Educational Games As An Effective Technique In Learning Of Foreign Languages

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Introduction

The Purpose of this article is emphasizing the importance of educational games during the process of teaching / learning as one of the most enjoyable tools for children, where they do feel as protagonist.

Educational games mean freedom, pleasure, experimentation, manipulation, but also obey and respect the rules, implement strategies and plans, problems solving, discover the unknowns challenge yourself and others.

The teacher should use this technique at any stage of teaching / learning process. Endured prepare the games on the diary, even when those are missing in the text book.

Educational games means learn by practicing.

I.

Our modest teaching wants to add something to the model of teaching / learning of foreign languages in lower secondary education, via the technique of educational games, as one of the favorite techniques aged 8 to 14 years.

In the past 20 years, with changes occurring in our country was deemed necessary learning foreign languages, which begins its journey from the elementary level, third grade. Reasons for teaching / learning of foreign languages are different dimensions: political, social, neurological and psychological. To transform an Albanian child in a European child means to start his education at

the time: his social identity, according to studies, formed before he is 10 years old. If we talk to the children about the presence of other languages and cultures, namely the existence of those different from them, we establish the social basis for a multicultural society[1].

My experience as a teacher of foreign language, as well as several surveys in different schools, have allowed me to discover a kind of dissatisfaction by students and teachers of this subject, this is because the language taught in the classroom is not the same as the foreign language spoken outside the country, students realize their limitations as soon as they are in contact with spoken foreign language. So, what is missing is the acquisition of communicative competence, the acquisition of language beyond grammatical competence, which is obtained only through its practical use, where the game finds an important place. The aim of the game is to fill the gap between mechanical language acquisitions and put it into practice, to enable communication, encouraging students to give personal assistance in developing of activities.

Asher, psychologist, researcher of language development in children, notes that the acquisition of a foreign language in classroom is a slow process where they anticipation proceed with manufacturing capabilities. So *it is wrong to ask students to speak before it is ready*[2]. He considers the acquisition of L2, (foreign language), a process similar to that of L1 (mother language) and adds that didactics will achieve its objectives efficiently only if it allows students to attend physically at learning. In this way the student through the various commands in a foreign language, as: *"Vieni qui, vai alla porta, aprila, chiudila,"* etc.. performs a series of physical actions, which allow him to understand precisely the relationship environment / reality and language[3], just as children do in L1. Giovanni Freddie, who has exhaustively studied the role of the educational game in child development, reinforces this idea and adds that, thanks to the game carried the

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[1] Balboni, E. P., Le sfide di Babele,UTET, Torino, 2007, f. 158

[2] Danesi, M., Il cervello in aula!, Edizione Guerra, Perugia, 1998, p. 148

[3] Danesi, M., Il cervello in aula!, Edizione Guerra, Perugia, 1998, p. 78

child, learns, dominates and controls the reality, prepares him to face the future, adult life. So, *it is necessary to learn by practicing*[4].

Quotations on the importance of the educational games can still be added: *Rossi remind us that Umberto Eco ranked the educational games in fourth place among the major human needs after food, sleep and before asking "why". Claudio Aveline says that man was born to play; original sin which has condemned to work*. "

It is known that the child is inclined towards the games, he has a fruitful imagination and invents his own language with all sorts of situations. The game becomes a teaching tool with unimaginable educational value as a catalyst in various processes of teaching / learning of foreign languages, attended by all capacities: cognitive, affective, senso - motor and social skills. Game means freedom, pleasure, movement, experimentation, manipulation. Teacher - judge of the game -, invites students to play with language, to hear and speak, to manipulate text, to build and draw, learn poems and songs to sing and dance, show, to imagine, to dramatize. He not only arranges the players in groups or individuals, but also observes that linguistic and behavioral. On the other side student is the actor protagonist of the game, but according to the game, participants can have all the same role or different roles. It is known that games are not only fun and pleasure but game means: recognition and observance of rules, processing strategies, problem solving, action planning, discovery of new combinations, challenge yourself and others.

If we look back upon, the texts of foreign language learning by traditional methods, rarely find any game, but today no longer surprised if we find this section in almost every lesson. So the idea is to create didactic unit similar to a permanent laboratory where teachers and students work together to create content and achievement of objectives.

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[4]Balboni, E.P., Coonan M. C., Garotti, R.F., Lingue straniere nella scuola dell'infanzia, Edizione Guerra – Soleil, 2001, f.12

Naturally comes the question: what are the advantages of the techniques of the game compared with other techniques?

➢ It is an activity carried out more simply, entertaining and emotional without major effects.

