

INTERACTIVE GAMES INVOLVING FUN COMPONENT AS THE WAY OF MOTIVATING STUDENTS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS

ІНТЕРАКТИВНІ ІГРИ З ЕЛЕМЕНТАМИ РОЗВАГИ ЯК ЗАСІБ МОТИВАЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

The article is devoted to the analysis of the interactive games involving fun component as the way of motivating students and developing their communicative skills.

Innovative student-oriented approach to foreign language teaching, aimed at developing communicative skills, requires creating positive emotional climate in which the teacher can demonstrate caring for learners and respect for their opinions and ideas. The learner's desire to inform the listeners of something interesting, important, exciting should be stimulated by the communicative situation, created by the teacher in the classroom. It is stated that interactive games and exercises containing fun component appear to be essential in foreign language teaching. It is shown that properly organized fun class activities can help the teacher to create relaxed and friendly atmosphere as well as provide intense and meaningful practice of the language. It is stated that for being a success the interactive game or role playing exercise offered by the teacher must be genuinely engaging activity making students perform a certain role, express a range of emotions, mime and use gestures and body language. According to the material used fun class activities can be divided into two groups. The first group includes warming-up exercises and ice-breakers, aimed at brief revising vocabulary units or grammar rules. The activities belonging to this category are usually organized for the whole group. These exercises can be easily adapted to any classroom goals as well as used as time-fillers between different stages of a lesson. The second group includes the activities based upon the use of dramatizing and story-telling techniques. They are more complicated in their structure and demanding in preparation and organization. These games can train the students to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibly. They are suitable both for developing all language skills and stimulating learners' creativity and imagination.

Key words: fun class activities, warming-up exercises, ice-breakers, dramatizing, motivation, story-telling techniques, communicative skills.

Стаття присвячена аналізу інтерактивних ігор з використанням розважальної складової як засобу мотивації студентів та розвитку їхніх комунікативних навичок.

Інноваційний студенто-орієнтований підхід до викладання іноземної мови, спрямований на розвиток комунікативних навичок, вимагає створення позитивного емоційного клімату, в якому викладач може продемонструвати турботу про студентів та повагу до їхніх думок та ідей. Бажання людини, яка навчається, повідомити своїм слухачам щось цікаве, важливе та захоплююче має стимулюватися комунікативною ситуацією, створеною викладачем на занятті. Зазначається, що інтерактивні ігри та вправи, які містять розважальну складову, є важливими у викладанні іноземної мови. Показано, що правильно організовані заняття з розважальною складовою можуть допомогти викладачу створити невимушену та дружню атмосферу, а також забезпечити інтенсивну та змістовну практику мовлення.

Зазначено, що для досягнення успіху інтерактивна гра або інсценування, запропоновані викладачем, мають бути дійсно захоплюючим видом діяльності, яка змушує учнів виконувати певні ролі, виражати низку різноманітних емоцій, використовувати міміку, жести та мову тіла. За матеріалом, що використовується, розважальні заняття можна розподілити на дві групи. До першої групи належать вправи для розігріву та розминки, спрямовані на коротке повторення певних лексичних одиниць та граматичних правил. Ігри, що належать до цієї категорії, зазвичай організовуються для всієї групи. Ці вправи легко адаптуються до будь-яких навчальних цілей, а також використовуються для заповнювання часу між різними етапами заняття. До другої групи належать ігри, які ґрунтуються на використанні інсценування та сторітеллінгу. Вони складніші за своєю структурою та вимогливіші у підготовці та проведенні. Ці ігри можуть навчити студентів гнучко використовувати свої знання іноземної мови. Вони підходять як для розвитку усіх мовних навичок студентів, так і для стимулювання їхньої креативності та уяви.

Ключові слова: вправи з розважальною складовою, розминки, криголами, інсценування, мотивація, сторітеллінг, комунікативні навички.

