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ENHANCING STUDENT COLLABORATION THROUGH GAMES IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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ІГРИ ЯК КОЛАБОРАТИВНА ТЕХНОЛОГІЯ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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This paper attempts to highlight how collaborative games can be implemented in English as Second language classroom and to describe their potential to enhance language learning. It has been shown that such games help learners to develop both language and social skills. By playing collaborative games, students will become critical thinkers, learn to work with one another, and apply these skills to deal with stressful situations, and understand the importance of working together as a team to be successful. Collaboration in ESL classroom brings positive results such as deeper understanding of content, improved self-esteem, and higher motivation to remain on a language task.

Keywords: *collaboration; language games, ESL, social skills.*

У цій статті висвітлюється роль кооперативних ігор на заняттях англійської мови як іноземної та їх потенціал у покращенні мовленнєвих навичок і вмій. Доведено, що такі ігри допомагають студентам формувати як мовні, так і соціальні навички. Використовуючи кооперативні ігри, студенти розвивають критичне мислення, вчаться працювати одне з одним, долати стресові ситуації та розуміти важливість співпраці у команді задля досягнення успіху. Навчання шляхом кооперативних ігор дає позитивні результати, такі як глибше розуміння змісту, підвищення самооцінки, більший рівень мотивації та сконцентрованість на мовному завданні.

Ключові слова: *співпраця; мовні ігри; англійська як іноземна мова; соціальні навички.*

В этой статье освещается роль кооперативных игр на занятиях английского языка как иностранного и их потенциал в улучшении речевых навыков и умений. Доказано, что такие игры помогают студентам формировать как языковые, так и социальные навыки. Используя кооперативные игры, студенты развивают критическое мышление, учатся работать друг с другом, преодолевать стрессовые ситуации и понимать важность сотрудничества в команде для достижения успеха. Обучение путем кооперативных игр дает положительные результаты, такие как глубокое понимание содержания, повышение самооценки, больший уровень мотивации и концентрированность на языковом задании.

Ключевые слова: *сотрудничество; языковые игры; английский как иностранный язык; социальные навыки.*

Nowadays the teacher's role is shifting from being a deliverer of material to a facilitator of learning experiences. English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are continually looking for ways to enhance student collaboration in the classroom and to encourage communication and cooperation among learners.

Simply defined, collaboration is a style of interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily

engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal [4]. A great deal of research has been done in the area of collaborative learning and results have indicated that the collaborative process can encourage cooperation and interaction, result in better motivation, higher performance and better thinking skills [7, p. 54]. According to an Intelligence Community Collaboration study, collaboration is the interaction among two or more individuals encompassing a variety of behaviours, including communication, information sharing, coordination, cooperation, problem solving, and negotiation [6].

Friend and Cook listed the defining characteristics of successful collaboration as follows:

1. Collaboration is voluntary;
2. Collaboration requires parity among participants;
3. Collaboration is based on mutual goals;
4. Collaboration depends on shared responsibility for participation and decision making;
5. Individuals who collaborate share their resources; and
6. Individuals who collaborate share accountability for outcomes [4].

Collaboration is one of the main instructional strategies that can be used to foster positive social interactions and to create an inspiring learning environment for ESL students.

Collaboration can be implemented in English as Second language classroom through different activities as well as language games. Collaborative learning through games as a strategy in ESL classroom is considered as a learning-centered activity that gives students opportunity to train and use languages with a practical purpose and to use their creative skills in a joyful atmosphere.

Thus in this paper, we attempt to show that games can be used as a medium through which students can learn collaboratively with peers in ESL classroom.

