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THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL GAME USE ON YOUNG CHILDREN'S' FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

The article touches upon the issue of the theoretical basis of the effectiveness of using educational game at the process of English teaching at preschool. Much attention is given to author's personal experience in this area. The article includes a number of education games designed by the author. The aim of the article is to provide the reader with some material on benefits of using games in teaching English in preschool education institutions; to describe an educational game as a useful tool for teaching English which heads essential role in encouraging and motivating preschoolers to learn a foreign language; to investigate the role of games in creating a comfortable and stress free classroom atmosphere. The study shows how educational games can be used effectively in order to improve the quality of teaching a foreign language in preschool, to create the conditions for practical language learning for each young student that would enable every child to increase their cognitive activity, creative skills and develop a foreign communicative culture.

Key words: *preschool educational system, teaching a foreign language in preschool, educational game, foreign language communication, preschool-age children.*

Стаття висвітлює основні теоретичні питання ефективності використання дидактичної гри у процесі вивчення іноземної мови у сучасних дошкільних закладах освіти. Дидактична гра розглядається як важливий педагогічний інструмент стимулювання і мотивації дітей дошкільного віку до вивчення іноземної (зокрема, англійської) мови, дієвий засіб створення природного освітнього середовища, основний фактор підвищення пізнавальної активності дітей, розвитку їх творчих здібностей і формування навичок іншомовної комунікації. Автор, спираючись на особистий досвід, пропонує ряд дидактичних ігор доречних для використання під час занять з англійської мови з дітьми дошкільного віку.

Ключові слова: *сучасна система дошкільної освіти, викладання іноземної мови в дошкільному освітньому закладі, дидактична гра, іншомовна комунікація, діти дошкільного віку.*

Статья раскрывает основные теоретические вопросы эффективного использования потенциала дидактической игры в процессе обучения иностранного языка в современных дошкольных учебных заведениях. Дидактическая игра рассматривается как важный педагогический

инструмент стимулирования и мотивации детей дошкольного возраста к изучению иностранного (английского) языка, средство создания природной образовательной среды, основной фактор повышения познавательной активности детей, развития их творческих способностей и формирования навыков иноязычного общения. Автор, опираясь на личный опыт, предлагает ряд дидактических игр для занятий по английскому языку с детьми дошкольного возраста.

Ключевые слова: *современная система дошкольного образования, преподавание иностранного языка в дошкольном образовательном учреждении, дидактическая игра, иноязычная коммуникация, дети дошкольного возраста.*

The problem definition in a general aspect and its relation to important scientific tasks. Modern changes in political, economical and cultural development of Ukrainian society have significantly affected new reforms in national educational system at all its levels. We live in time when Ukraine integrates with other European countries that influences the problem of learning foreign languages, especially at early ages. An essential and integral factor in this context is the increasing of quality and efficiency of preschool foreign language education. Nowadays the preschool foreign language educational reform is in progress in Ukraine. Numerous state educational basic programs of preschoolers' development indicate the importance and benefits of learning a foreign language at preschool-age.

Actually, learning a foreign language at preschool-age becomes an essential widespread problem of Ukrainian pedagogy. The main problems are to motivate preschool students, maintain their interest and support them in the process of studying. One of the issues of pedagogical research is to find effective technologies, methods and tools in order to improve the quality of teaching English in general.

The growing number of studies shows that game technology is one of the activities that really works. Game is a significant part of what life means to children at preschool-age. Preschool learners have a plenty of benefits from learning through games. Using games in teaching English is a creative way to develop listening and speaking skills of preschoolers as well as improve their memory, develop learners' social and cultural competence, stimulate physical activity. Games fully involve preschool-age children in the learning process.

The analysis of the recent researches and publications in which the resolution of the given problems commenced and to which the author refers to. O. Boyko, G. Cheatham, R. Martynova, S. Nikolayeva, Yu. Passov, S. Sokolovska, Y. Ro, P. Tabors, Yu. Veklych have presented the peculiarities of preschoolers' foreign communication. The main aspects of teaching English to preschoolers have been described by V. Bondarenko, M. Borshchenko,

A. Burns, S. Carton, F. Coplan, O. Negnevytska, A. Panasiuk, I. Riazanova, I. Shyshkova. Researches of G. Bedson, D. Elkonin, A. Ersoz, G. Lewis, Ye. Matetska, T. Shkvarina, R. Tyson show that preschoolers actually do learning English better through games. Learning by playing with peers and adults is a really great way to study. Preschool-age children have fun while they learn, and can use the new things and knowledge in practice.

In recent years, there have been several successful methodological and empirical studies on the effectiveness of using educational games in studying English as a foreign language in preschool, such as A. Bohush, K. Karasova, N. Malkin, O. Nemenushcha, A. Onyshchenko, T. Talapkanych, K. Vittenberg etc.

