THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING IMPORTANT SKILLS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO PRIMARY CHOOL LEARNERS THROUGH GAMES

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Abstract: Contemporary pedagogical approaches to language acquisition for young learners prioritize flexible and effective methods, with game-based instruction emerging as a particularly valuable and increasingly prevalent technique. This article examines several effective game-based strategies designed to comprehensively address various aspects of language development in young children.

INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical efficacy of gamification in language instruction has gained considerable traction in recent decades, owing to its demonstrable capacity to foster not only cognitive development but also socio-emotional growth in young learners. However, the early elementary years (grades 1-4) present unique challenges, as young children possess limited attention spans and are readily susceptible to distractions, hindering the effectiveness of traditional, textbook-based approaches like simple guessing games. The inherent limitations of such methods in stimulating sustained engagement highlight the significant advantage of game-based instruction. In contrast to the often-sterile learning environment created by rote memorization exercises, gamified learning environments cultivate a relaxed and intrinsically motivating atmosphere, thereby significantly increasing learner engagement and fostering a more positive learning experience.

Key words: teaching, games, young learners, difficulties

This article explores a range of game-based methods and digital platforms designed to enhance the learning experience for young language learners, thereby

mitigating challenges commonly associated with traditional teaching approaches and fostering more engaging and effective instruction.

Language games serve as effective tools for developing a range of language skills, with readily available online resources significantly simplifying the process of locating or adapting suitable activities. Technological advancements have made it remarkably easy for educators to access and modify a wealth of engaging games aligned with specific learning objectives. The ease of access to these digital resources, coupled with the ability to tailor games to individual learner needs, represents a considerable advancement in language instruction. For example, online phonetic games can be easily adapted to include activities such as text imitation, gap-fill exercises, or question-and-answer sessions, providing teachers with versatile tools for creating dynamic and engaging learning experiences.

Stronin MF (1981) [2] claims that, there are many types of games, but among them the following group can be distinguished:

- Phonetic

- Lexical

- Games with phrases

- Grammar games

- Games for teaching reading

- Games for listening

- Games for teaching speaking

- Mixed games

- Communication games

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A strong lexical foundation is crucial for successful language acquisition; learners with a robust vocabulary are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the language learning process. Vocabulary-building games, integrated into daily lessons, offer an effective means of reinforcing newly acquired lexical items. For example, following a lesson on animals, a game like "Hot Seat" can be used to engage students in active vocabulary recall. In this simple yet effective game, a

student is chosen to identify a mystery animal by asking yes/no questions about its characteristics (e.g., speed, habitat, diet), thereby prompting both active recall and the construction of grammatically correct questions. This interactive approach ensures that vocabulary review is both engaging and effective.

The utilization of game-based activities to reinforce phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions is particularly effective for learners possessing a foundational understanding of the target language. Digital platforms such as Wordwall and Jeopardy, or readily adaptable matching exercises, provide versatile tools for engaging learners in the practice and memorization of English phrases. These activities move beyond rote memorization by encouraging learners to connect phrases with their contextual meanings, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of the language. For example, a matching exercise pairing the phrase "take care" with its definition ("to care for someone") fosters lexical comprehension in the target language, rather than relying on direct translation into the learner's native language, thereby facilitating a more nuanced and effective understanding of the phrase's usage and implicature.

While grammar instruction can be challenging for students due to its complexity and numerous exceptions, it remains a critical component of language acquisition. The often-confusing nature of English tenses, in particular, frequently leads to avoidance and inadequate understanding. However, the integration of interactive online exercises, utilizing multiple-choice formats or drag-and-drop activities, can significantly enhance engagement and comprehension. The inherent visual appeal of these digital platforms, often incorporating colorful elements, is particularly effective in capturing the attention of young learners, thereby transforming what can be a source of anxiety into an engaging and effective learning experience.

Effective reading instruction for children necessitates engaging texts and activities that extend beyond simple vocabulary exercises to simulate realistic scenarios. Presenting children with texts containing only unfamiliar words can be demotivating and counterproductive. Instead, incorporating games or reading materials that mirror real-life situations, such as a doctor's appointment, a

television announcing competition, or a computer game scenario (Bacharova LN, 1996), can significantly enhance both engagement and comprehension. This approach transforms the reading experience into a relatable and meaningful activity, fostering greater motivation and a deeper understanding of the language within context.

Oral communication in a second language can be a source of anxiety for young learners, with a fear of making mistakes often hindering participation (Rao, 2019). This apprehension, exacerbated by concerns about peer judgment, frequently results in reluctant participation in classroom discussions. To foster greater confidence and engagement, incorporating game-based speaking activities is highly effective. The playful nature of games reduces the perceived pressure associated with formal speaking tasks, encouraging spontaneous participation and facilitating natural language use. Games such as "Picture Description," "Who Am I?," or "Snowball" offer engaging and low-stakes opportunities for students to practice speaking skills in a fun, interactive environment.

In conclusion, the strategic integration of games into language instruction, particularly at the beginning and end of lessons, proves highly effective in enhancing student engagement and reinforcing learning. A teacher's skill in adapting and modifying games to align with diverse lesson plans is crucial for maximizing their pedagogical impact. The multifaceted benefits of game-based learning cognitive stimulation, physical activity, knowledge expansion, and memory development highlight its significant contribution to holistic language learning, underscoring its indispensable role as a complementary tool to the teacher's expertise.

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