

LANGUAGE LEARNING GAMES WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

JOGOS DE APRENDIZAGEM DE LÍNGUAS AO ENSINAR INGLÊS PARA ESTUDANTES JOVENS

JUEGOS DE APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS AL ENSEÑAR INGLÉS A JÓVENES APRENDICES

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ABSTRACT: The relevance of the study is due to the need to optimize the teaching-learning process by reducing children's stress and increasing their self-esteem via employing game-based techniques. It is the language learning games (LLG) that allow greater involvement of beginners into the educational process. The purpose of the study is to develop a model of a gamified English lesson, on the basis of which it is possible to conduct classes with younger students. The research methods were the method of a needs analysis (a questionnaire and an oral test) and a pedagogical experiment. 20 teachers took part in the survey, with the experiment involving 39 students. The model of an English lesson based on LLG has been developed and tested. The developed model of a gamified lesson has proved its effectiveness. The number of students experiencing difficulty demonstrating language skills decreased significantly. Properly chosen LLG had a beneficial effect on memorizing speech pattern and words under study. The study has demonstrated that gamification incorporated into foreign language education contributes to the creation of a learner-centered educational environment, which allows minimizing stress and increasing academic performance.

KEYWORDS: Language learning games. Game-based techniques. Teaching young learners. Student-oriented environment. Gamified education.

RESUMO: O objetivo do estudo é desenvolver um modelo de aula de inglês gamificada, com base na qual seja possível realizar aulas com alunos mais jovens. Os métodos de pesquisa foram o método de análise de necessidades (um questionário e uma prova oral) e um experimento pedagógico. 20 professores participaram da pesquisa, com o experimento envolvendo 39 alunos. O modelo de uma aula de inglês baseado em LLG foi desenvolvido e testado e este provou sua eficácia. O número de alunos com dificuldade em demonstrar habilidades linguísticas diminuiu significativamente. O LLG adequadamente escolhido teve um efeito benéfico na memorização do padrão de fala e das palavras em estudo. O estudo

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demonstrou que a gamificação incorporada ao ensino de línguas estrangeiras contribui para a criação de um ambiente educacional centrado no aluno, o que permite minimizar o estresse e aumentar o desempenho acadêmico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Jogos de aprendizagem de línguas. Técnicas baseadas em jogos. Ensinando jovens aprendizes. Ambiente voltado para o aluno. Educação gamificada.*

RESUMEN: *El propósito del estudio es desarrollar un modelo de una lección de inglés gamificada, sobre la base de la cual es posible realizar clases con estudiantes más jóvenes. Los métodos de investigación fueron el método de un análisis de necesidades (un cuestionario y una prueba oral) y un experimento pedagógico. 20 profesores participaron en la encuesta, y el experimento involucró a 39 estudiantes. El modelo de una lección de inglés basado en LLG ha sido desarrollado y probado. El modelo desarrollado de una lección gamificada ha demostrado su eficacia. El número de estudiantes que experimentaron dificultades para demostrar habilidades lingüísticas disminuyó significativamente. El LLG correctamente elegido tuvo un efecto beneficioso en la memorización del patrón del habla y las palabras en estudio. El estudio ha demostrado que la gamificación incorporada a la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras contribuye a la creación de un entorno educativo centrado en el alumno, lo que permite minimizar el estrés y aumentar el rendimiento académico.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juegos de aprendizaje de idiomas. Técnicas basadas en juegos. Enseñando a los jóvenes aprendices. Ambiente orientado al estudiante. Educación gamificada.*

Introduction

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its Roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme (GAP) on education prioritizes sustainability of education. GAP highlights the importance of “rethinking learning environments” so that it can “inspire learners to act for sustainability” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 11). Moreover, “all individuals and societies must be equipped with and empowered by knowledge, skills and values” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 11). That is why “pedagogy and learning environments” play crucial role in designing educational climate, which employs “interactive, learner-centred, exploratory, action-oriented” techniques (UNESCO, 2014, p. 11).

In this respect, game-based techniques today are considered an integral part of teaching any subject, foreign languages in particular. Before talking about the currently existing techniques, as well as their special role in teaching English to younger students, it must be remembered that the phenomenon of the game itself is much more complex than it might seem at first sight.

