

Email: [jheyeh@naver.com](mailto:jheyeh@naver.com)

### ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study is to find out the perceptions of pre-preschool teachers about the play for children with disabilities through metaphor analysis. Data were collected from 71 university students majoring in early childhood education located in South Korea. The research procedure proceeded in the order of data collection and cleaning, coding, elimination and sorting out, categorization by type, checking reliability and validation, and analyzing data quantitatively. A total of 71 metaphors were categorized into the following 5 representative types. (1) Play as pleasure, (2) Play as growing, (3) Play relationship-building, (4) Play as rest, (5) Play as a difficult challenge. As a result of verifying the metaphor difference according to the recognition type, the difference between having experience in inclusive institute and not having difference was significant. There were many positive views that were helpful for development. Based on these results, suggestions were made on the direction of pre-preschool teacher education.

**KEYWORDS:** Play, Disability, Metaphor, Inclusion Education, Pre-preschool teacher.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, Play is life and life itself for young children, and plays an important role and meaning. Children's interests, interests, knowledge, and attitudes are contained in play, and through this, social relationships and creativity can be fostered (Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education, 2019, Lim, 2020). In addition, observation and exploration skills can be developed through play (Broadhead, Howard, & Wood, 2010), Through this, more proactive and autonomous growth is possible. There is joy in the process of selecting and performing a play, and the learning and development of the child takes place in it (Kieff & Casbergue, 2000). Children can obtain physical and mental health through play, and it helps to cultivate positive emotions and develop creativity (Wood, 2010a). For this reason, recently, play has been emphasized as an important teaching and learning method for young children.

Such play has a special meaning for children with disabilities. Children with disabilities learn through various stimuli and senses and develop skills to adapt to life in everyday life. In other words, children with disabilities get an opportunity to promote physical, cognitive, communication, social skills, and language development through play (Kang, 2014; Jin, 2020). Organizing and providing play and activities to children with disabilities can achieve the goal of promoting children's learning and development without losing the characteristics of play. For children with autism spectrum disorder, play can help them develop social interaction and communication. In other words, you can learn how to communicate with others through play, and gradually increase opportunities for interaction. Therefore, there is a need for an integrated institution for children with disabilities to not only know and guide the meaning of play, but also to know the characteristics of children with disabilities and to support a play-centered curriculum that suits them. In this regard, teachers of disability integration institutes are making great efforts to provide education suitable for the characteristics and developmental level of disabilities.

Previous studies have looked at teachers' perceptions and experiences of play (Kwak, 2013; Bae, 2017; Seo, Park, 2014; Seo, Jo, 2015; Lee, Song, Jang & Yoo, 2021), A study on the connection between play and the curriculum (Ahn, 2016; Jeon & Uhm, 2011), a study on play in the early childhood classroom (Na, 2021; Jeong & Son, 2020), a study on pre-service teachers' perception of play (Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2021), and a study on the play-related teacher experiences and perceptions of children with disabilities (Kang & Cho, 2020; Jin, 2020). Among them, there are many studies related to children's play and teachers, and it was found that pre-primary early childhood teachers recognized the teacher's role in play as a teacher who leads, a teacher with whom, a teacher who corrects, and a teacher who encourages. However, it has been re

ported that the actual play perceived by early childhood teachers is difficulty, ambiguity, and anxiety about practicing within the curriculum (Yoon, 2019). As such, early childhood teachers recognize the importance of play in the field, but it is found that they are experiencing many difficulties and conflicts in linking this to education (Eom, 2004; Lim & Na, 2011). These results suggest that various supports related to teacher education are needed for the successful implementation of the play-centered curriculum.

