THE INTEGRATION OF GAMES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract: Because games can improve student motivation, engagement, and language acquisition, their use in language instruction has drawn a lot of attention lately. This article examines the potential ways of structuring games based on situation or time in language instruction. Teachers can establish an engaging and dynamic learning environment that promotes active engagement and facilitates successful language acquisition by implementing game-based learning strategies.

Keywords: game-based learning (GBL), collaboration and communication, active learning, critical thinking, problem-solving skills

Introduction:

Language teaching has traditionally been viewed as a formal and sometimes tedious process. Students often struggle to stay engaged and motivated when faced with the challenges of learning new vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. However, the integration of games into language teaching has proven to be a powerful strategy for overcoming these challenges. Games not only capture students' attention but also promote active learning and collaboration.

The use of games in language teaching spans various formats, from traditional board games and card games to digital games and simulations. By introducing game elements such as rewards, points, levels, and competitions, educators can make language learning more interactive, engaging, and effective.

The significance of game-based learning in language instruction, as well as the ways to incorporate games into the curriculum to improve language acquisition, are covered in this article.

The importance of game-based learning

Game-based learning is an educational approach that should be widely used both in traditional classrooms and modern online education because it offers a variety of opportunities for learners. One of these opportunities can be the encouragement of *collaboration and communication* among students. It is pretty well known that such games are often designed for groups, which requires learners to work together and reach the goal. This, in turn, brings them together, helping them to build strong friendship relationships and maybe, a healthy competitive zone, too. Fair competitiveness always leads students to study more and overtake others justifiably. This way, good results can be achieved sooner. Another one is the promotion of *active learning*. Instead of passively receiving the necessary information, the learners are given a chance to learn actively, working independently, thinking about the two sides of the coin, and making decisions. Learning this way assists in strengthening thinking ability and memory retention. *Critical thinking and problem-solving skills* can also be developed along the way. Repetitively participating in games that require logical thinking fosters the brain and makes it get used to thinking of different ways to find the answer in a short time, meaning that the two skills mentioned earlier are already

shaped in the brain. These are only a part of many more benefits the games in education bring about.

How to incorporate games into the curriculum

The role of games of different types in education, namely in learning foreign languages, either digital or real, has already started to increase. The reasons are as clear as day. Firstly, the learners are too lazy to learn new words when learning a language, which leads them to find excuses not to learn, one of which is boredom. Unfortunately, language learning is indeed tedious if taken too seriously and forced. So, what should be done to avoid these problems? Of course, the solution lies in the hands of the teachers. They are required to get both the students and themselves out of this situation by creating relevant games in a classroom. Regarding traditional educational games, they are a bit boring for students, which means we need something new to have fun alongside learning. But how do they do it? To my mind, every teacher should be able to use their pedagogical skills, creating their own games, for example, by integrating two or several different games. Here is one sample that can help you understand what I meant:

Whispering game combined with finding the riddles

Around 6 or 7 students should attend this game. They should stay in a row and listen to the conductor carefully. The conductor shows the first participant a riddle (in English) that is written on a small piece of paper beforehand, and the attendant should let the next participant hear that riddle, whispering to him or her. This order continues till the one who is standing last, and he should tell the riddle that came to him. Firstly, he should tell the riddle correctly, and secondly, find an answer to the riddle within a time limit that is set by the conductor. The participants change their places for each riddle; that is, the last attendant becomes the first, and the next ones also move to the next places.

As you saw, in this game, an active and positive environment is provided, forcing learners' brains to think logically (for riddles) and listen carefully (whisper). Listening to the whispering sounds in a foreign language might come in handy in strengthening understanding of the language right after listening. Finding answers to the riddles helps improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Conclusion

All things considered, game-based learning is useful not only for learners, helping them build strong communication and healthy competitiveness with their peers, foster thinking abilities, and enjoy the learning process, but also for teachers, maintaining a positive bond with the students and relaxing.

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Online resources:

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