➢ Assist in the growth of personality of students.

➢ Use simple materials to utilize the game: connector, drawings, maps, charts, etc..

➢ Develop tools, making, manipulation, the singing, learning, poetry, riddles, stories. etc..

➢ The class is divided into pairs, groups, teams, which allow the development of social learning and collaborative style.

➢ It is very alive and present challenges, competition, loss and victory.

➢ Stimulates and encourages creativity, namely the ability to find solutions to problems that it poses[5].

Methodology of the game should not be confused with its simple presentation made to students, says the game will use learning spontaneous of the L2. This methodology is complex and performs student-teacher collaboration. Indeed, it is a way of working where the teacher must have at his disposal a "repertoire" of appropriate techniques of the game, that could apply in different stages of learning techniques which means the concrete development of any teaching activity and precede any situation. So, the teacher should:

➢ Prepare and have the appropriate materials as per optional didactics;

➢ The overall structure or activities differentiated according to students;

➢ To monitor progress on an ongoing basis, the specific difficulties that arise while working in the classroom;

➢ To develop new materials and organize activities differentiated to strengthen or compensate the gap.

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[5] Hido, M., Metodologjia e mësimdhënies, EXTRA, Tiranë, 2007, f. 107

In his blog, the teacher must have to determine the overall objectives (grammatical, lexical, communicative, cultural, social etc.), will develop the skills (listening, reading, speaking or writing), different materials for the development the game, its duration, the team division. etc..

So, from what are called memory games, bring an example where the students must enter the appropriate names and surnames, names with verbs of action.

The general objectives: linguistic, communicative and social.

Skills: reading and associating names / surnames / names / verbs.

Didactic materials: 8 pairs fold. In each pair have just written words.

Length of game: 5 - 10 minutes.

Number players: the game in pairs or in small groups.

lungo	feroce	alto	grosso	enorme	veloce	piccolo	lento
serpente	leone	giraffa	ippopotamo	balena	ghepardo	topo	tartaruga

Vola	nuota	striscia	salta	corre	Cammina e nuota	scava	Si arrampica
passero	delfino	serpente	canguro	ghepardo	Coccodrillo	talpa	scoiattolo

It is clear that this game aims at verification of a lexical set. So it is necessary that the teacher before the game launch to ensure that students know the words and agree with connections that are made. This game can now be the benchmark for various language activities, such as:

- *The adjective scales*

- *Listing some adjectives on a scale of intensity, (small, large, extra large)*

- *Verbs of movement.*

Can also be used for cultural and intercultural section as:

- Animals in the world. Ratio man-animal in different cultures.

- Proverbs or idioms with animals in different nations (such as wily as fox - furbo come una volpe). This exercise - play, encourages students to bring examples of dealing with their culture, noting similarities or differences between cultures.

At what stage of the teaching / learning techniques are used to the game?

Mezzadri and Freddie say the educational games can be used at all stages, like motivation, analysis, synthesis and reflection, by emphasizing game as learning phase[6].

Thus, for example, the stage of motivation to integrate game between techniques which serve to recall the elements already used and, at this stage, ludico element can also serve to create the atmosphere to continue in subsequent phases.

This element has an important role during the synthesis: we refer to a technique that stimulates the language activity independence, like a technique which should be directed to the discovery of something.

We should never forget to consider the duration of the game, if developed in the group or not, the role of teachers and individuals that the game provides, possible difficulties that may occur, competitive or cooperative character of the game etc.. For all the foregoing reasons game used different techniques.

These kinds of techniques can classify as:

➢ Structural games, which means the ability to control the structure and words of foreign language.

➢ Content games, which means the ability to use foreign language to understand.

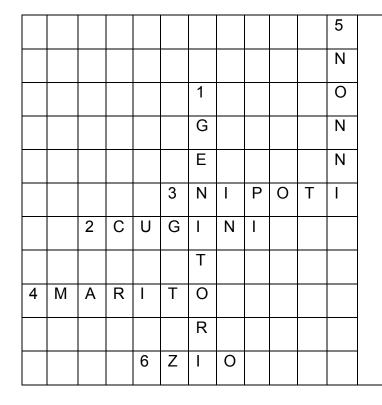➢ Communication games, which means the ability to serve foreign language for communicative purposes[7].

