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METHODOLOGICAL POSSIBILITIES OF USING GAMES FOR TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Abstract: The article deals with one of the important problems that exist in the methodology of teaching foreign languages in elementary school – the problem of using games at foreign language lessons. The author describes the types and classifications of educational games, focuses on the requirements for using games at lessons and the effects which can be achieved with their help.

Keywords: foreign language, English language teaching, game technologies, types of games, young learners.

The purpose of teaching a foreign language is the formation of communicative competence – a set of skills that allow a person to receive information, interact in another language. To form this competence, traditional methods and teaching materials are used, as well as modern pedagogical technologies to get students more interested in the subject. One of such technologies is a game.

The importance of the game in children's lives is very high. The children begin to play from a very early age, but even in elementary school, play activity does not lose its relevance. As N.F. Vinogradova says: *“The contradiction between the desire to play and a significant decrease in the share of the game among other activities prompts the teacher to pay special attention to its use in teaching, especially in grades 1-2”* [9, p. 47]. While playing the children, gain life experience, they develop themselves, learn to manage themselves, communicate with other children [4].

Different games can be used in teaching, we will consider which cognitive (or didactic) games become a teaching method in elementary school in general, and can be used to teach younger learners a foreign language in particular.

First of all, didactic games are classified according to:

- the type of activity;
- the didactic purposes;
- the content of educational material;
- the presence or absence of game material;
- the degree of children's activity;
- the orientation of the pedagogical process;
- the nature of the game methodology;
- the number of the participants.

A.I. Sorokina identifies such types of didactic games as task games, travel games, riddle games, guessing games, games-conversations[8]. Didactic games with ready-made rules include such types as quizzes, contests of experts, olympiads, auctions, puzzles, riddles and charades, entertaining tasks and questions.

Let us characterize cognitive games that can be used in the work with children at foreign language lessons.



A puzzle is one of the types of didactic games, which are based on a “tricky” task that has its own rules for compiling and solving. Puzzles include: riddles, puzzles, crosswords, chainwords, cryptograms, etc.

A rebus is a riddle in which the words to be solved are presented in the form of drawings in combination with letters and some other signs. There are certain rules for compiling and solving a rebus [1].

The crossword is the most common word game in the world. Crossword can be presented in a wide variety of forms: a magic square, a compacted rhombus, a one-sided ladder, a shaped model, a profile lattice, a rebus system, etc. [1].

The rebus system is a crossword puzzle, where the search words are “encrypted” with the help of drawings [1]. They are widely applied in teaching younger students, as they are convenient in compilation and easily filled in by children in the course of solving.

A riddle is a folklore genre of a small form, a verbal game in the form of an intricate question that requires an answer (guess). In other words, a riddle is a metaphorical expression in which one object or phenomenon is depicted through another that has some resemblance to it.

At the initial stage of training, the use of different types of didactic games allows a teacher to form in children:

- sustained interest in learning;
- general educational skills, skills of studying and independent work;
- skills of self-control and self-assessment;
- readiness for adequate relationships in the team, for the development of social roles [4].

Another equally important function of didactic games that is worth noting is the development of creative abilities in children. One and the same game, for example, a crossword puzzle on a certain topic, may differ not only in content, but also in the way it is designed. It all depends on how creatively the authors approached the creation of the game.

Didactic games in elementary school fall into the following four forms:

1. Game teaching method (game techniques, game situations, problematic issues with showing solutions).
2. The form of education (games, activities, didactic games, entertaining questions, etc.).
3. Independent game activity (pedagogy of cooperation, trust of the players to each other during the game).
4. A means of comprehensive development of the child's personality (cognitive, moral, labor, aesthetic, physical) [4].

The didactic game has the following structure: didactic task; game task; game actions; rules of the game; result (summarizing) [3].

The structure of the game determines its stages: preparation, conducting and summing up. At each stage the activities of the teacher and students must be clearly coordinated: any game can be successful only if it is well organized.

When using games at foreign language lessons, S.V. Nilova suggests taking into account the following criteria for selecting gaming technology:

- the level of language proficiency;
- the students' age;
- the purpose of the game technology;
- the general level of education of the students [6].

According to V.S. Kukushin, when choosing a game suitable for a lesson, two components must be taken into account: psychological (certain skills and abilities that must be formed during the game) and methodological (the game must be built according to the algorithm for its implementation – reminders, templates) [5].



A methodically correctly organized game needs to be repeated many times so the teacher explains the rules, gives instructions and steps aside as an observer, sometimes prompting and helping students. If the preparation stage was successful and the students were able to quickly understand what the teacher wanted, this is already a half-successfully applied game technology that will give the desired results [2].

The game should take place entirely in English so that the students could fully immerse themselves in the environment and do not even think that they will be more comfortable in Russian. The conditions should be as comfortable as possible for students – fit their knowledge and skills. It is better to use in the game the words and expressions that students have studied earlier, both recently and a few lessons ago, because the more often they repeat the vocabulary and grammar they have learned, the better it will be remembered.

It is better to correct mistakes in the speech of students by also turning them into a game, for example, initially a teacher can give the children the instruction “If you hear a mistake from your class-mate, clap your hands.” The players will take better care of themselves during the game, and the rest will not be able to sit on the sidelines, and it will be easier for the teacher to track the presence of errors.

The didactic game should include such conditions that no student is left behind. Everyone should be interested. Therefore, a teacher should not use a game that has several main roles, and the rest stand aside and watch. If the game is creative or project-based, an additional task should be given to the students who are not yet participating in the performance but are watching it. The attention of the student can quickly shift to the side, so we keep everyone busy with their own business.

Also, it is worth considering that games designed for a certain (4-6) number of children may not be suitable for a larger class. A teacher has to be ready to adapt to the situation. Games that can be transformed are very popular for use in the classroom [7].

The educational game should be as close to real life as possible, so it is very important to think over a story for the student, which will explain to him “why and what”. Also, each educational game needs to be slightly transformed for a certain class or group, because the interests of children are different. The more flexible the game is, the more useful it will be in the educational process.

Thus, the educational game is an assistant in the educational process, and does not replace traditional methods. It should not interfere with the educational process and the topic of the lesson or distract students from the main task – students should acquire knowledge from each lesson and be able to apply it in the future. The game in elementary school is not an aim in itself, but a way to draw the child's attention to the subject being studied through a kind of “visualization”. The game allows a teacher to make the educational process more diverse, creates a positive emotional attitude to work, develops the student's cognitive interest. The game can be used at any stage of a lesson, but it must be appropriate and optimally integrated into its structure.

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