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EDUCATIONAL GAMES AS MEANS OF DEVELOPING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

The article highlights the place of educational games in the process of developing the foreign language communicative competence of secondary school students and briefly discusses types of games, their components and main functions. The article demonstrates some productive experience in using educational games at the lessons of English highlighting their potential in enhancing students' communicative competence.

In the period of important transformations in Ukraine taking place in all spheres of public life, one of the most important is the reform of education. The project under the title of the New Ukrainian School presupposes a radical and systematic transformation of general secondary education in Ukraine.

As it is stated in the Concept of Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Reforming General Secondary Education, the main attention should be paid to the student of the new Ukrainian school due to the introduction of the principle of learner-centered education. In other words, the new Ukrainian school should be the place where the child enjoys to be studying.

As far as teaching foreign languages is concerned, one of the most popular issues is the question how to teach and organize the learning process enhancing schoolchildren's interest in learning and intensifying their activities during the lesson.

There have been a lot of research and studies conducted by foreign scholars who devoted their scientific research to the problems of teaching a foreign language through games (W.Howard, C Herd, W.R Lee, J Revell, J.Taylor, R Walford). Representatives of Ukrainian methodology of foreign language teaching (E. Dianova, T. Oliynyk, S.Perkas) have contributed a lot to our knowledge of the aspects of language acquisition through games [8].

D. Byrne defines an educational game as a technique in which a student freely improvises within a certain situation, acting as one of its participants. Similarly, an educational role play is defined by E. Dianova as a spontaneous behavior of a student, his reaction to the behavior of other people involved in an artificially created communicative situation. The scholar states that games are one of the most effective methods in developing students' foreign language communicative skills. As a result of the game, there can be achieved high activity of schoolchildren, their cohesion in learning activity, improvement of their linguistic competence and a great desire for new knowledge [2, p. 92].

The article highlights the place of the educational game in the process of developing students' foreign language communicative competence, and briefly discusses types of games, their components and main functions. Our intention is to share our experience in using games at the lessons of English and demonstrate their potential in enhancing students' communicative competence.

We strongly believe that the usage of games is an effective tool and form of teaching English at school. Games are the key to the organization of learning process of a foreign language in the classroom. Introducing educational games at the lesson, the teacher creates a friendly and cheerful atmosphere in the classroom. We support V.Artemov's opinion that while playing, children have the opportunity to assign roles, to observe each other's activities, and to help others. During an educational game they play a variety of social and interpersonal roles while implementing gestures, postures, facial expressions, eye contact etc. [1, p.64].

It should be born in mind that the cognitive activity of students and the level of awareness of their educational information increase in accordance with their life and educational experience. Hence, while introducing games into a foreign language learning process the teacher should take into account the students' age characteristics. For younger children, it would be advisable to use fairy-tale games with positive and negative roles; for seniors, it would be interesting to use, 'a round table dispute' to discuss important issues. It is also quite possible to integrate different types of playing activities at different levels of the learning process.

Various forms of games that enrich and enhance the learning process can be conducted at any lesson depending on the topic and purpose. Role plays include enacting situations concerning

shopping, restaurant visits and table reservations, as well as menu items, discussions on holiday arrangements and travel. The teacher can diversify the conversation plot, the roles of the participants, or the form of the lesson, based on the topic of the lesson. It is more like a series of questions and answers, which will be relevant for any topic of the lesson and will help improve the communication skills of children [6, p. 22].

The central role in teaching a foreign language through games belongs to the teacher who clearly understands the purpose and the result of the game, its details and the structure, taking into account the following components: motivational goal, content, procedure, control, evaluation and summary.

To make students' learning during the game effective, the teacher should explain the game in a thorough and concise manner, defining the situation and the tasks to each player beforehand to prevent his/her own intervention during the game which will make children act independently in cooperation with other participants.

G. Kretova states that the potential of introducing games in the classroom consists in the fact that the participants of the game have the opportunity to show their creative approach to the task or to show acting skills at the highest level. The role play has an interactive character because of the expression of the spontaneous behavior of the learner, and his reaction to the behavior of other people involved in the hypothetical situation [3, p. 53].