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Problem statement. Innovative student-oriented approach to foreign language teaching, aimed at developing communicative skills, requires creating positive emotional climate in which the teacher can demonstrate caring for learners and respect for their opinions and ideas. No one will object the fact that speech must be motivated. The learner's desire to inform the listeners of something interesting, important, exciting should be stimulated by the communicative situation, created by the teacher in the classroom. Taking into the account that language learning is

hard work that requires a lot of concentration and making an effort to understand, to repeat accurately new language units, to memorize and use them in conversation and written tasks, the teacher has to look for such methods and activities that can help to encourage students to sustain their interest and work. "The idea that all students have different emphases in the way they perceive information and learn has become part of every teacher's life" – points out the researcher A.Wright [7, p. 6]. It's true that learning styles are not considered to be exclusive. Some

students respond best to information which is seen or heard, others prefer to move, touch or use the language creatively. No matter what learning style might be chosen and preferred every student will be easily motivated, got involved into the activity as well as concentrate better if there is an element of humour, fun and lightness in the experience. Interactive games and exercises containing humorous dramatizing, entertaining role playing or merry miming and story-telling are usually associated with getting the students interested and making them feel eager to learn, to cooperate and to enjoy themselves. Fun and humor seem to be essential in foreign language teaching. Communicative approach gives the opportunity to combine the periods of focused concentration when the students are doing their best to grasp the initial understanding of a new grammar structure or language unit with the interactive games and role plays which can make new information more memorable and relevant. Properly organized fun class activities can help the teacher to create relaxed and friendly atmosphere as well as provide intense and meaningful practice of the language.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Interactive games containing fun or entertaining component has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. The researcher S. Woodward takes into consideration grammar games containing fun component. In the linguist's opinion, "during those phases of explanations and examples can be enlivened by funny sentences using the students' names or by fun demonstrations and pantomimes" [6, p. 6]. S. Woodward points out that in modern conditions teachers "shouldn't approach grammar far too seriously with long unsmiling faces, in plodding academic way" [6, p. 7]. The grammar games, worked out by W. Woodward, appear to be practical and welcome tool for teachers as they "reflect and give structure to what actually goes on in effective foreign language classroom".

The researcher F. Klippel focuses attention on the importance of fun component in ice-breakers and warming-up exercises as they help the teacher to get students into the right mood. It is advisable to use such games in big groups of learners as "they give the students the opportunity to get to know each other better" [2, p. 12]. Fun class activities can be useful for the teacher as well because in the relaxed atmosphere it is easier to have some idea of what individual members of the group are interested in. Interactive games containing fun can help to reduce the strain as the most reserved and shy learners don't have to produce long monologues and speak about themselves in front of the whole class. Funny guessing games, merry story-telling, jokes and witty remarks can give all the students the reason to laugh and enjoy themselves. Humour appears to be the significant component of any culture, no wonder

that having fun in a foreign language class "make students realize how important is to be able to joke and to make others laugh" [2, p. 40].

A. Littlejohn takes into consideration the main sources of motivation in learning and the ways of raising and sustaining it. In researcher's opinion, "students' natural interest or intrinsic satisfaction, the teacher or extrinsic reward and success of the task completed by the learner can be regarded as the main factors that can affect the level of motivation" [3, p. 83]. Learning a foreign language is impossible without ups and downs, achieving success and making mistakes or failures. Few people like to fail but even fewer are able to cope with failure and its psychological circumstances. Not being able to make progress quickly can lead to "learner's low motivation and low effort" [3, p. 83]. Using activities involving fun component the teacher can keep the students from developing an image of themselves as "no good at English". Being able to understand jokes in a foreign language, to laugh together at the amusing situations created in the classroom, to look for comic options for the cartoons as well as to feel and appreciate the English humour can help the learners to develop the sense of competence and confidence. The researcher emphasizes that fun class activities give students the opportunity to develop "the sense of optimism and belief" that everyone can learn, make progress and take risks without fear of losing marks or feeling stupid.

R. Nascante's work is devoted to the cognitive and affective aspects of learning the language. Characterizing students' anxieties about learning English, the researcher points out, the importance of humour "in creating friendly and harmonious atmosphere which is regarded by most students as the main source of a feeling of well-being in the classroom" [4, p. 88]. Having fun with grammar or vocabulary contributes a lot to "more productive interaction in class". Interactive games and activities of amusing character help to overcome students' feeling of discomfort and debilitating anxiety and give them the opportunity to feel at ease, to build self-confidence and enjoy learning.