On the other hand, depending on how the teacher perceives play, the teacher's behavior toward play may be different (Cho, 2011). Teachers should interact appropriately with children when supporting play, and should understand the dynamics and flow of play and lead them accordingly. In the play-centered curriculum, the teacher prepares and supports children's play, and plays a role in helping the experience of immersion and expansion occur in the process of play. In particular, in the integrated education scene, the direction and quality of instruction can vary depending on how the teacher perceives and guides play. Inclusive education for children with disabilities is a form of educational arrangement for children with disabilities (Kang & Cho, 2020), where infants and general infants who are subject to special education are educated together in general kindergartens and daycare centers. In this inclusive education, not only physical integration but also educational integration should be achieved (Kaffman et al., 1975). To this end, the teacher's role in inclusive education for children with disabilities is important, and not only professionalism in educational practice but also belief in inclusive education for children with disabilities is an important factor. The more positive the teacher's perception and attitude toward children with disabilities, the more participatory and positive the teaching activity can be (Han & Lee, 2009). This is also true of the operation of the play-centered curriculum, which has been emphasized recently. If the teacher does not have sufficient knowledge and experience about play for children with disabilities, he/she will experience many difficulties with embarrassment in educational practice. In an integrated education environment, play is the actual expression of teachers' beliefs and knowledge about play for children with disabilities (Kang & Cho, 2020). In other words, since the results of play can vary depending on the teacher's leadership ability and beliefs, the teacher's perception of play for children with disabilities is just as important. In addition, in the case of pre-school teachers, the theoretical contents learned at the university are put into practice in the practice scene, and the educational practice in the integrated education scene is a good opportunity to acquire practical knowledge about inclusive education. Previous studies also showed that teachers showed more positive perceptions and attitudes toward children with disabilities if they had experience in teaching (practice or vo

lunteer) children with disabilities or taking subjects related to children with disabilities (Cho & Seo, 2018; Choi, 2020; Han, Son, & Kim, 2013). Therefore, examining the prior experiences of pre-primary early childhood teachers related to disability integration institutions can be an important reference index in setting the educational direction.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the concept and perception of what pre-primary early childhood teachers think about the play of children with disabilities. In other words, through metaphor analysis, we want to investigate the pre-school teachers' perception of play for children with disabilities, and to analyze the metaphor difference according to the experience of disabled children's institutions. This metaphor analysis method can get closer to the thinking of the research subjects, and is useful for understanding the conceptual system or change of beliefs on a specific topic (Lee, Gyeon, & Kim, 2014). By using metaphors, it is possible to describe complex objects or concepts in an easier-to-understand way. Previous studies also reported that metaphorical techniques such as metaphor analysis are useful for understanding the thoughts of individuals or groups (Raffel, 2013). In addition, the metaphorical technique includes both quantitative and qualitative methods, which helps to increase the effectiveness of research (Lee & Park, 2012). For this reason, examining the metaphor of the preschool teacher can clearly understand the preschool teacher's perception of play for children with disabilities, and it can help to understand the role of the future teacher with disabilities. Therefore, in this study, the metaphor of pre-school teachers on play in disability integration institutions is investigated, and based on this, the direction of pre-service teacher education is explored.

Therefore, in this study, the following research questions were set.

First, what is the metaphor of the preschool teacher's play for children with disabilities?

Second, what is the difference by metaphor type according to the experience of disability integration institutions?

## **II. METHOD**

### **1. Study Subject**

This study was targeted at university students majoring in early childhood education in S city, South Korea, and the researcher explained the contents and purpose of the study and conducted an online survey. After reviewing the validity and relevance of the questionnaire responses, the final 71 copies of data were used for analysis. The distribution of respondents was found t

to be 4 males (5.6%) and 67 females (94.4%) out of a total of 71 respondents. Looking at the distribution by grade, 18 students (25.4%) in the first year, 18 students (25.4%) in the second year, 21 students (29.6%) in the third year, and 14 students (19.7%) in the fourth year. The experience of integrated organizations with disabilities includes volunteer and practical experiences, and the number of times is more than once and the duration is more than 1 day. Types of institutions include integrated daycare centers for the disabled and special classes in kindergartens. A total of 45 (63%) research participants had experience with a disability integration institution, and a total of 26 (37%) non-experienced research participants.

