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THE MAIN ISSUES OF GAME – BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN PRESCHOOL

Modern Ukrainian preschool educational reforms focus on teaching English to children at the early ages and widely support a strategy that may create both competent and competitive citizens. This calls for new learning technologies and methods as well as new learning materials for preschool. So learning a foreign language at preschool-age becomes an essential problem of Ukrainian pedagogy. The main problems are to motivate preschool students, maintain their interest and support them in the process of studying.

The most appropriate program for children in the preschool years is a game-based program. Preschoolers' rate of learning English is influenced by a number of factors that include their position in the early years setting, their interests and abilities, their level of physical and mental development, their previous experiences or exposure to English, the attitudes of the teachers, and the type of program provided.

The growing number of studies (G. Bedson, D. Elkonin, A. Ersoz, G.Lewis, Ye.Matetska, T.Shkvarina, R. Tyson) shows that one of the activities that really works is educational game. Game is a significant part of what life means to preschool-age children. Preschool children are extremely active and mobile. They have a lively imagination. This is a stage of intensive physical, intellectual and social development. Preschool learners have a plenty of benefits from learning through games. Using games in teaching English is a creative way to develop listening and speaking skills of preschoolers as well as improve their memory, develop learners' social and cultural competence, stimulate physical activity. Games fully involve preschool-age children in the learning process.

According to “Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics” (1995) game is “an organized activity that usually has the following properties: a particular task or objective, a set of rules, competition between players, and communication between players by spoken or written language” [1, p.89].

T. Talapkanych (2008) demonstrated that “games are a different kind of playing activity. They are highly structured and include specific rules to be followed. Educational games are workable because they can easily attract the attention of preschool students, thus influencing their motivation and abilities” [3].

Thus, numerous modern pedagogical researches (L. Artemova, Q. Deng, J. Hadfield, T.Polonska, T. Shkvarina, O. Sorokina, O. Yankivska) represent an educational game as one of the most exciting teaching tool in preschool. It is necessary to underline its leading role in teaching English language to preschool children. An educational game satisfied human fundamental need to learn by providing enjoyment, passionate involvement, motivation, creativity, social interaction and emotion in the game itself while the learning takes place.

There are a great number of educational games that are successfully used in preschool language learning. The type of educational game most valued in the preschool years is imaginative game. For example, free game provides ideal opportunities for children to engage in pretend talk. Socio-

dramatic game offers children the opportunity for problem solving, creative thinking and developing communication skills. Children are always full of energy so that physical activities attract their attention strongly.

According to R. Tyson “educational games must have the following features: 1. A game must be more than just fun. 2. A game should involve “friendly” competition. 3. A game should keep all of the students involved and interested. 4. A game should encourage students to focus on the use of language rather than on the language itself. 5. A game should give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material” [2, p. 3].

To sum up, according to the studies aforementioned, using educational games to teach young learners can enhance their motivation, confidence, and vocabulary acquisition, because of the advantages of challenging content it is easier to capture their attention than with traditional teaching. In our day and age game-based language learning is a useful tool for teaching English to preschool-age learners which heads basic role in encouraging and motivating preschoolers to learn a foreign language better. The general benefits of educational games are:

- 1) affective (encourages creative and spontaneous use of language, promotes communicative competence, motivates, stress free educational environment);
- 2) cognitive (support developing of all communicative skills, permanent repeating, reviewing and revising materials guarantee its understanding and remembering by every learner);
- 3) class dynamics (student centered, fosters whole class participation, easily adjusted for age, level, and interests).

In conclusion, teaching English in preschool through educational games is both an effective and interesting way. It becomes clear that there are many advantages of using educational games for development preschoolers’ foreign language communication. Among them is positive motivating influence, creation a meaningful context for language use, providing language practice in the various listening and speaking skills. Games bring in relaxation and fun for preschool students, thus help them learn English more easily. Educational games help preschool learners to make and sustain the effort of learning. They can be used effectively in order to create the proper conditions for language learning for each young student that would enable every child to increase their cognitive activity, creative skills and develop a foreign communicative culture. The role of education games in the process of teaching preschoolers is to create a comfortable and stress free classroom atmosphere. It is arranged to maximize learning progress, social and emotional development of young English learners. We may say that in modern Ukrainian society knowledge of English are socially demanded and game-based learning English is one of the most efficient technologies in teaching English language and makes this process available to a wider range of preschoolers.

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