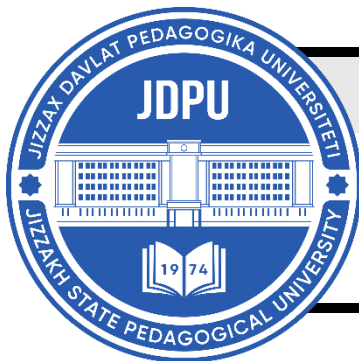


MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC – METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>



EDUCATIONAL GAMES AS TOOLS FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ABILITIES

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: educational games, EFL, competitiveness, physical and mental development, theory, role-play.

Received: 01.05.23

Accepted: 15.05.23

Published: 20.05.23

Abstract: This article discusses how to use educational games in learning English language, the importance of using different types of games in education and to indicate some ways of applying these tools for enhancing English language learning abilities. Using interactive games to facilitate learning in educational settings has a number of recognized benefits. For most students, games are highly engaging and motivating.

INTRODUCTION

Language learning is really a difficult task. Much effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time and some motivating, encouraging, innovative and attracting materials may be needed. Therefore, games may help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication. Nothing can be more natural than learning through playing games; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that integrating games into language courses would benefit students' learning experiences. In addition, interactive games allow students to achieve practical knowledge as well. In contrast to books and movies, computer games

are interactive and allow for socialization and participation in the language learning process. Using interactive games to facilitate learning in educational settings has a number of recognized benefits. For most students, games are highly engaging and motivating. Games provide real-time feedback and built-in goals that can motivate students to improve. In addition, students must make decisions as they play games, and they can see the results of those decisions right away and use that information to inform their next decisions.

Using educational games in teaching English as a foreign language is a modern educational method in teaching English as it focuses on the learner as the focus of the educational process. It provides the learner with pleasure and psychological comfort, helps him building his physical, mental, psychological and social aspects of his personality, and makes him a permanent state of activity, interaction and exploration in order to achieve a particular goal. Educational games are also a means of renewal, prompting learners to revitalize their activity and increase their academic achievement. Educational games earn students' specific characteristics such as mental development, discovery, accuracy and the acquisition of concepts that help them express themselves well.

Educational games help learners to revise or recall the previous acquired material in a foreign language classroom. They have been considered as a pleasant and entertaining for foreign language learning. Scholars have studied educational games in relation to learners' motivation when learning a foreign or a second language. This will also be one of the scopes of this paper. Learners might also gain communicative competence and generate language proficiency and fluency thanks to educational games.

The use of educational games in teaching process has many benefits not only for teachers but also learners. First benefit I can say that it is more motivational. By playing games, students become more motivated to learn, pay attention and participate in set tasks. Games help students to become a part of a team as well as take responsibility for their own learning. They can also be a great classroom management tool, helping to motivate a class. Controlled competitiveness may also be one of the most significant

advantages of using games in education, because students, particularly boys, can become extremely competitive in the classroom. Games are an excellent way to manage peer competition. Students can compete against each other while playing a game and then support each other during other learning activities by using games in the classroom. The next one which I want to share my opinion is strategy simulator. The majority of games necessitate problem solving strategies and planning. Students can use their working memory to solve problems by using a variety of strategies in a game, which improves their mental cognition. Brain stimulation through game strategies can be a great brain workout.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Games, which include activities that involve goals, rules, and fun, have been considered as very important components in EFL education. Such games are useful for the encouragement of learners' motivation and serves as communicative practice for all foreign language classrooms. It is for certain that educational games reduce learners' anxiety levels as well as offer a pretty engaging platform, in which students get involved in the process of language learning.

Games are one of the most essential elements in EFL classrooms. They contain activities with rules, goals, and a sense of fun. They are also educational activities that involve interaction between learners in an attempt to achieve specific objectives under certain regulations.