Game in general are of great importance in human life, regardless of the age group. The anthropological aspect of games is fully described in E. Fink's (FINK, 1988). He claims that the game, being present in all aspects of human life, is more than a natural element of pedagogical methodology. "The idea of (any) games being important for human well-being and society is indeed well-known since the beginning of mankind" (KNEER; JACOBS, 2018, p. 57). "Game is a natural means for children to understand the world around them (KLIMOVA, 2015, p. 1157).

The psychophysiological peculiarities of the age group of younger schoolchildren are characterized by problems concerning concentration, restlessness, highly developed imagination and a great need for directed motivation and stimulation to study foreign languages. The use of language games during an English lesson in this age group helps the teacher to overcome all the difficulties mentioned above. At primary school, young learners face a completely new and complex type of activities. At this stage, special importance should be given to boost their motivation by creating younger student-oriented friendly educational environment.

Our study is relevant despite the fact that the use of language games during an English lesson still requires deeper research especially nowadays when school education focuses on learner centeredness and creation of "humanist classroom" (HARMER, 2013, p. 58). Experts believe that "game components included in communicative situations" foster learners' "cognitive activity when studying lexical units, while forming the foundations of the term system, grammar system, and rules of speech etiquette" (RYABCHIKOVA *et al.*, 2020, p. 200). In this respect, the article aims to show how properly a model of a worked-out game-based English lesson plan facilitates teaching-learning process, minimizes young learners' stress and does not allow teachers to neglect their discomfort and disengagement.

Literature Review

A game is a universal concept that applies to all spheres of human activity. The gamification of educational process intensifies of learners' engagement "similar to what games can do", upgrades "their particular skills and optimize their learning" (SMIDERLE *et al.*, 2020).

Specialists (ZIMNYAYA, 2001) highlight such features of a game as: collectivity, conventionality, structure, interest, emotivity, motivation, the possibility to win.

It is obvious that learning a foreign language should contribute to the development of students' language skills, creative abilities as well as memory, attention, thinking, and help them to socialize and widen their horizons, “determine cultural background of learners” (REYES-CHUA; LIDAWAN, 2019). At the very beginning, children are quite enthusiastic about learning a foreign language. However, as the material becomes more and more difficult the more often teachers witness the decrease of students' enthusiasm. “Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained” continuously (WRIGHT *et al.*, 1984). Games play a crucial role in sustaining their interest and work (WRIGHT *et al.*, 1984).

At the stage of studying grammar, as a rule, interest fades away, “which can sometimes be frustrating” (ERSÖZ, 2000). Traditional ways of teaching are boring and do not lead to the desired result, but “well-chosen games are invaluable” since they not only “give students a break” but “allow students to practice language skills” (ERSÖZ, 2000). The learning process will become much more effective if students are actively involved in the process. For younger students, the most relevant method of stimulating the activity of students is a game that promotes intensive language practice.

LLG can be used both at the beginning of the lesson to warm up, attract attention, focus all students on the learning process, and at the end of the lesson to relieve tension after learning new difficult material, change activities during the lesson. It is important that the games should be interesting for the given age group and help to facilitate young learners' a foreign language acquisition. Ethel Reyes-Chua et al highlight that “beneficial or well-adjusted” games are to be combined with traditional teaching technologies and the teacher must take into consideration “students' different learning styles with sensitivity, creativity and flexibility to sustain higher engagement” (REYES-CHUA; LIDAWAN, 2019, p. 111).

One of the most important advantages of integrating language games into the learning process is that all students at a time are actively involved in the lesson. Participation in games helps to form younger students' ability to cooperate without showing aggression, teach attentiveness and responsibility. In this respect, experts assert that nowadays the key challenge a teacher deals with is “raising a harmoniously developed personality, competitive and in demand in the modern multicultural society” (TATARINOVA *et al.*, 2021).

Obviously, the ability of a teacher to turn a regular exercise from a textbook into an entertaining game helps to significantly increase the progress of the class and boost the

acquisition of the material. By creating the conditions for achieving success in the process of learning a foreign language, it is possible to fuel children's desire to study the subject, be interested in it, and improve their knowledge. Being involved in LLG children express themselves "individually or in a group, trying one's hand, applying one's knowledge, benefit, and publicly showing the achieved result" (PLAKHOVA *et al.*, 2019).