Collaborative learning through games is considered as a learning-centered strategy that gives students opportunity to train and use language with a practical purpose in a joyful atmosphere. Iarenko argues that games have a great educational value in teaching ESL to both adults and younger learners by offering students a fun-filled and non-stressful learning atmosphere. While playing games, the learners feel more relaxed and anxiety-free that promotes communicative competence and encourages creative and spontaneous use of language [5, p.126]. Using games is an effective way to improve students' communication and social skills, as highlighted by Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby [9]. Language games encourage students to exchange their ideas and also collaborate with each other while actively participating in a game which. A game is a learner-centered activity, governed by rules, "they are not just a diversion, a break from routine activities, but a way of getting the learner to use the language in the course of the game"[1, p. 199]. Teaching ESL through games can foster language acquisition as it "occurs in a context that is supportive and motivating, communicative and referential, developmentally appropriate, and feedback rich" [3, p.61]. The benefits of using games in the ESL classroom, summarised by Chen, are as follows: they are learner-centered; promote communicative competence; create a meaningful context for language use; increase learning motivation; reduce learning anxiety; integrate various linguistic skills; encourage creative and spontaneous use of language; construct a cooperative learning environment; foster participatory attitudes of the students [2].

There are different types of games available for the teacher to use in their classroom. Cooperative (collaborative) games differ from competitive games, focused on winning or losing, and allow students to work together to make decisions based on creative thinking, communication, and collaboration. Here are two sample collaborative games suggested by Stephen Seifert to use in ESL classroom.

1. One Million Dollar Pyramid

This game promotes communication, collaboration, listening and English expression as students race to get as many words as they can. You will need to do a bit of preparatory work for this game, and need a projector connected to your computer. You will create 20 categories with five words relating to each

category. Once you create your 20 categories with five words for each, you can put them into a presentation program (like PowerPoint) to make the game even more streamlined.

Divide your students into two teams and place two chairs between the teams. One chair will be facing the projected screen and the other chair will be facing away from the screen. Two players from one team will participate in one turn.

Here is how it works:

- The student facing the screen (let's call them "Student S") will tell their teammate, Student A, three topics they can choose from.
- Student A, the one facing away from the projector screen, will then choose a topic. Student S will now be able to see the five words for that specific topic on the screen.
- Student S will try to get Student A to guess the first word on the list by describing it with single words – not complete sentences. Student S can use any word they like, as long as it is not the target word. Once Student A has guessed the first word, Student S will begin describing the second word, and so forth. They have one minute to get as many of the five words as they can.
- Teams get money values for each right word guessed and the two teams take turns choosing, describing and guessing. The first team to \$1 million wins [8].

2. The Verb Boat Race

The verb boat race is an exciting game that involves connecting subject pronouns with verbs. The skills this game promotes are writing, collaboration, reading and quick English expression as groups race down the line, matching subject pronouns with verbs.

You will need just a pencil and paper for each group in this game. This activity is best if desks are removed and students can sit on the floor, changing the class environment in an exciting way.

Here's how it works:

- Separate your class into groups of five or six students per group. Students should sit on the floor in a line, with each student having a designated spot.
- The first student in the line for each group will have a pencil and paper. To begin, say a verb familiar to your students, maybe a verb you have recently gone over together.
- Once the first student hears the verb, they will write a subject pronoun with the verb. For example, you if you say, "run" the first student could write "I run" on the paper.
- After writing, the first student passes the paper down to the next student in the line. This student will write a different subject pronoun matching the verb – in any tense. For example, "She ran."
- Once all students have written his or her subject pronoun with the target verb, the last student in the line stands up and copies all their answers on the board.
- The first team to complete all tasks wins. It is great to move the line order around, giving every student a chance to write on the board.

To make the game more challenging, one variation would be to assign a specific verb tense that must be used [8].

On the example of these games it has been shown that games that can promote collaborative learning and enable the use of English in a meaningful way, allowing learners to express themselves in an authentic context and interact with each other. Collaborative language games encourage speaking and listening which is significant for language development. Working together with peers allows learners to feel more confident and use the language for a specific purpose rather than out of context.

Conclusion. Language learning involves community. Learners need to be able to apply their language skills in real world contexts. One of the most effective ways to foster communication in English as

a Second Language is to use collaborative games. Such games help learners to develop both language and social skills. By playing collaborative games, students will become critical thinkers, learn to work with one another, and apply these skills to deal with stressful situations, and understand the importance of working together as a team to be successful. Collaboration in ESL classroom brings positive results such as deeper understanding of content, improved self-esteem, and higher motivation to remain on a language task.

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