## **2. Measuring Tool**

The questionnaire used in this study was prepared based on the analysis of previous studies (Kim & Baek, 2018; Yoo, 2013; Lee, 2021). The metaphorical question used in this study was “Play is --- for children with disabilities. Because --- is.” A questionnaire containing these metaphorical questions was prepared and distributed to the study participants. When filling out the questionnaire, examples of metaphors were included to help the research participants understand, and through this, efforts were made to secure the reliability and validity of the responses.

## **3. Data Analysis**

In this study, the metaphor data analysis procedure was conducted based on previous studies (Aydin & Unaldi, 2010; Saban, 2008; Yapici, 2015). The process of metaphor content analysis is summarized in the steps of 1) data collection and coding, 2) data classification, 3) metaphor categorization, and 4) validation and reliability verification. First, the first stage consists of quantitative data collection, coding, and cleaning processes. The data was collected for college students majoring in early childhood education, and the meaning and purpose of the survey were explained in class and conducted by mobile using an online form. The collected data were carefully checked, and data with insincere responses or omissions were excluded from the analysis. Through this process, a total of 71 response data were used for analysis.

Step 2 is a classification process that classifies and removes the collected data. To this end, a statistical program was used, data was divided by experience (including service and practice) of integrated disability institutions, and the contents of metaphors were reviewed. First, after examining the contents of the entire metaphor, they were classified based on the meaning and reason of the expression. Even if the same word contains different meanings, it is classified into

different types. For example, in the case of the metaphor of 'teacher's guidance', children with disabilities are recognized as growing and developing through play guidance, so it was included in the growing play. However, in the case of the metaphor of 'needs help', it was included in 'play as a difficult challenge' because it was recognized as a difficult activity that requires help from a teacher or outside. Both metaphors meant external help, but they were classified into different metaphors due to different reasons.

Step 3 is the process of categorizing the classified and classified data based on a representative topic. After examining the contents of the metaphor, a representative topic for each metaphor was selected, and the representative properties of the subject were named.

Step 4 is the process of checking the validity and reliability of metaphor expression. To this end, we conducted content validity and reliability verification with one doctor in education and one doctor in early childhood education. First, each of the expressions of the metaphor was reviewed, and the subjects of the reviewed metaphor were compared. As a result of the comparison, if the categorization did not match, it went through a process of review and consultation, and finally, the consistency of the classification by subject was confirmed through the continuous work of these processes. Finally, quantitative statistical analysis was performed on the metaphor analyzed in this way. As an analysis tool, a statistical program (SPSS 22.0) was used, and frequency analysis, cross analysis, and descriptive statistical analysis were performed.

### III. RESULTS

#### 1. Metaphor Characteristics

Table 1 below shows the metaphor distribution of preschool teachers' play for children with disabilities. Preparatory early childhood teachers showed a total of 71 metaphors for the play of children with disabilities as shown in the following <Table 1>. Among these, duplicate contents were classified by the same code, and then sorted in alphabetical order. The metaphor that showed the highest frequency was 'treatment', followed by possibility, confidence, fun, and difficulty.

**Table 1** *Metaphor distribution (N=71)*

code	metaphor	N	%	code	metaphor	N	%
1	Possibility	3	4.2	25	helping you grow	1	1.4

2	Attention	2	2.8	26	Break time	2	2.8
3	not interested	1	1.4	27	rest	2	2.8
4	parish	2	2.8	28	difficulty	3	4.2
5	doing things with the teacher	1	1.4	29	regular pattern	1	1.4
6	teacher's guidance	1	1.4	30	Confidence	3	4.2
7	education	1	1.4	31	good at	1	1.4
8	slow	1	1.4	32	fun	3	4.2
9	Disconnection	1	1.4	33	joy	2	2.8
10	need help	1	1.4	34	having fun	1	1.4
11	need help	1	1.4	35	Participation	1	1.4
12	peer play	2	2.8	36	doing it slowly	1	1.4
13	interest in peers	1	1.4	37	cure	5	7.0
14	indifference	1	1.4	38	friend	2	2.8
15	just looking	1	1.4	39	essential	1	1.4
16	develop	1	1.4	40	learning	2	2.8
17	learning	1	1.4	41	doing things together	2	2.8
18	just looking	1	1.4	42	loneliness	1	1.4
19	Sociability	1	1.4	43	play alone	2	2.8
20	sociality education	1	1.4	44	patience	1	1.4
21	to develop social skills	2	2.8	45	slander	1	1.4
22	Interaction	1	1.4	46	rest	2	2.8
23	understanding each other	1	1.4	47	showing interest	1	1.4