It is important to take into account that games based on a certain skill is not appropriate as it can lead to the situation when winner are the same students who do not face difficulty in practicing this skill. At the same time, the rest of the group quickly get bored and demotivated because they feel they have no chances to win and get the prize. On the contrary, games in which skills vary are considered more suitable. Thus, each student may demonstrate their knowledge and skills and be a winner. Team games also appear to be resultative in the educational process. On the one hand, they allow students to feel part of the team, experience less stress and contribute to the victory. On the other hand, students with poorer knowledge improve their skills by getting support from the groupmates with a better command of the language. Declan Mulkeen maintains that many students are "motivated by competition", game elements enable them to compete "with others for high scores, rewards and leader-board rankings" (MULKEEN, 2018).

The outcome of the gamified lesson depends on the teacher's flair for choosing games and to employ proper teaching tools effective for a certain group of students taking into consideration their individual characteristics and learning abilities. It makes educational process more productive and effective and helps teachers to avoid the so-called "labelling" and not to divide a group into "gifted", "average", "poor" students (KOROVINA *et al.*, 2017).

Educators underline the importance of LLG and game elements in the implementation of the following methodological tasks:

1. to create the atmosphere when a child is psychologically ready for verbal communication;
2. to provide an opportunity to revise and repeat the material under study in a natural desire to revise and repeat;
3. to teach students choose the right words and speech patterns for appropriate context (ZAIR-BEK, 2011).

Despite the great number variety of language learning games, they all have similar features that make them an effective tool in the teaching/learning process. Here are the most typical features:

- children/learners enjoy the very process of the game, not only the result;
- positive emotional aspect of activity, rivalry, competitiveness leads to the increase of motivation;
- rules of a game reflect its idea, logic and timing (ZVERLOVA, 1994).

Thus, Hadfield characterizes a game as “an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun” (HADFIELD, 1990). She claims that “inclusion of games as an integral part” of educational process enables “intensive language practice”. Moreover, she concludes that games are effective “diagnostic tool for the teacher” which identifies “areas of difficulty” (HADFIELD, 2010, p. 5).

In the field of teaching foreign languages, experts suggest various types and classifications of games. Thus, Hadfield J. divides all games into two major categories: competitive games, in which participants try to win, and cooperative games, when participants act as a team (HADFIELD, 2010).

Dias (2019), in his turn, defines six types of games:

- interactive and interchanging games (which help “release tensions and overcome personal reserves”);
- games of touch and trust (that allow students to overcome psychological barriers gradually involving touch that results in further trust and confidence);
- games of creativity and reflection (aimed at stimulation of “imaginary expression, intuition and creativity”);
- games of management (provide students with the opportunity to express themselves in a team work, draw their attention to “planning, managing resources, simulating situations and learning specific techniques”);
- closing games (they allow both the teacher and students evaluate what has been done and achieved during the lesson);
- games of skill and strategy (they deal with developing concrete skills through repetition, drilling, practising “but without abandoning the competitive aspect”).

In Russian methodology A. V. Konyshева (2006, 2007) identifies the following types of games:

- object games (the game of children with objects of material and spiritual culture or their substitutes, subject to the cultural and historical characteristics of these objects and their direct purpose);

- role-playing games (children play different roles);
- business games (modelling of decision-making processes and mechanisms; developing certain social skills and proper self-esteem);
- imitation games (interactive, educational games focused on developing students' critical thinking, team building, boosting brainstorming);
- dramatization games (children portray cartoon characters or characters of fairy tales, poems, songs, etc.).

Role-playing games and dramatization games seem similar. Nevertheless, as for the latter participants should follow the plot of a fairy tale or a poem dramatized. At the same time, it is necessary to highlight that both of these games along with the others mentioned above have a positive effect on the development of children's speech, enrich and expand the vocabulary, foster creativity.

M. F. Stronin who distinguishes two types of games (STRONIN, 2001) suggests another classification:

1. Preparatory language games (grammar, lexical, phonetic, spelling games) aimed at developing and improving language skills;
2. Creative language games (which develop speaking skills and creative thinking).