D. Byrne defines the role play as a technique when the student is free to improvise within the given situation, acting as one of its participants. The scholar claims that participation in the role play helps activate the foreign language activity of students, developing in them the ability to express their thoughts independently, forming their sense of confidence and responsibility [4, p.108].

Let's proceed with some examples of role plays specially selected for students of middle secondary school. In our experience, while explaining the situation, we practice the use of role cards describing the role, illustrations of the situation played by the students, information about the person, his life experience, habits and hobbies.

Role Play 1 «Sowing the Seeds for Survival» [7, p. 78]

Students join in two groups.

The students of **Group 1** are participants of the symposium (a conference or meeting to discuss a particular subject), the purpose of which is to attract attention of the public to the growing problem of endangered species of plants. They are assigned the roles of botanists and environmentalists who are specially qualified in different issues of the flora on the planet who are here today to discuss the problem of safeguarding the threatened species of plants.

The students of **Group 2** are the journalists who are interested in the discussion because they would like to find the materials for the series of articles about the dangers facing the flora of the planet Earth.

Task for the students of Group 1:

Student A You are the host of the symposium. At the beginning of the talk announce the special theme of the conference and its purpose. Introduce the participant of the talk. Your guest speaker today is Patricia Bennett – the botanist and environmentalist dealing with flora the rainforests of the Amazon. Welcome the guest and thank her for joining the symposium.

At the end of the talk thank your guest for coming in. Conclude the talk saying that everybody present has learned a lot about endangered plants. Wish your guest good luck in her continuing struggle to save endangered species of plants.

Student B You are Patricia Bennett – the environmentalist and botanist dealing with the issues of the influence of industrialization on the flora of the planet Earth.

Task for the students of Group 2:

Ask questions about the dangers facing the flora of the planet Earth.

Speaker 1

You are Sandra Welchek. As far as endangered species are concerned, you want to know which of them run a risk to become extinct to a greater extent: animals or plants.

Speaker 2

You are Jenny Dooley. You've never heard before that plants are so much in danger of becoming extinct. You would like to know what the major threat to the survival of plants is.

Speaker 3

You are Barbara Wolf. Hearing the previous questions and the replies of the botanists you may conclude that the situation is rather severe. You want to know if there is any optimistic prognosis about the future perspectives for safeguarding the flora of our planet.

Role Play 2 «The Student Exchange Program between Ukraine and the UK».

Students join in two groups.

Group 1 is assigned to take on the role of the participants from Ukraine.

Group 2 is assigned to take on the role of the participants from England.

Tasks for the students of Group 1:

Tell 'foreign guests' about your country, its geographical location, the capital city, traditions and customs, rights and responsibilities of Ukrainian citizens, attractions, as well as name and prove all the advantages of Ukraine over other countries. Ask at least one question and answer at least one question

Tasks for the students of Group 2:

Tell your friends about England, its geographical location, the capital city, traditions and customs, major holidays, attractions of Great Britain, express the hope that you will have fun and enjoyment coming to Ukraine.

The role play mentioned above is aimed at developing the communicative competence in students of middle secondary school. According to W. Lee, with the help of such educational games, students not only improve their speaking skills but also broaden their minds, cultivate respect to foreigners, their culture and life style [5, p.67].

We consider that the advantages of this type of role play consist in the fact that children learn to express their thoughts and prove them, analyze and synthesize their knowledge, spontaneously answer the questions of others and ask questions competently. This role play instills in children politeness, respect of others, and appreciation of the achievements of other people, along with patriotism, friendship and loyalty to people from all over the world.

The experience gained while introducing role plays into the learning process in the English language classroom has given us the opportunity to prove the efficiency of games as an effective means of teaching a foreign language as far as it ensures a natural, easy and, above all, interesting way to develop the students' foreign language communicative competence.

In conclusion, being an integral component in the system of teaching a foreign language learning games play an essential role in developing of students' foreign language communicative skills, enhancing their communication, the acquisition of new knowledge, developing their perception, memory and imagination.

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