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## **GAMES AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF DEVELOPING YOUNG LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Teaching English to young learners is a rapidly growing field around the world and the main goal of teaching young learners is to encourage children to use the target language in their life and improve their communicative skills, competency and culture using different effective ways of teaching English. Therefore, at the lessons of foreign languages the teachers are using some strategies, which encourage pupils to be active participants of the lessons, focusing on developing their communicative skills, forming their interest and motivation to study the language, as well as trying to have their language learners speak proficiently and independently in various situations.

So, this article deals with the ways and role of using different types games in teaching speaking in English to young learners. As young children are very imaginative and learn more if they are enjoying what they are doing, games are considered a very effective and beneficial way of learning a foreign language.

### **KEYWORDS**

Young learners, communicative approach, types of games, communicative skills, competency, culture, primary classes, language acquisition, cognitive development, language skills, speaking.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Learning foreign languages no longer a pastime: it is necessity, because it results in language learners

achieving divergent thinking, creativity and cognitive development. According to the view of the President

of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh.M.Mirziyoev, in the system of education we, teachers, should attach a great importance to teaching young learners not merely liberal arts and vocational skills, but also required learning of foreign languages. Therefore, nowadays the main goal of teaching young learners has become to improve their communicative skills, competency and culture using different effective innovative ways of teaching English, and one of the most innovative and effective ways of teaching English is teaching through different types of games, as they encourage, entertain, teach, and promote fluency of learners, as well as these games include activities which have goals, rules, and at the same time fun.

Hadfield describes games as “an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun” and according to Scott and Yetrebeg young learners’ “... own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears, and the physical world is dominant at all times”, therefore, implementation of games are incredibly valuable in a class as they provide many opportunities for young learners to learn the language.

The primary school group means young learners from five to ten years old. During this short period of time children develop very much. It is a very individual process, but certain characteristics can be traced and generalized. Of course, the nature of foreign language learning is influenced by what they can or cannot do in their first language. Moreover, young learners tend to have short attention spans and a lot of physical energy, as well as they are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in the physical and the tangible.

## **METHODS**

Games are considered a very effective way of learning a foreign language, because they can play a big part in helping participants build relationships, feel equal, and, of course, activate pupils who may have been inactive before, due to lack of interest. Moreover, young learners enjoy learning through playing, they learn best when they learn through games and they are less shy than older learners. In addition, they are very much linked to their surroundings and are more interested in the physical activities.

Games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value and it can be used in the classroom to make learners use the language instead of just thinking about learning the correct forms.

There are different types of games, which are used in teaching and learning process, as well as each type of game has its own goal and learning outcome:

- competitive games, in which pupils work in a group and race to be the first to reach the goal;
- cooperative games, in which pupils work in a group together towards a common goal;
- linguistic games, the goal of which is linguistic accuracy, that is producing a correct structure, remembering the correct word;
- communicative games, in which pupils are very involved the carrying out of a task such as drawing, matching, rewriting, filling in a chart, etc.

Very often games teach a language, which uses it in real situations, for example when travelling, shopping, expressing own ideas in different social situations and these games prepare pupils to the real life. It is easier to open up and forget the shyness when playing a game, because more emphasis is put on fluency rather than grammatical correctness.

Games have memorizing and communicating stages:

- In memorizing stage games are designed to fix the meaning of the word in the learner's mind and their focus is on accuracy rather than fluency. The games used in this stage are very simple versions of: matching, guessing, miming and their aim is to get the learners to remember and to produce the right word.
- In communicating stage the focus is on successful completion of a goal such as finding an object, solving a puzzle, "Find someone who", role playing, simulation rather than on correct production of lexis and structures. In this stage, language is less controlled and there is more flexibility and creativity required.

Methodologists suggest the following strategies to English teachers of primary schools while using different types games:

- change the games and games every 5-10 minutes.
- vary the pace during the lesson, mixing up energetic games with quiet ones.
- use short games to review vocabulary and phrases they have already taught.
- make lessons playful and full of physical movement.
- teach in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with plenty of encouragement.
- encourage and support young learners.
- focus on listening and understanding, building vocabulary and the acquisition of short phrases.
- concentrate also on speaking practice, starting with single words and short phrases, and gradually moving onto longer sentences and questions.
- avoid abstract concepts and focus on concrete items that children understand and relate to.

- involve shy children - help them to express themselves.

Taking into account the above-mentioned tips, teachers should pay more attention to the following 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.;

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Young learners may wish to play games purely for fun, however, teachers need more convincing reasons. According to Khan, J.

"Teachers need to consider which games to use, when to use them, how to

link them up with the syllabus, textbook or program and how, more

specifically, different games will benefit pupils in different ways".

Therefore, English teachers of young learners should be very careful about choosing games if they want to make them profitable for the learning process. If games are to bring desired results, they must correspond to either the pupil's level, or age, or to the material that is to be introduced or practiced. Not all games are appropriate for all pupils irrespective of

their age. Different age groups require various topics, materials, and modes of games.

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.