In our research we will stick to the classification of M. F. Stronin, since each type of the games focuses on a concrete target skills such as reading, speaking, etc, Grammar of a foreign language is considered the most difficult aspect to master not only for younger students, but also for adults. Given the age characteristics, it is necessary to use grammar games as often as possible, as they contribute to a more effective acquisition of the material. The goals of grammar games are to minimize difficulties in the use of speech patterns through creating communicative situations. We claim that children “easily acquire grammar structures through speech patterns” and willingly use them during the lesson. In addition, phrases and words from songs smooth difficulties in memorizing and further practicing active vocabulary (PUSHKINA *et al.*, 2021).

As for vocabulary, the more new words the students come across, the more efforts they have to take to enlarge the scope of it. In this respect, lexical games turn to be an effective technique employed by teachers when working with young learners. Such games integrated in

the educational process mobilize visual memory and associations. We underline that beginners easier remember names of objects if they are presented in the forms of pictures or toys.

Phonetic games are especially effective at the initial stage of language learning. It is necessary to not only recognize and distinguish the sounds of a foreign language, but also be able to quickly come up with examples of words containing these sounds. Games with letters and phonetic symbols make the learning process less boring, which, as a rule, suggests the monotonous “repeat-after-me” activities. Acquiring correct pronunciation and improving reading skills in a trouble-free way is more resultative.

In contrast to phonetic games, spelling games focus more on writing skills, correct spelling of words and phrases under study, the ability to recognize a word or spot the differences between the words which look or sound similar.

Creative language games stimulate the development of students' language skills by involving their imagination, creative thinking, attentiveness. Properly designed creative games give rise to students' psychological readiness for spontaneous verbal communication in a child-friendly educational environment and “emotionally valuable context” (TATARINOVA; SUNGUROVA, 2019, p. 164).

Educators consider the role of a teacher in planning a game-based lesson properly “to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful” (WRIGHT *et al.*, 1984). All the types of games mentioned above allow a teacher to resort to any of them depending on students' needs as “games can be easily adjusted for age, level, and interests” (SIMPSON, 2019).

Materials and methods

To achieve the goals of the research the method of a needs analysis (a questionnaire and an oral test) and a pedagogical experiment were employed. To work out a model for a language game-based English lesson for young learners, to make a 45-minute lesson more effective and highlight the students' needs we provided twenty primary school English teachers from three primary schools in Moscow, Russia, with the following questionnaire (see **Table 1**).

Table 1 – Questionnaire I

Questions	Answers
1. In your opinion, which of the aspects of learning English is the most difficult for your students? (grammar, writing, reading, listening, memorizing vocabulary)	
2. Do you use game-based technologies during the lesson?	

3. What do you do to encourage your students (hand out stickers for notebooks, sweets, etc.)?	
4. How often do you give your students any creative tasks?	
5. How motivated are your students: 1- 5 scale (where 1 is the least motivated, 5 – the most motivated)?	

Source: Prepared by the authors

After analysing the results of the completed questionnaires, we came to the following conclusions. More than half of the respondents noted that their students had difficulties with grammar and reading exercises. Only six teachers mentioned that they used game technologies during the lesson regularly. According to the completed questionnaires, we found out that the ways to encourage students with any additional materials in the form of stickers, sweets, etc. not used by any teacher. Nine out of twenty teachers gave creative tasks. Finally, the average level of children's interest in English is 4, as six teachers estimated the students' motivation as "5", nine teachers – as "4", and five teachers – as "3".

Thus, we concluded that teachers very rarely use game-based technologies in class, which may lead to demotivation of young learners. Most teachers give difficult grammar and reading exercises as homework, which should be best practiced in the classroom. We believe that it is necessary to use the maximum possible number of language learning games in order to keep students interested in the subject and engaged during the lesson. As homework, it would be better to give tasks aimed to revise the material covered in class.

Research results

When drawing up a lesson plan, the teacher needs to think about how to effectively present the material to students, it is necessary not only to take into account the factors that help students learn new material, but also the factors that develop the individuality of each student, their creative potential. It is natural for children to be fond of fantasizing, discovering and inventing. Employing language learning games (LLG) enables educators "to apply the language material creatively, turn foreign language classes into a process of communication, discussion, research" (PLAKHOVA *et al.*, 2019). That is why a teacher only facilitates the process but only in case if the games are correctly chosen and allow young learners to overcome barriers and feel free to use foreign words in speech, which has a beneficial effect on their learning progress.

The table below presents the worked out English lesson plan with the active use of language learning games (see **Table 2**).