Emphasizing of previously not defined parts of the general problems to which this article is dedicated. Analysis of the works shows that they contain a wealth of theoretical and empirical material which is the foundation of the study of using game technology in teaching English as a foreign language in preschool. This problem is rather popular today but, nevertheless, numerous of its peculiarities remained uncovered. The present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of using games on teaching English to preschool-age learners in Ukrainian context and hopes to find an effective solution for a number of aspects of the problem aforementioned.

In this article the focus is on benefits of using games in teaching English in preschool education institutions. The first and foremost purpose of this study is to describe an educational game as a useful tool for teaching English to preschool-age learners which heads basic role in encouraging and motivating preschoolers to learn a foreign language better. The second goal is to investigate the role of games in creating a comfortable and stress free classroom atmosphere. At last, the study shows how educational games can be used effectively in order to improve the quality of teaching a foreign language in preschool, to create the conditions for practical language learning for each young student that would enable every child to increase their cognitive activity, creative skills and develop a foreign communicative culture.

The presentation of the main material research with the justification of the scientific results. Psychological and pedagogical researches (A. Leontiev, A. Lurii, M. Lvov, O. Negnevytska, T. Shkvarina, L. Vygotsky, M. Zhyntkin) have proved senior preschool age is the best time for learning a foreign language. During this period the foundations for thinking, language, vision, attitudes, and other characteristics are laid down. It is a time for active exploration of environment. Children this age are extremely active and mobile. They have a lively imagination. This is a stage of intensive physical, intellectual and social development. One of the peculiarities of this period is that the process of learning is similar for most children, but each child progresses at their own rate.

Summarizing the opinions of a number of scholars (O. Bartashnikova, V. Davydov, D. Elkonin, I. Zelena etc.) noticed that educational and training processes at this age, learning a foreign language in particular, should be based not at forcing it from outside in the form of norms and rules, but at a child's interest and desire.

Shelley Ann Vernon [4] emphasizes some problems that many preschool English teachers face:

- Preschool children have a very short attention span
- Preschool children will forget things quickly
- Preschool children may not be fully confident in their own language
- Some of preschool children may not be motivated to learn
- They may be fearful
- Preschool children develop at very different rates so you are sure to have a mixed ability group
- Preschoolers can be easily overwhelmed.

As a solution to these problems preschool English teachers ought to use the pedagogical potential of things that children love to do. Games can create a situation in which requirements of a natural language learning environment could be met. Games add variation to a lesson. They are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. The game context makes the foreign language immediately useful to the children. It brings the target language to life [5].

According to «Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics» (1995) game is «an organized activity that usually has the following properties: a particular task or objective, a set of rules, competition between players, and communication between players by spoken or written language» [3, p. 89].

Numerous pedagogical researches (L. Artemova, Q. Deng, J. Hadfield, T. Polonska, T. Shkvarina, O. Sorokina, O. Yankivska) represent an educational game as an activity with rules explicitly designed with educational purposes and which has educational value. An educational game is a game designed to teach children about a specific subject and to teach them different skills. They satisfy human fundamental need to learn by providing enjoyment, passionate involvement, motivation, creativity, social interaction and emotion in the game itself while the learning takes place.

Thus, educational game must rank as one of the most exciting teaching tool in preschool. It is necessary to underline its leading role in teaching English language to preschool children. In our days and age it is the most efficient «meaning of achieving the educational goal which is to develop foreign communicative skills» [2, p. 24].

H. Widodo reports numerous benefits of using games such as raising motivation among shy students who cannot express their feelings or talk in front

of other people. By using games students can be more active, autonomous, and energetic, learn about environment, the world they are living in, and be engaged in the teaching-learning process [7].

Games have been shown to have advantages and effectiveness in learning vocabulary in various ways. They bring a relaxation and fun for preschoolers, thus help them learn new words more easily. Educational games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. These create the motivation for preschool-age learners to participate actively in the learning activities [1, p. 49–55].

According to R. Tyson «educational games must have the following features:

- A game must be more than just fun.
- A game should involve «friendly» competition.
- A game should keep all of the students involved and interested.
- A game should encourage students to focus on the use of language rather than on the language itself.
- A game should give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material» [6, p. 3].

According to the didactic purpose, the number of participants, the goals of training, etc. there are many different kinds of learning games for teaching English language to preschool children. I would like to pay your attention to some of educational games, which I widely and successfully use in my teaching practice:

1. Sorting, ordering or arranging games. For example, preschoolers have a set of cards with numbers or seasons, and they have to arrange those cards in order; or they have a set of cards with domestic and wild animals, and they have to sort them out in two groups.

2. Odd one out. It is a fun classroom activity that I use for testing and improving preschooler's listening skills. The game helps to concentrate on listening and understanding, building vocabulary. Preschool students must listen from 4 to 6 different English words and decide which is different from the others and why. For example, Cat, dog, goat, wolf (answer: wolf (because it's a wild animal)); Red, green, summer, yellow (answer: summer (because it's a season)).