24	growth	1	1.4
Total		71	100

## 2. Metaphor Type

Table 2 below shows the distribution of metaphors for preschool teachers' metaphors on the play of children with disabilities by subject. It was classified into a total of 5 types, and the meaning of play was classified into main themes according to characteristics and perspectives. These types are play as pleasure, play as growth, play as relationship-building, play as rest, and play as a difficult challenge. Metaphor types for play for children with disabilities were classified in consideration of the metaphors suggested by preschool teachers and their reasons. If the content of the metaphor is the same but the reason is different, it is classified into different types. Table 2 below shows the metaphorical expression of play for children with disabilities expressed by pre-school teachers by type.

**Table 2** *Metaphor distribution by subject (N=71)*

metaphor	category	N	%
pleasure, participation, confidence, fun, interest, showing interest, doing well, having fun	play as pleasure	14	19.6
possibility, working with teachers, learning, learning, helping growth, therapy, essential, growth, teacher guidance, teaching tools, education, development	Play as growth	20	28.0
Friendship, fostering social skills, interest in peers, playing with peers, being together, sociality education, understanding each other, interaction, sociality	Play as Relationship building	13	18.2
rest, rest, time off	play as rest	6	8.4
need help, need help, disconnection, interruption, pattern, playing alone, playing alone, loneliness, difficulty, no interest, just looking, indifference, taking it slow, seeing, slow	Play as a difficult challenge	18	25.2
Total	5	71	100

Preparatory early childhood teachers recognized 'play as growth' (N=20, 28.0%) the most about play for children with disabilities, followed by 'play as a difficult challenge' (N=18, 25.2%) and 'play as pleasure'(N=14, 19.6%)', 'play as relationship building' (N=13, 18.2%), and 'play as rest' (N=6, 8.4%) were recognized in order. In other words, preparatory early childhood teachers recognized the most 'play as growth', which has educational implications, and the least p

received 'play as a rest' for play for children with disabilities.

#### 1) Play as Pleasure

Preparatory early childhood teachers mainly recognized the elements of 'pleasure' and 'fun' about the play of children with disabilities. It was hoped that children with disabilities would gain 'confidence' by showing 'interest' and 'participating' happily in play, which is 'something they are interested in,' and, as a result, play that they are good at.

#### 2) Play as growth

Preparatory early childhood teachers perceived play as a 'possibility' for children with disabilities, and they expressed play as 'working with the teacher' and 'learning'. This was recognized as a process of experience for children with disabilities to learn and learn various things while participating in an activity called play with a teacher. It was understood that in this process, children with disabilities would 'grow up' and receive opportunities for 'treatment'.

#### 3) Play as relationship building

The metaphor of this theme is that children with disabilities also show 'interest in their peers' through play and recognize it as a process of naturally making 'friends'. In other words, it was recognized that 'understanding each other' through 'playing with peers' and becoming 'social education' by itself. Preparatory early childhood teachers tended to perceive children with disabilities as pre-existing goods that can naturally socialize with their peers and develop social skills through play.

#### 4) Play as rest

The metaphor that belongs to this theme is that play is regarded as a 'rest' for students with disabilities, and it is hoped that this 'break time' will be used as a time to get 'rest' away from learning or treatment. In other words, it is expressed that play can serve as a medium of education or treatment for children with disabilities, but it can also play the role of a comma where they can forget everything and rest.

#### 5) Play as a difficult challenge

Preparatory early childhood teachers expressed that play can be fun for children with disabilities, but on the other hand, it can be a 'difficulty' itself. Play may involve rules, methods, and interactions with others. For this reason, pre-preschool teachers perceived the play of children with disabilities as 'needs help' or 'plays alone' or 'loneliness'. It was also expressed as 'just watching' until the rules or methods of play were learned with the help of others. In addition, there

was a perception that, if such rules or methods were not learned, there would be separate experiences such as 'disconnection' and 'disruption' without being able to participate in play or participate in play activities. Even if such learning occurred, it was thought that it would happen slowly, so it was expressed as 'slowly' or 'slow'.