- Subject: English

- Year: 2
- Set of teaching material: "Spotlight" (BYKOVA *et al.*, 2021; BYKOVA *et al.*, 2019).
- Topic of the lesson: "I like Food" (Module 2)
- Duration: 45 minutes
- Goal: developing students' communicative skills on the basis of the vocabulary under study.
- Tasks: activation of educational material on the topic "Food"; development of speaking, reading, listening skills; expansion of span of attention, vocabulary, and memory; revision of letters and sounds.

Table 2 – LLG English lesson plan

Stage № (duration)	Stage description	Activities
1. (1 min.)	Greeting	Teacher: "Hello, children!" Students: "Hello, teacher!" Teacher: "Sit down, please." The students sit down.
2. (10 mins.)	A spelling language game with the use of an audio recording.	The teacher asks the students to listen to the audio file. The speaker pronounces the words of the studied vocabulary on the topic "Food", the class repeats in chorus. Words under study: tomato, apple, chocolate, ice-cream, carrot, peach, sweets, fish, orange, banana. Students, one by one, comes to the board to write down and spell the words they hear. The rest of the pupils write them in their copybooks.
3. (2 mins.)	Active phonetic game "Let's jump".	The teacher shows the card with a transcribed word, for example: [tə'mɑ:təʊ]. The pupil who recognizes the word jumps up pronouncing it and showing the proper picture.
4. (10 mins.)	A grammatical language game to revise the speech pattern "What is it?"	What is required: a prepared presentation with pictures of food, a smartboard, a computer, dummy food. The teacher turns on the presentation, a picture of an apple appears on the screen. Teacher: What is it? The students raise their hands, the teacher calls any student. Student: It is an apple. (If the student answers incorrectly, the next one is called out). For each correct answer, the student receives a dummy or a picture of an apple. At the end of the game, students return them to the teacher pronouncing this word.
5. (10 mins.)	Lexical language game to revise the topic "Food".	What is required: a ball. The teacher throws the ball to any student, while naming any edible or inedible item from previously studied topics. The student catches the ball, if the item is edible, presses it to his/her chest and repeats the word. If the item is inedible, he/she throws the ball back to the teacher and keeps silent.
6. (12 mins.)	Creative auditory language game for developing reading and listening skills.	Pupils look at a small dialogue in their textbook. The teacher turns on the recording. Pupils first listen to the whole dialogue, then close their books and repeat sentence by sentence after the speaker. After that, they roleplay the dialogue on their own in pairs.
7. (2 mins.)	Writing down homework.	Teacher: Guys, you are great! Let's now carefully write down the homework:

		<p>1) Practice spelling and pronunciation of the new words. Write carefully, as for properly written words you will be awarded funny stickers. 2) Practice reading dialogue No. 3 in the textbook on page 53. 3) Exercise No. 4 in the workbook. Pay attention to the speech pattern "What is your favourite food?". Teacher: "Goodbye, children!" Students: "Goodbye, teacher!"</p>
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Source: Prepared by the authors

Now let's consider each stage of the lesson plan in detail.

Stage "Greeting" lasts 1 minute and includes greeting speech formulas for the teacher and students. For students of this age-group, it is better to avoid complex greeting constructions, long dialogues between the teacher and students. If necessary, you can add a few questions from the studied material, for example, "How are you today?", "What is the weather like today?", "What date is it today?", etc. It is important to introduce more difficult questions gradually.

Stage "A spelling language game with the use of an audio recording" (10 minutes). Firstly, this type of language game is methodologically expedient at the beginning of the lesson and aims to revise active vocabulary. Secondly, it contributes to developing writing and spelling skills as well as phonetics at the initial stage of a foreign language acquisition.

The phonetic LLG on *Stage 3* improves pronunciation and intonation skills, trains foreign speech perception, provides drilling of difficult sounds in a less stressful but in a more student-friendly form.

Stage 4 requires a multimedia presentation depicting food. Visualization of the grammar construction "What is it?" along with food images of words under study facilitates memorizing new words and grammar constructions. Moreover, this game involves a competitive element: the more active a student is, the more pictures or dummy food they get, which makes them the winner.