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[6] Mezzadri M., *I ferri del mestiere,* edizione Guerra – Soleil, Perugia, 2003, f.316

So, the game can evolve and adapt elements of grammar, lexical, spelling, phonological. etc.. By type of argument with which to face, will choose the typology of the game. Refreshing the memory here are some types of games: the puzzle; such as crossword, puzzle, anagram, kriptograme, find which?, mysterious object, identikit, find the famous character, friend, occupation, address hidden. etc..; memory games as: find the pattern, make word-picture connection, the small-letter big letter, name-node, name-surname, symbolic games; such as masks, puppets, drama, shopping game so called simulation games, role-taking, role- making, role-playing. etc.

Here are some examples of the typology of the games memory harvested by different methods. (Some games have to do with family vocabulary).

I.   *Complete the puzzle with the names of relatives*.

								5	
								N	
				1				O	
				G				N	
				E				N	
		3	N	I	P	O	T	I	
	2	C	U	G	I	N	I		
				T					
4	M	A	R	I	T	O			
				R					
		6	Z	I	O				

Padre e madre
I figli dello zio e della zia
I figli di mio fratello
È sposato con la moglie
I genitori dei miei genitori
È marito della zia

II. *Add the missing letters to complete words:*

Fr_te_lo   s_o_er_   c_gi_o

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[7]Mezzadri M., *I ferri del mestiere,* edizione Guerra – Soleil, Perugia, 2003, f.328

M_ _re   s_re_ _a   n_n_ _

III. *Anagrams*

Anona = nonna   depra = padre   rtaflelo = fratello

IV. *Logical game*

Una spia deve entrare in un castello che ha una serie di porte. Osserva il comportamento di quelli che entrano e scopre che:

alla prima porta, alla parola d'ordine della sentinella che è "Dodici", chi entra dice come controparola "Sei";

alla seconda porta, alla parola d'ordine "Dieci", chi entra dice "Cinque";

alla terza porta , alla parola d'ordine "Otto" che entra dice "Quattro";

alla quarta porta, alla parola d'ordine "Sei", chi entra dice "Tre";

Poiché a ogni porta è sempre più difficile osservare, e credendo di aver capito il meccanismo, la spia è sicura di entrare nel castello.

Va alla prima porta: "Dodici" "Sei". Passa.

Alla seconda porta "Dieci" "Cinque". Passa.

Terza porta: "Otto" "Quattro". Passa.

Quarta porta: "Sei" "Tre". Passa.

Quinta porta: "Quattro" "Due". Viene subito circondato, catturato e ucciso.

Perchè?

Cosa doveva dire? Con quale logica?

(Naturalmente il motivo è che ha sbagliato la risposta. Doveva rispondere "Sette". La contra parola non si trova dicendo la metà del numero, ma nel contare il numero delle lettere della parola d'ordine. Infatti "Dodici" è composta da sei lettere, "Dieci" da cinque, "Otto" da quattro, "Sei" da tre e "Quattro" da sette.

How those games are implemented in the text books for the albanian middle schools?

In our circle we use the Method of Eva Gjikës, *Ciao!,* The method used in the third grade, fourth and fifth, where the third book is also equipped with notebook. The textbooks and notebooks are illustrated in color, attractive and relaxing elements for a child. They find almost all the typologies of the games mentioned above some in the considerable number and some no. Games suit this group age and memory games dominate followed by enigma games and simulation games, report that we find the opposite in the method *Insieme* (text prepared by L. Baci, which is used in grade six).

So, in text *Ciao!* we find enough exercise, such as surrounds, tie, dye, who is?, to the words, put in order, crossword, cryptogram, anagram, ranked in order of event or object, where we find the demand translated into Albanian. Learning a foreign language also implies recognition of culture as well, which is mainly found conducted through various poems which accompany each unit as well as images of some works that trace the student's memory as the Colosseum, the Tower of Pisa, and Venice gondola, italian symbols like the flag, pasta, fashion, etc.., various post cards for religious holidays or not, the character who accompanies us in almost every unit, Pinocchio, all this often accompanied with the playing technique.

Conclusion:

Teaching is a serious activity, *where taught and not played, learned by practicing*[8], quotes Marco Mezzadri. So, the game, the favorite reality of children, is a basic factor in the teaching / learning of foreign languages. Its purpose is to facilitate communication and encourage students to give their assistance during the activity. The game becomes a teaching tool with unimaginable education value as a catalyst in various processes of teaching / learning of foreign languages, attended all the capabilities cognitive, affective, senso - motor and social skills. Game means freedom, pleasure, movement, experimentation, manipulation and communication, less emotion in communication with the teacher's technique that can be used in all stages of learning: motivation, analysis, synthesis and reflection, using different types of games.

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[8] Mezzadri M., *I ferri del mestiere,* edizione Guerra – Soleil, Perugia, 2003, f.311