Basic elements of educational games:

Any game and in order to be educational should have the following basic elements:

1. Goal: Any game should have a clear and specific learning goal that matches the goal which the player wants to reach at the end of his lesson.
2. Rules: Any game should have a challenging component rules which explain to students how to play the game. These instructions should be "taught" to students before you play the game.
3. Competition: Achieving the outcomes of the lesson depends on the element of competition, which may be between a learner and another or between the learner and

the organ, or between the learner and a test or criterion, in order to master a skill or achieve specific goals.

4. Challenge: The game should include some appropriate challenge that depletes the individual's abilities to the extent possible. This challenge should be a little bit higher than students' present level.

5. Imagination: The game provokes the imagination of the learners and this stimulates students' intrinsic motivation and their desire to learn.

6. Entertainment: The game should achieve a tangible element of amusement and pleasure. That is not the goal of the game, but must take into account the balance between pleasure and educational content.

Conditions of learning by games: these games should be suitable to the child's age, physical and mental development level; games should not be complicated or incomprehensible; the most important must be characterized by ease, clarity and lack of complexity; these games should be connected to the surrounding education environment; there are no risks to children's safety in these games; the game should be exciting and enjoyable; the game should suit the children's abilities, experiences and tendencies; these games should help the trainer assess the student's ability to acquire more experience and skills, and know his weaknesses, with a view to strengthening them by teaching him the appropriate experiences that address these points.

There are some types of language games as follows:

- Arranging games where students have to arrange the cards according to topics.
- Guessing games where a person had something in his mind like thinking of a person, thing or place, and the players can ask yes/ no questions to find clues and guess what the person is thinking about.
- Information gap games where some people have information and the other people have to listen carefully to the information to complete specific tasks.
- Search games where players should gain knowledge to solve problems.
- Matching games where learners need to match a word, picture, or card. Turn over the cards, and then turn two cards at the same time by using their memory.
- Labeling games, the participants match the labels with the pictures.

- Role-play games where students perform such a role that may play in real life situations.

Educational games are one of the main teaching entrances that are concerned with the pupil's activity and positivity and with the comprehensive development of his personality in various aspects. They reflect the abstract concepts by attracting learners to interact with educational attitudes with their good teaching materials and targeted educational activities. This makes learners more active as they learn via these educational situations that are almost realistic and offer them the chance to achieve the desired goals of the lesson.

Teaching using educational games is one of the most important teaching methods and strategies that take into account the psychological aspect of the learners, as this teaching method demands interaction between teachers and their pupils during the educational process through activities and games developed and implemented in a structured scientific manner. Educational activities play an important role in the educational process at all levels of education, contributing to the achievement of educational objectives and constituting an essential element of the curriculum by which different areas of it can be linked. Through this curriculum, teachers can provide children with first-hand experiences that enable them to understand and absorb key meanings and ideas in an integrated way.

Examples of games that can be used to teach languages:

1. Who am I.

The teacher asks some pupils to represent some roles for grammatical concepts in the form of educational puzzles entitled "Who am I?" By wearing masks, or via the puppet theatre, it is the winning group that can solve these puzzles correctly. This game can be applied orally, or by employing puppets via the puppet theatre.

2. Game of boxes.

The teacher brings two boxes, each representing a grammar or a spelling concept. Each group is required to classify the words before it according to the two previous boxes.

3. Debate game.

The class is divided into groups, and each group is given a name with a specific grammar concept (he and her sisters), each of which is required to identify itself and oppose others, by mentioning their advantages, similarities and differences between them and other groups.

4. Game Discover Error

The teacher shows each set several floors of words, each floor contains the word error (born-picnic-beach-adventure), and the group is required to detect the spelling error found on each floor.

5. Game words and letters

The teacher draws a rectangular shape, dividing it into five sections, for example, so that these sections represent word letters that represent a specific linguistic concept. The winning group is the one which can know the word.

6. Scrabble

This classic word game requires players to form words using letter tiles on a board, which can help improve vocabulary and spelling skills.

7. Word Search

In this game, players are given a grid of letters with hidden words to find. It's an excellent way to boost vocabulary, improve spelling, and enhance focus.

