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INTEGRATING INTELLECTUAL GAMES INTO THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING PROCESS: METHODS AND OUTCOMES

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Annotation

The article analyzes the pedagogical value of intellectual games in foreign language teaching. It highlights that games lower students' anxiety, increase motivation, and support the effective acquisition of vocabulary and grammar. By creating a relaxed atmosphere, games promote spontaneous communication and the use of authentic language. The article also outlines key criteria for selecting suitable games and provides recommendations for integrating them into different stages of a lesson. Intellectual games are shown to help students overcome language barriers and improve overall learning outcomes.

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается педагогическая значимость интеллектуальных игр в обучении иностранному языку. Отмечается, что игры снижают тревожность студентов, повышают мотивацию и способствуют эффективному усвоению лексики и грамматики. Создавая непринуждённую атмосферу, игры стимулируют спонтанное общение и использование подлинных языковых выражений. Автор определяет критерии выбора игр и даёт рекомендации по их включению в разные этапы занятия.

Keywords

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foreign language teaching; intellectual games; communicative competence; vocabulary acquisition; grammar practice; language motivation; learner engagement; teaching methods; classroom interaction; game-based learning.

Introduction

Many experienced methodologists argue that games used in foreign language classes possess significant pedagogical value (Harmer, 2007; Wright, 2006). Intellectual games encourage students to use the foreign language spontaneously, without overthinking the correct form of expression. (Lee1979) also notes that games should occupy a central rather than peripheral place in foreign language instruction.

Indeed, there are many advantages to integrating games into language lessons. Games reduce learners' fear and anxiety about making mistakes and help them overcome language barriers (Richard-Amato, 1996). They serve a motivational function and prompt even the most reserved students to express their opinions and emotions in the foreign language. Moreover, games relieve tension in the classroom and enhance the learning process by introducing novelty into the routine structure of a lesson (Zimnyaya, 2001).

By creating a relaxed atmosphere, games enable students to acquire new expressions and ideas more easily and quickly. The use of games is also beneficial because students engage with authentic communicative phrases and expressions in the foreign language (Pica, 2005). In ordinary lessons, this is often impossible since teachers and students tend to rely on familiar, repetitive daily phrases.

Games enrich students' vocabulary quickly and effortlessly. New words are memorized far more effectively than through rote learning (Lewis and Hill, 1992). Games entertain, encourage, and teach students to communicate rapidly and easily

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in the foreign language. They also allow students to appreciate the beauty of the language rather than perceiving it solely as a source of difficulties.

Selection Criteria and Methodology

Teachers must know how to select an appropriate game for a specific stage of instruction. A carefully chosen game can yield maximum positive results in explaining new material (Rixon, 1981). Games should be selected in accordance with students' proficiency level, age, and the complexity of the learning material, as not all games are suitable for all age groups.

For instance, games using pictures and visual aids are appealing to first-year students, while debates and crossword-based tasks are more appropriate for senior students (Mourão and Robinson, 2009). Age must be taken into account when choosing the topic, theme, and structure of a game. Games become challenging when students have never encountered the material or expressions on which the game is based.

Another important criterion for selecting a game is time. It should correspond to the lesson plan. If only a few minutes remain until the end of the lesson, the teacher should choose a simple, time-efficient game. If sufficient time is available, more complex and longer games may be used. It is not advisable to devote too much time to a single type of game, as it may become monotonous (Wright, 2006).

Implementation in the Classroom

The most appropriate time for games is at the beginning or end of a lesson. “Warming-up” games are used at the start of a class, whereas “competition games” are suitable for the final stage. Games may be used at various stages of a lesson if chosen appropriately.

A game should consist of three stages:

1. **Presentation**—the teacher introduces the game and explains its rules;

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2. **Monitoring**—the teacher supervises the correct progression of the game and the students' use of phrases and expressions in the foreign language;
3. **Completion**—the teacher concludes the game and announces the winner.

Games can be used not only for introducing new material but also for consolidating previously learned content in an engaging and enjoyable manner. Games are essential in vocabulary instruction and in working with new words. For example, teachers may use gap-fill contexts requiring students to insert newly learned vocabulary. Another option is to divide the class into two groups and distribute sets of cards containing new words. Students then take turns explaining the word on their card in the foreign language so that their partner can guess it. This approach fosters both vocabulary retention and speaking skills.

Games can also be employed when teaching grammar. For instance, after introducing the four types of questions in English (general, special, alternative, disjunctive), a teacher may use the game “Famous Names” for practice. Cards bearing the names of famous individuals are placed face down, and students ask questions to guess the name their classmate has drawn. The teacher monitors the accuracy of question formation and corrects mistakes.

Thus, games help students use authentic language, communicate freely, express their thoughts without pressure, and overcome language barriers.

Conclusion

The integration of intellectual games into the foreign language classroom is more than a recreational activity; it is a vital pedagogical strategy that enhances communicative competence. As demonstrated, games serve a dual function: psychologically, they reduce anxiety and lower the affective filter, allowing students to overcome language barriers; linguistically, they provide a context for the

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authentic use of vocabulary and grammar. By shifting the focus from rote memorization to active usage, games foster an environment where students are motivated to express themselves spontaneously.

However, the success of this method relies heavily on the teacher's ability to select games that are appropriate for the students' age, proficiency level, and specific lesson objectives. Whether used for warming up, introducing new concepts, or consolidating knowledge, games must be carefully structured through clear presentation, active monitoring, and constructive completion. Ultimately, when implemented strategically, intellectual games transform the learning process from a routine task into a dynamic, engaging, and effective educational experience.

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