Stage 5 is based on the game "Edible-Inedible", which is popular among young schoolchildren. The teacher throws the ball to one or another student, thus it becomes possible to keep all the students involved. Words are also chosen by the teacher. However, if a student faced difficulty in memorizing this or that word the teacher can throw the ball several times with the same word to the student.

Stage "Creative auditory language game for developing reading and listening skills" is an integral part of the lesson plan for any foreign language, including English. Since reading is one of the most disliked and difficult skills for primary school students, it is necessary to

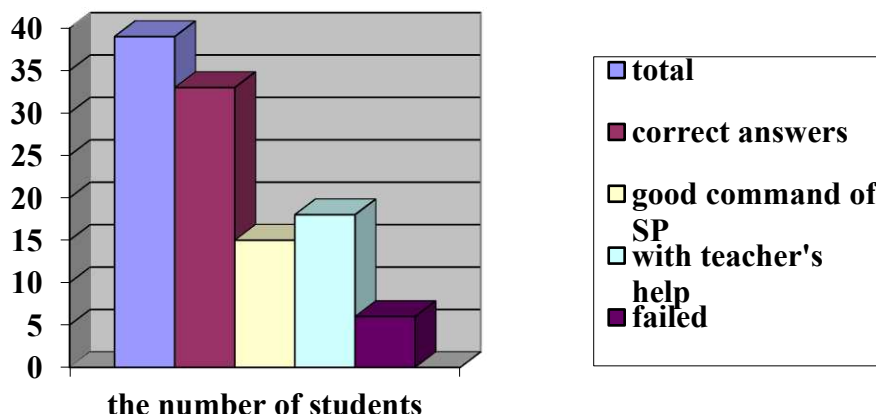
remember about motivation. In such cases to keep them more interested and motivated the teacher suggests repeating the phrases after the speaker, reading in pairs, then roleplaying. It should be noted that teamwork and competitions are of great importance to boost young learners' incentive to study English. Reading in pairs proves to be the most effective activity for practicing reading skills.

Stage 7 is a very important stage for the teacher to draw conclusions, highlight the class progress, to praise the children for hard work. In addition, the teacher must make sure that the pupils understand the homework clearly as it is quite natural that at the end the lesson young learners can be tired and less concentrated on the teacher's words.

To test the effectiveness of the suggested English lesson plan we conducted the experiment in a primary school in Moscow, Russia. It involved three groups of 8-9 year-old pupils; the total number of the participants was 39. The classroom was equipped with a smartboard and a computer with the audio files, and a set of necessary items for the lesson (phonetic cards, pictures, dummy food, a ball) was supplied.

The day before the experimental lesson we asked the pupils 78 questions concerning active vocabulary on the topic "Food", 2 questions for each of 39 students. 33 (85%) students gave correct answers wherein 15 pupils (38%) out of 39 had a good command of the "What is it?", "It is a..." speech patterns (SP). And 18 (46%) students coped with the questions and the vocabulary with the help and encouragement of their teacher. 6 students (15%) failed to answer (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1 – Pre-test results

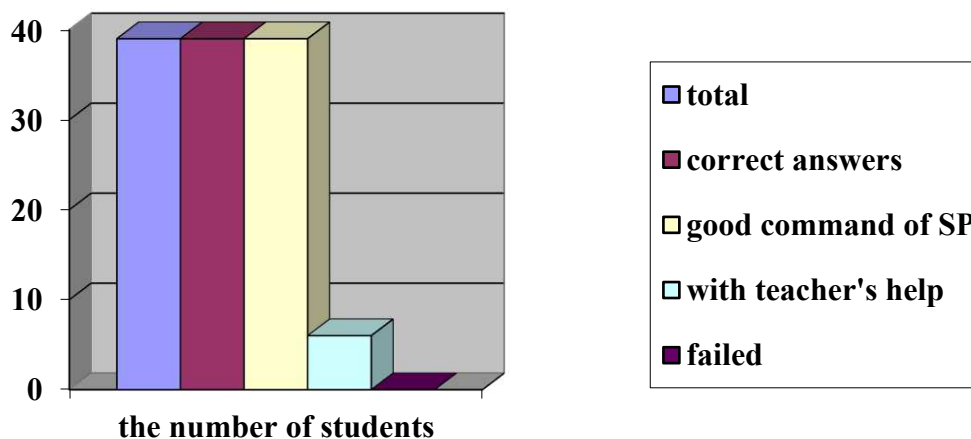


Source: Prepared by the authors

During the experimental lesson itself we implemented our worked-out lesson plan with LLG. Thanks to game-based elements students faced no difficulties in memorizing the main speech patterns and words under study. The active use of the ball, dummy food, cards, pictures kept the whole group engaged in the educational process. Moreover, due to the quick change in the type of activity not a single student was distracted, did not feel tired, did not need any extra encouragement. All children enthusiastically participated in the activities and even helped each other.