One of the methodologists, Carrier mentions that there are three appropriate stages in a game-based lesson:

- 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.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned methodologists' studies, we can state that games are used for three purposes in teaching languages:

- to warm up the class at the beginning of the lesson
- to practice language or a structure which is being studied in the lesson
- to recycle the learnt material

The following games are mostly used in primary language classes in order to develop young learners' speaking skills:

Find someone who, Information Gap games, Word games, Puzzle-solving,

Miming, Bingo, Listen and do, Guessing, Matching, Board games and etc.

Let's analyze some of these games for young learners:

1. "Find someone who..." activity is considered one of the best language-teaching games, in addition, using this activity teachers can improve their learners' not only speaking skills, but also grammar, as well. Teacher prepares "Find someone who..." handouts with genuine personal information and distributes these handouts to pupils and asks them to move around the classroom and complete the table asking questions.

For example: Grade 2. Kids' English. Unit 5. My day off.  
Gr: Do you like?

Objective: to enable young learners to communicate with their friends and gather information about how they spend their day-off.

*Pupil: DO YOU LIKE ..... in your day off?*

<i><b>Friends' names</b></i>	<i><b>playing "Bingo"</b></i>	<i><b>watching TV</b></i>	<i><b>playing see-saw</b></i>	<i><b>working in the garden</b></i>
<i>Sadriddin</i>	✓			✓
<i>Sardor</i>		✓	✓	
<i>Mehrinoz</i>	✓			✓
<i>Khadicha</i>		✓	✓	

Having completed the table, pupils are asked to share their ideas. Using this handout, they learn both to ask questions from each-other and to speak about their friends' hobbies in the 3rd singular.

2. Guessing games are useful to help children become familiar with new vocabulary in an enjoyable way. When you show children what to do and at the same time give instructions for games in English, they will listen to you with a real purpose - to find out how to play.

First teacher teaches new vocabulary using pictures to young learners, as they are visual learners. The class

will repeat and practise the words. Then the teacher wants to see if they can remember the words without seeing the pictures. They have to guess the picture. The child who guesses correctly comes up and takes the next picture. This vocabulary game continues until all the cards will have been guessed and put on the board.

For example: Grade 2. Guess What. Unit 1. What is this? What are these?

Objective: to develop young learners' guessing, critical thinking skills.





This guessing game is very useful for the 1st or 2nd grade pupils. Thus they will absorb both new vocabulary and grammar structures.

3. Picture description. This activity can be used both as a group work or pair work activity in order to improve students' both speaking and understanding comprehension, as well as their critical thinking skills can be developed. In addition children's vocabulary can be expanded while describing.

For example: Grade 2. Guess What. Unit 5. Meal.

Objective: to enable young learners to compare and contrast people and events.

Pupils, looking at the picture, talk about Tom's and Pat's favourite meals, at the same time they will compare these two children's favourite meals



Tom



Pat

4. Miming. This game can be used as a guessing game. The wordless activity leads the learners to talk quite

naturally. Someone mimes an action and the others try to guess what it is. This game can provide further

practice of a wider variety of lexical and grammatical units. One pupil choose a card and mimes a typical activity that it involves. The others try to guess it by asking questions.

For example: Grade 2. Guess What. Unit 6. Activities

Objective: to enable pupils to make up questions and improve guessing skills



So, the best game-based lessons are those where learners do most of the talking and their motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics. Andrew Wright, David Betteridge and Michael Buckby in his “Games for Language Learning” book stated the benefits of games as following:

“Language learning is hard work... Effort is required at every moment and

must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage

many learners to sustain their interest and work.”

Having studied the role of games in language teaching and learning process, we can sum up saying that any lesson, which is based on games will be more effective, motivating and beneficial, as they play an important

Pupil A chooses a card and mimes, the others will ask questions, such as:

Pupil B: - Are you riding a bike? Pupil A: - No, I am not

Pupil B: - Are you playing cards? Pupil A: - No, I am not

Pupil B: - Are you taking a photo? Pupil A: - Yes, I am

role in developing students’ communicative competences, as well as they:

- encourage students to create their own reality;
- develop the ability to interact to other people;
- increase student’s motivation;
- engage shy students in class activities;
- make students self - confident;
- help students to identify and correct misunderstandings;
- underline the simultaneous use of different skills.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we want to say that the benefits of games are great not only for learners but also for teachers, because using games in teaching:

- lowers affective filter;

- encourages creative and spontaneous use of language;
- promotes communicative competence;
- motivates, fosters whole class participation;
- reinforces vocabulary/ grammar and focuses on them communicatively;
- builds class cohesion;
- promotes healthy competition;
- utilizes all four skills and requires minimum preparation after development.

A game should be planned into the day's lesson right along with exercises, dialogues and reading practice. It should not be an afterthought. Many games require modification in use when the pupils' need is taken into consideration and, of course, teachers must be very attentive while giving instructions if they want to encourage their pupils to learn more. When giving instructions to younger learners, a few words in the mother tongue would be the quickest way to make everything clear. For younger learners games are best set up by demonstration rather than by lengthy explanation and it is very important not to play a game for too long, because they will begin to lose their interest. It is best to stop a game at its peak.

The key to a successful language game is that the rules are clear, the ultimate goal is well defined and the game must be fun.

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