Metaphor types can be classified according to two viewpoints, one that views the play of children with disabilities positively and the oligopoly that views negatively. The positive view is that for children with disabilities, play is not only enjoyable in itself, but also helpful for growth and development, social relationship formation, and treatment. The negative view is that for children with disabilities, play is perceived as a difficult activity that requires the help of others rather than an enjoyable and proactive activity (refer to <Table 3>).

**Table 3 Topics by metaphor point of view**

aspect	topic
positive perspective	play as fun growing play Play as Relationship Formation play as rest
negative perspective	Play as a difficult challenge

### 3. Differences in perception

In this study, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether there was a difference in the perceptions of pre-primary early childhood teachers according to whether or not they had prior experience in an integrated institution with disabilities. To this end, we investigated the differences in perception types according to whether or not they experienced an integrated disability institution (including volunteer work and practice). As a result, it was found that there was a statistically significant difference according to the experience of disability integration institutions (\* $p < .05$ ). The differences in recognition types according to the experiences of disability integration institutions are presented in the following <Table 4>. An integrated disability institution refers to an early childhood education and childcare institution that implements disability inclusive education, and experience is equivalent to at least one day of volunteer or practical experience. As a result of the analysis, 'play as a difficult challenge' was the highest in the group with no experience in integrating disability institutions, and 'play as growth' was the highest in the group with experience in integrating institutions with disabilities. According to the metaphor perspective in <Table 4>, the negative view of 'play as a difficult challenge' was the high

est in the group without experience in the integration institution with disabilities, and 'play as growth' among the positive viewpoints in the group with the experience of the integrated institution with disabilities. appeared the highest.

**Table 4** *Distribution by metaphor recognition type*

category	play as pleasure	Play as growth	Play as Relationship building	play as rest	Play as a difficult challenge	$\chi^2$	df
no experience	6(8.5)	9(12.7)	11(15.5)	5(7.0)	14(19.7)	11.736*	4
have experience	8(11.3)	11(15.5)	2 (2.8)	0(0)	5(7.0)		
Total (%)	14(19.7)	20(28.2)	13(13.8)	5(7.0)	19(26.8)	71	100

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to find out how pre-primary early childhood teachers perceive the play of children with disabilities through metaphor analysis. Through this, we tried to find the direction for the practice of the play-centered curriculum for children with disabilities and the direction of the pre-school teacher education. The main results of metaphor analysis on the play of children with disabilities are presented as follows.

First, as a result of examining the metaphors of pre-school teachers regarding the play of children with disabilities, 71 representative metaphors were found. Preparatory early childhood teachers expressed the play of children with disabilities as 'pleasure', 'possibility', 'treatment', 'being together', 'rest', and 'difficulty'. These are metaphors with two or more frequencies. If we look at the representative metaphors and their reasons in the metaphor, it is because it seems that we can have fun with toys rather than learning (pleasure), because we can learn rules or concepts through play (possibility), play Because it seems that treatment can be achieved through (treatment), play is playing with someone (together), play time allows you to forget everything and rest for a while (rest), so there may be difficulties in recognizing how to play. It seemed like it was (difficulty). As above, the pre-school teachers showed the perception of various topics about the play of children with disabilities.

Second, as a result of categorizing and analyzing the metaphorical expressions of preschool teachers' metaphorical expressions on play for children with disabilities, the theme 'play as growth' appeared the highest, 'play as a difficult challenge', 'play as pleasure', and 'relationship building' and 'play as a rest' appeared in the order.

