THE IMPORTANCE OF USING INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract: The integration of interactive activities in language teaching has become an essential pedagogical approach to enhance student engagement and language acquisition. This paper explores the significance of incorporating interactive methods, such as role-playing, group discussions, and task-based learning, into language classrooms. These activities foster active participation, promote authentic communication, and allow students to practice language skills in real-world contexts. Research highlights that interactive activities not only improve speaking, listening, and writing proficiency but also encourage collaborative learning, critical thinking, and cultural understanding. By shifting the focus from traditional, passive learning methods to interactive, student-centered practices, educators can create a more dynamic and effective language learning environment. The findings emphasize that when students actively engage in language use through interactive activities, their motivation, confidence, and retention of the language significantly increase.

Key words: interactive games, cognitive abilities, social skills, positive outcomes, creative approach.

There is a widespread opinion that learning process should be free from fun, which means fun and games cannot help students to possess greater results on their studies. But is totally biased idea as it is definitely possible to learn language and have fun simultaneously. One of the best ways of practicing it considered to be interactive games. We all totally believe that understanding and learning language is hard and can be frustrating to follow. But through well-chosen interactive games students not only have a break but also, they are able to have opportunity to practice their language skills.

Interactive activities are educational or recreational exercises that require active participation from the individuals involved. These activities typically involve direct engagement and interaction with the content, materials, or other participants, rather than passive observation or listening. Interactive activities can include games, simulations, discussions, group projects, hands-on experiments, and other forms of experiential learning that encourage collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and engagement. They are often used in classrooms, workshops, team-building exercises, and training programs to enhance learning and retention by promoting active involvement and participation.

Engaging in games can significantly boost your cognitive abilities as you learn, enhancing skills like problem-solving, memory, focus, mental quickness, and language proficiency. It is important to choose games that align with the learning environment. Su Kim notes the various advantages of incorporating games into the classroom:

• Games are advantageous and efficient for enhancing vocabulary acquisition in various ways. They offer a refreshing break from traditional language instruction. Primarily, games

promote a sense of enjoyment and relaxation for students, facilitating the retention of new vocabulary. Additionally, the competitive nature of games maintains student engagement and encourages active involvement in learning. Furthermore, vocabulary games introduce real-life situations into the classroom, enhancing the flexible and communicative use of English.

• Games can be used in a range of ways, such as a quick review or a concluding activity to reinforce the lesson. They can also serve as a means to practice a new language in small groups or pairs, introduce new vocabulary or concepts, or provide guidance for writing essays. Games offer flexibility in adjusting the pace of the lesson while engaging students in interactive learning.

• In addition, games can resist the burden or fear of making mistakes in front of our friends or colleagues (we have all felt this way before) and make the learning process smoother and more efficient.

• Games can be tied up with individualize instruction, which definitely aid pupils to become more self-confident and independent thinkers.

• Games play an important role in eliminating students' stress and anxiety, which improves their language acquisition. Pupils indeed memorize information better and faster when they learn in a relaxed state. Games can add to the concept of such an atmosphere.

• games are considered to be the most important way to have pupils revise linguistic concepts that they have already learned and been exposed to.

Games enhance language learning by providing motivation and interaction, leading to faster and more effective knowledge acquisition compared to other methods. The competitive nature of games encourages student participation and learning, as they naturally strive to win. In addition to being enjoyable, games facilitate language acquisition, prompting students to use the language to communicate effectively. Games also create a relaxed atmosphere that reduces anxiety, helping students remember information more efficiently. By engaging all language skills within a single activity, games can boost learners' achievement, improving test scores, communication abilities, vocabulary knowledge, and overall language skills. C. Riedle underscores the benefits of using games in the classroom to cater to the needs of modern students and enhance their desire to learn, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes.

Flores (2015) categorizes gamification elements into two main types: proprietary features such as badges, levels, and time constraints. These elements primarily aim to foster a competitive atmosphere and enhance feelings of achievement. Additionally, they incorporate social aspects like interaction and cooperation. Kenéz (2015) and Rigóczki (2016) emphasize that the gaming process is defined by a principle of slowness and gradual progression, allowing language learners to manage their participation based on voluntary engagement. As the difficulty of levels increases, the learning objectives should also become more challenging; repetitive tasks can diminish motivation (Kenéz, 2015). He further outlines key criteria for implementing gamification in education, stating that it is crucial to decompose the process into elements. A significant consideration is to design the game with multiple stages, enabling learners to join or catch up later.

Some authors argue that language games should be positioned as a central component of foreign language teaching programs rather than being considered peripheral. They emphasize

that games, in addition to being enjoyable, have specific goals and are governed by rules. S. M. Silvers, author of "Games for the Classroom and English Speaking Club," asserts that many teachers view games as tools to prevent monotonous repetition in lessons and to fill time. He highlights the importance of creating a relaxed environment where authentic learning can occur, allowing learners to apply the target language they have been exposed to and practiced. According to Greenall's definition, games can arouse positive competition among students engaged in language activities. The widespread acceptance of using games in foreign language classrooms is evident in the numerous benefits they offer learners. Experienced writers have emphasized the educational value of games.

Games are seen as one of the most important components in EFL classrooms. They include activities which have goals and rules at the same time fun. Hadfield (1990; Quoted in Deesri, 2002) describes games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun." Foreign language learning games can be considered as a framework to provide a meaningful context for language acquisition. Constantinescu (2012) points that learners can improve their understanding of written and oral English through games. Games assist learn words and structures in a context using correct pronunciation and spelling. Games play a crucial role in the language learning classrooms despite the fact that great number of teachers are not aware of it as a learning strategy. However; it has lots of benefits to the learning process of the learners. Firstly, games prevent the lesson from being ordinary and boring. Conversely, they create a successful and positive classroom environment where students and their learning are central.

Effectiveness of interactive educational games

Calderón and Ruiz (2015) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature, revealing that 53 studies focused on evaluating the effectiveness of various educational games between November 2013 and April 2015. In comparison, the health and wellness sector utilized 18 games, while the professional learning and training domain utilized 20 games. Their analysis showed that 60% of the studies in higher education settings explored the efficacy of educational games, whereas only 40% examined their impact in primary or secondary school settings. This suggests that educators in higher education are more inclined to integrate educational games with traditional teaching methods to enhance student learning, demonstrating a creative approach to enriching the learning experience. In addition, students can receive feedback/results immediately to get answers, instead of receiving delayed feedback from traditional assessment methods (e.g., tests and examinations). Moreover, some educational gamification may help to reduce limitations, including time and place, as portable devices can enable students to study and/or learn anytime and anywhere. These user-friendly tools can make difficult subjects easier to understand and memorize (Hanus and Fox, 2015) In other words, with the use of educational games, the learning process is considered to be more interesting (Calliari, 1991) motivating (Sun-Lin and Chiou, 2019) achieving knowledge retention (Gros, 2007) increasing attention (Prensky, 2003), and can even enhance peer communication and social skills (Liao et al., 2011).

A discussion of interactive games and learning should consider not only the solo activity of a person playing game but also the social environment in which game occurs. So interactive games are considered to be social activity. According to the researches, games help students to improve social skills ever before and helps them to meet new friends by having firmer

bonds.

In conclusion, interactive games are considered to be the most important part of learning process as it possesses abundant positive benefits including development of social skill, elimination of stress and boredom during lesson and easy and effective learning acquisition. Interactive activities provide a hands-on and engaging approach to vocabulary acquisition, leading to improved retention, understanding, and application of new words. By incorporating interactive activities into language learning programs, educators can enhance vocabulary acquisition and create a more engaging and effective learning experience for students.

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