8. Hangman

Hangman is a classic game in which one player thinks of a word and the other player tries to guess it letter by letter. It's an excellent way to practice spelling and vocabulary.

9. Word Ladder

Word Ladder is a game in which players rearrange letters to create new words. It's a fun way to practice vocabulary and problem-solving skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language games such as picture describing, storytelling and find difference have been used as teaching methods to improve learners' skills. The main aim of using games is that anxiety and depression learners suffer from make it difficult to learn appropriately so that it helps to students make easier and more interesting than before.

Using games to teach English is one of the educational tools and modern education, which depends on benefiting from the impact of games on students in childhood and work to transform this impact into a positive, useful educational tool to make students interact with their materials efficiently and increase verbal interactions between them and thus acquire new vocabulary in the language. Educational games are defined as the investment of children's motor energy, which expresses their physical activity mentally and helps to obtain many information by using entertaining educational methods. Learning through games has a stronger impact on memory, as the student will acquire a lot of linguistic elements and can use them efficiently in the classroom.

Educational games are powerful tools that can enhance English language learning abilities. These games are designed to engage students and make learning fun and interactive. Educational games help students to learn new vocabulary and understand the meaning of words in a fun and engaging way. These games typically focus on specific topics or themes, and as students play the games, they learn new words related to those themes. Educational games also help to enhance reading and writing skills. Students who play these games are required to read instructions, answer questions, and write responses. This improves their ability to read and write in English. Many educational games are designed to challenge students and encourage critical thinking. These games require students to think creatively and come up with solutions to problems. As they do so, they improve their ability to think critically in English. Educational games also help to develop listening and speaking skills. Students can listen to and follow instructions given in the game, and they can also speak and respond to questions asked in the game. This helps to improve their listening and speaking abilities in English. Educational games can be customized to suit the needs of individual students. They can be adjusted to match the skill level of the student, making it easier for students to learn at their own pace. Educational games are a great tool for enhancing English language learning abilities. They are fun, engaging, and effective at improving vocabulary, reading, writing, critical thinking, listening, and speaking skills.

It should always be kept in mind that “A game should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do”. As it has already been known that foreign language learning may be boring and demotivating especially for young learners in traditional language classroom settings. Therefore, language instructors and scholars seek different and plenty of opportunities to engage, take their attention, increase their curiosity and motivate their learners in the target language. It is also beneficial for students to build and increase self-confidence, develop language competency, learn in an unconscious and no-threatening atmosphere. Of these, gaming may be one of the best learning techniques ever invented. Some researchers suggest that the dominant percentage of respondents was satisfied with the Internet-based games. Internet based games encourages students’ positive attitudes towards language learning. We believe that the attentively selected internet-based educational games application will facilitate positive learning outcomes for young foreign language learners.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the benefits of language games may be classified as follow:

- Games make learning more fun, and students will be more motivated.
- Games promote cooperation.
- Games help learners learning from mistakes.
- Games provide quick and specific feedback.
- Games allow students to focus well enough to learn better.
- Games provide opportunities to establish a bridge between school and home.
- Games create a stress-free environment and reduces the anxiety of the learners.
- Games make learners active in their learning.
- Games provide reasons for language skills.
- Games help teachers appeal three different channels of the students.
- Games reenact various situations from real life.
- Games add variety to the range of learning situations.
- Games change the pace of a lesson and help to keep pupils’ motivation.
- Games lighten more formal teaching and can help to renew pupils’ energy.

-Games provide hidden practice of specific language patterns, vocabulary and pronunciation.

-Games can help to improve attention span, concentration, memory, listening skills and reading skills.

-Games are encouraged to participate; shy students can be motivated to speak.

-Games increase pupil-pupil communication, which provides fluency practice and reduces the domination of the class by the teacher.

-Games help create a fun atmosphere and reduce the distance between teacher and pupils.

-Games can help reveal areas of weakness and the need for further language.

-Games can help to motivate and improve writing skills by providing a real audience context and purpose.

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