Preparatory early childhood teachers were highly aware of the educational aspect of play for children with disabilities, and they recognized that play was linked to educational activities to improve learning ability and increase potential. This is consistent with previous studies (Kang, 2014; Kang & Cho, 2018; Kwon, 2019) that play is related to development or learning. The themes of 'Play as Pleasure' and 'Play as Relationship building' also emphasized the essential functions and changes of play, and previous studies that viewed the essence of play as a process rather than a result (Aras, 2016; Johns, Christe, & Wardle, 2005). Children learn rules and relationships through various developments through play. Previous studies have also reported that play improves the social interaction of children with disabilities (Jin, Lee, & Kim, 2019; Jeong & Bae, 2005; Kim & Jeong, 2003). Kwon (2019) also reported that social interaction of children with disabilities is improved through play with children without disabilities. For children with disabilities, play time is the most meaningful time to meet friends and interact with each other (Kang, 2014). Considering the positive effects of play, it is necessary to pay more attention to and study play support for children with disabilities in an integrated education environment.

On the other hand, the second highest 'play as a difficult challenge' indicates that pre-kindergarten teachers highly recognized the difficulties to overcome and the burden of playing for children with disabilities. Preparatory early childhood teachers recognized that even if children with disabilities experience difficulties and difficulties in play activities, they should continue to challenge and try. In addition, it can be seen that play activities for children with disabilities were recognized as activities that require the support and help of the tutor. In other words, it seems that pre-school teachers judged that it was difficult for child-led play to take place in the integrated education field due to their disabilities. Of course, in the case of children with disabilities, the speed of play may be slower than that of general children, or it may be somewhat repetitive and low in spontaneity (Goldstein & Cisar, 1992). However, this may be because they view play as an activity that requires help based on teacher-led learning rather than as a voluntary activity based on interest. In previous studies, most of the studies on play for children with disabilities in integrated classes have been studied as part of an intervention program or treatment (Kang and Cho, 2018). However, children with disabilities can also explore toys based on their interests and play freely. Hughes (2003) argues that play should focus on the activity itself. Previous studies have also argued that children with disabilities are more active in non-standardized play scenes such as play with sand or water (Brown & Bergen, 2002). In this way, children with disabilities also feel pleasure in being interested in and concentrating on the play.

y activity itself, and holistic growth and development can be achieved. Therefore, pre-school teachers should know about the play characteristics of these children with disabilities and be able to support play that suits the characteristics of children with disabilities. This will be the way to raise the professionalism of pre-primary teachers in inclusive education with disabilities and to improve the quality of inclusive education with disabilities.

Finally, it was found that pre-school teachers without prior experience (volunteer or practice) at disability integration institutions perceived negative views on play for children with disabilities to a greater extent than pre-kindergarten teachers who had experience in disability integration institutions. That is, the group without prior experience in the disability integration institution showed a higher value in the perception of 'play as a difficult challenge'. This is in line with previous studies (Cho & Seo, 2018; Choi, 2020; Han, Son, & Kim, 2013), and the effect of prior experiences related to disability integration on the positive perception of pre-school teachers about children with disabilities. These results suggest that practice-oriented education such as field experience at an integrated institution with disabilities is necessary in the curriculum for pre-school teachers. By linking various field experience education, I hope that pre-school teachers will recognize that the play of children with disabilities is no longer a 'difficult challenge' but the essence of play that can be enjoyed and rested freely.

Based on the results of this study, suggestions for follow-up studies are as follows. First, it was found that pre-school teachers mainly had a positive view on play for children with disabilities. Play was recognized as the basis for change and growth, and there was a high tendency to perceive it as a process of growth and development through various explorations and experiences. In addition, in the case of a preschool teacher who had prior experience (volunteer or practice) at an integrated institution with disabilities, they viewed the play of children with disabilities from a more positive perspective. In other words, since the essential value of play was recognized as positive change and growth, a follow-up study to find realistic support and teacher education methods to apply play-centered education in the integrated education scene is needed. Through the education of pre-service teachers, it will be possible to change this perception and overcome the difficulties of play support for children with disabilities. If participatory observation and interview are further analyzed in follow-up studies, more practical research on play support for children with disabilities will be possible. It is hoped that the results of this study will contribute to the successful practice of integrated education for children with disabilities and to foster the professionalism of pre-school teachers in supporting children with disabilities.

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