The next day we asked the pupils the same questions that were asked before the experiment. Now all the students (100%) succeeded in answering the questions. The 6 students (15%), who faced difficulty in this activity before the experiment, coped with the tasks though with the help of the teacher. It proves that this game-based technique motivated young learners with poor English skills (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2 – Post-test results



Source: Prepared by the authors

According to the figures acquired we witness the significant trend in the participants' academic progress. The number of students who faced no difficulties in using active vocabulary of the lesson has considerably grown - by 15% (before the experiment – 85%, after the experiment – 100%). The number of those who had a good command of speech patterns under study amounted to 38% but after the experiment it rose up to 100%, i.e. by 62%. At the same time, the vast majority of the participants who completed tasks with the help of a teacher considerably decreased – from 46% to 15%, i.e. by 31%. The young learners who failed to do the tasks before the experiment (15%) demonstrated remarkable progress and made no mistakes so the total decrease is 15%.

Results discussion

The study showed that the effectiveness of the suggested lesson model was fully justified, the use of language games during the lesson helped to focus the attention of all students in the learning process. The children's interest had a beneficial effect on memorizing speech pattern and words under study, the variety and active change of activities kept the class involved and ready for tasks. Undoubtedly, LLG contributed to creating team spirit in class: the children enthusiastically helped and supported those who faced difficulties, took their mistakes less dramatically because it was not an exercise but a game.

LLG incorporated into the educational process proved to be an effective tool in developing young learners' language skills:

- the purpose of spelling games is not only to train the correct spelling of the words of the target language but also improves readings and writing skills;
- phonetic games are especially effective at the initial stage of language learning; it is necessary not only to visually recognize the sounds of a letter, but also to distinguish them by ear, to be able to quickly come up with examples of words containing these sounds;
- grammar games are an integral part of the lesson for young learners the grammar aspect is considered the most difficult one to master not only for young students but also adults;
- lexical games are designed to simplify the process of memorizing new words as visual memory and associations are involved; in this type of language games, the more props used, the better;

– the purpose of creative language games is to develop a child's ability to independently practice speaking skills, spontaneously use acquired speech patterns and words under study; they also stimulate young learners' creativity, help overcome psychological barriers.

Moreover, the study confirmed experts' statements concerning gamification. Thus, games prove to be an effective tool in developing “empathy and support among classmates and peers” (WATSON, 2020). Obviously, the teacher needs to change activities during the lesson using different types of LLG as well as use audio/visual facilities, presentations, toys, etc. What is more, game-based techniques significantly appeal to young learners, as children willingly switch from one activity to another during a lesson because of their age and physiological characteristics.

The learning process is much more effective providing students are “in their comfort zone” and actively involved in the process. In this respect, it is essential for a teacher to let the students know that the teacher is “protecting their confidence and self-esteem” (WATSON, 2020). Being an interactive resource, a game allows getting “the effective feedback needed so that students can be sure of their progress on the path from ignorance to knowledge” (RYABCHIKOVA *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusions

This study has shown that the use of language learning games in an English class when teaching young learners. It allows effectively overcoming challenges connected with behavioural peculiarities which are characteristic of the age group such as: distracted attention, restlessness, lack of motivation, fear of making a mistake, etc. As a rule, children face their first difficulties when vocabulary and grammar material become more complicated. It results in decreasing their interest that affects their academic progress. That is why teachers should employ game-based techniques to encourage students and keep them motivated.

Thus, LLG incorporated in a lesson plan help to rally the team, attract attention and keep it throughout the lesson, inspire students, and also contributes to the most effective memorization of the rules of all aspects of the language and lexical units. Indeed, young learners being involved in a game “can work towards group goals by cooperating with a team within a competitive environment”, they are encouraged to exchange ideas and opinions, think critically and strategically (MULKEEN, 2018).

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