3. Guessing games. For instance, one child who has a flash card with a picture of an animal on it and cannot show it to others tells, «There is a card in my hand/ Try to guess what I've got, friend!» and describes an animal «It is wild/ domestic animal. It is big/small. It is grey/white. It can fly/jump. It cannot run/swim». And other preschoolers try to guess and ask questions, «Is it kind/ severe? Is it big/small? Is it black/green? Can it bark/mew/ sing? Is it a dog/ cat/crocodile/parrot?»

4. Matching games. Participants need to find a match for a word, picture, letter, sound etc. I think, it is especially efficient for learning ABC. There are a

number of modifications of matching games. My children like active games. For example, I give a letter flash card to each preschool student and propose finding out a thing that starts with it in my big magic box. They do it all together and try not only to find out their own thing but help each other. As a rule, there are «new words» in the magic box. And children desire to learn their names and find a match for a new word and a letter.

5. Role playing games. Such games based on real situations (For example, my 2nd year students (5–6 years old) like game «The Doctor». As a rule, it takes place at the end of the lesson. We make a circle, saying «Let's make a circle big and round (Everyone holds hands in a circle)/ Attention! (Everyone holds a pointer finger up)/ Everyone sits dawn (Everyone sits down)». My place is in the middle of the circle. I am a doctor. Then we sing the song «Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed». And we imagine that children are very ill patients. I have to treat them. I ask, «Oh, my darling! Where does it hurt?» And each student can point and say, «Here. My arm/leg/finger hurts!» If they say «My arm hurts» I ask «Which one?» and receive answer «My right/left arm». I bandage this body part with a toilet paper. Kids are so happy! They prefer leaving the toilet paper on themselves as long as possible and even after the lesson).

6. Songs and rhyme activities. You can use songs and rhyme activities to teach preschoolers the key words on different topics. All of them include movements so the children learn through the total physical response. I've created gestures for different words because this makes it easier to practice and remember new vocabulary. I always choose gestures that my little students are comfortable with and that are simple enough for them to do repeatedly throughout not only the lesson or topic but the course in whole. I have songs for each part of the lesson to help my students learn English. I guess the most favorite rhymes of preschoolers are counting-out rhymes that are played with spoken words and hand gestures. These activities work well with preschool-age children because they like to compete with each other. There are some examples of my counting-out rhymes, «A little bee lands on my knee. One, two, three – you are free!» or «Hi! Hi! My dear butterfly! It's time to fly! One, two, three – catch me!» Action-based songs and rhymes activities keep my students' attention and interest.

7. Physical activities. Preschool-age children have boundless energy. They enjoy physical activities. That's why I make my English lessons full of physical movements. I try to avoid competition between my students because it can be stressful for them. I always organize physical games in which everyone wins. I use such games as «Run and count» (My preschool students have to touch every example of the object I tell them and also count them off. For example, I give a command, «Count all red pencils on the window/all toy hares under the table» and so on (as they're running around and touching them)), «My brother Jonny»

(We make a big circle and lay out variety of toys/ fruit and vegetables /blocks of different colours in the middle of the circle. Then we say all together, «My brother Jonny pulled a big lorry. Three, four – all my toys are on the floor». Children have to pick up toys and name them), etc.

8. Art and craft activities. During my English lessons I choose from lively games to quiet ones to keep my children under control. I often use art and craft activities. I want to stress that arts and crafts are wonderful valid activities, but you should not spend more than 8–10 minutes of a lesson on colouring activities. When my students have known the vocabulary on topic «My Body», we play the game «My friend's portrait». I split them into 2 teams and each team has a space on the blackboard. The first student on each team draw the friend's head, the next student draw his eyes, the next draw his hair, etc. Then we vote on which team's friend is the best.

It becomes clear that there are many advantages of using educational games for development preschoolers' foreign language communication. Among them is positive motivating influence, creation a meaningful context for language use, providing language practice in the various listening and speaking skills. Educational games help preschool learners to make and sustain the effort of learning. They can be used effectively in order to create the proper conditions for language learning for each young student that would enable every child to increase their cognitive activity, creative skills and develop a foreign communicative culture. The role of education games in the process of teaching preschoolers is to create a comfortable and stress free classroom atmosphere.

In conclusion, teaching English in preschool through educational games is both an effective and interesting way. The results of this research suggest that the efficiency of educational games is supported by some pedagogical principles such as clear and simple rules and a flexible structure of the educational game (owing to the age of participants an education game should be recognizable and easy reproducible by every preschool student); a stress free educational environment (educational environment is ought to be comfortable for children. It is arranged to maximize learning progress, social and emotional development. You should teach in a friendly atmosphere with lots of encouragements); steadily repeated practice and activation of prior knowledge (education games should be short and give possibility to review vocabulary and phrases you have taught earlier in the course. The preschool game activities incorporate repetition as part of the natural learning process); using great variety of educational games during the course (preschoolers have a very short attention span so that English teacher needs a fresh idea about every 5–8 minutes at lesson. As learning English ought to be interesting and exciting process for preschoolers, English teacher needs numerous educational games for the whole course); alternation of different types of games that is means regularly mixing up excitable games with quiet ones during the lesson.

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