

INTERACTIVE GAMES AND THEIR ROLE IN DEVELOPING LANGUAGE LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

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Abstract

This article highlights the importance and benefits of interactive games in developing language learners' communicative skills. We know implementation of interactive games in teaching improves not only students' language skills, but also their creative and critical thinking skills, as well as their communicative competences. Moreover, they give motivation to learn and use language in real situation and help to develop pair work and group work skills.

Key words: interactive games, language skills, creative and critical thinking skills, learner-centered approach, communicative competence.

Learning foreign languages no longer a pastime: it is necessity because it results in students achieving divergent thinking, creativity and cognitive development. According to the view of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M.Mirziyoev, we should create the necessary conditions for the youth to acquire deep knowledge and modern professions and train a highly qualified workforce, young specialists capable of taking on responsibility for the future and further development of the country. In addition, our President states that in the system of education we attach a great importance to teaching students not merely liberal arts and vocational skills, but also required learning of foreign languages. That's why nowadays the main goal of teaching learners has become to improve learners' communicative skills, competency and culture using different effective innovative ways of teaching English.

So, one of the innovative and effective ways of teaching foreign languages is teaching through interactive games, as they encourage, entertain, teach, and promote fluency of learners, as well as interactive games are include activities which have goals and rules at the same time fun. Hadfield describes games as - "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun." That's why implementation of games are incredibly valuable in a class because they provide many opportunities for learners to learn the language. One of the methodologists, Carrier mentions that there are three appropriate stages in a lesson that games can be used:

✦ **an introduction**

When games are employed as an introduction, the lesson begins with stimulation. At this point, the students' interest is provided from the very beginning of the lesson. Besides they play a very crucial role to know what level students already have. Moreover, games can be used for revision of a previous activity.

✦ **the development of the lesson**

Games are included after development of the lesson to emphasize an item which is considered significant by the teacher for revision or practice.

✦ **conclusion of the lesson**

At the end of the lesson games are brought into play to serve a stimulating end. Consequently, students have chance to practice the studied item, and the teacher can have an idea if the item well achieved or not by students.

As learners may wish to play games purely for fun, teachers, however, should be very careful about choosing games, if they want to make them profitable for the learning process, because not all games are appropriate for all pupils irrespective of their age. Different age groups require various topics, materials, and modes of games. That is why teachers should pay

more attention to few important things regarding the games:

First of all, games should be interesting. They should include visuals, materials, sounds, mime and ought to be clear enough and simple so that children can understand what they are expected to do.

Secondly, games should be designed in such a way that children should be involved actively as much as possible. It is well-known that children learn easily and more quickly if an activity requests their physical involvement.

Thirdly, games should have an aim and focus on the use of language, as well as they should be in accordance with students' age and level of knowledge. Thus they help students learn, practice, or refresh language components;

The following interactive games are mostly used in language classes:

- Find someone who;
- Information Gap games;
- Puzzle-solving;
- Miming;
- Bingo;
- Guessing/Matching games;
- Board games;
- Role playing /simulations and etc.

These games are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy pupils more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings. In addition, using games in teaching foreign languages lowers affective filter, encourages creative and spontaneous use of language, promotes communicative competence and healthy competition, motivates, fosters whole class participation, reinforces vocabulary, focuses on grammar communicatively and utilizes all four skills.

Moreover, interactive games provide encouragement to interact and communicate successfully for learners and permanence to carry on the effort of learning and create a context to use the language meaningfully, decreases anxiety, and allow learners to study in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

Constantinescu states some advantages of interactive games as in the following:

- ▲ games build up learners' English repertoire in a familiar and comfortable environment (even for students who may have special needs), where they feel confident. More than this, English is widespread used with computers;
- ▲ games increase motivation and desire for self-improvement;

- ▲ challenge and competition are key factors for any game and students pay more attention to completing the task;
- ▲ interdisciplinary approach. Students use knowledge from other classes, too.
- ▲ games develop students' ability to observe;
- ▲ games have clear rules and objectives;
- ▲ games develop critical thinking, problem solving, and imagination;
- ▲ games offer new and dynamic forms of teaching/ practicing which replace the traditional worksheets;
- ▲ games are adaptable for different levels of knowledge.

In conclusion we can state that there cannot be one universal scheme of organizing learning process. Lesson structure depends on goals, contents, target audience, etc. Using interactive games is not an objective, but it is a means of creating necessary conditions for communicatively effective learning. It encourages individuals' cooperation, self-development, improves both skills of foreign language communication and personality traits. So, interactive games provide a great pedagogical value for language teachers with many advantages when they are introduced in foreign language classrooms. The review of the studies related to language games indicates that games play a crucial role in foreign language teaching and learning contexts in a variety of areas, as they reduce anxiety, increase positive feelings and improve self-confidence because learners are not afraid of punishment or criticism while practicing the target language freely, as well as games create a successful and positive classroom environment where students and their learning are central.

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