In P. Watcyn-Jones' opinion, "humorous and funny activities can be viewed as light relief after discussing a new grammar rule or introducing new vocabulary units" [5, p. 6]. The researcher who has had years of experience of using humour in foreign language teaching points out, that "funny jigsaw reading, retelling and dramatizing jokes and anecdotes, learning amusing tongue-twisters by heart can help the students to learn more effectively" [5, p. 7]. The games, worked out and selected by the researcher, are based on the use of humour in various forms. The activities of this type can be ideal for practicing grammar and vocabulary as well as correcting pronunciation.

The aim of the article is to define the role of interactive games containing fun component in developing students' communicative skills and to offer a set of activities which can be used for developing learners' speaking competence at different stages of the English lesson.

Presenting the main material. No matter what teaching style the teachers might prefer, none of them will object to having a short break and doing some exercises just for having fun. Even a short funny story read aloud can be appreciated by the learners as they can feel some relief, loosen concentration and forget at least for a while about the difficult grammar rule they practiced before. On the other hand, many teachers still consider entertaining language activities to be something if not useless but inappropriate and distractive. The reluctance to use such exercises can be explained by the fear of losing control and turning learning process into something chaotic and unruly. The question arises: how much fun in a foreign language classroom is not too much? How to find the right proportion between practicing language skills and entertaining? In fact fun class activities may appear to be more challenging and time-consuming in preparation. Introducing interactive games, involving fun component and aimed at the achieving learning targets, into the education experience requires certain skill, creativity and a lot of efforts from the teacher.

Emphasizing the necessity of "looking seriously at non-serious language", the researchers N.Bell and A.Pomerantz, that "the ways in which engagement with humour and language play in classroom can facilitate language awareness and help the learners to see communication as variable, dynamic and situated" [1, p. 13]. Role playing activities of all types appear to be the most suitable way of creating close-to-life situations in a foreign language classroom. Dramatizing even simple dialogues, taking place in the shop, in the public transport or in the street can be both exciting and useful as they help the students to express themselves in acting, to cooperate with each other as well as develop language skills. The dialogues containing jokes, funny and witty remarks can be prepared by the teacher or made up by the students themselves. Fun and humour can be found, noticed and experienced everywhere. There are more ridiculous and comic things around us than we can imagine. The teacher can ask the students to recall any funny incident, that happened to them or their friends, and then to dramatize the story with other group-mates. The dialogues or short scenes which are based upon the students' personal experience can encourage them and show that they are taken seriously as personalities. Taking part in dramatizing funny stories can contribute a lot to development learners' creativity and positive thinking.

Let's have a closer look at fun class activities which are suitable for all levels of proficiency and can

be used at various stages of a lesson. The word *fun* isn't a guaranteed way of getting students interested and motivated. For being a success the interactive game or role playing exercise offered by the teacher must be genuinely engaging activity making students perform a certain role, express a range of emotions, mime and use gestures and body language. According to the material used fun class activities can be divided into two groups. The first group includes warming-up exercises and ice-breakers involving fun component, aimed at brief revising vocabulary units or grammar rules. The activities belonging to this group are usually organized for the whole class. They can be also used as time-fillers between different stages of a lesson. The second group includes the exercises based upon the use of dramatizing and story-telling techniques. They are more complicated in their structure and demanding in preparation and organization.

The game "Back to back" is aimed at practicing descriptive sentences as well as developing speaking skills. The activity gets the entire group involved and gives all the students the opportunity to join in and let the class know something about their interests and preferences. The game consists of several steps.

Step 1: While the music is playing or the teacher is clapping, everybody is walking around the room observing the way other students look, focusing on their appearance, clothes and hairstyle. As soon as the music stops, the teacher chooses one student and the person standing nearest to come up and stand back to back in front of the class or in the centre of the circle if the activity is arranged in this format.

Step 2: Taking turns, each of the student starts describing the other's appearance. The teacher asks someone from the group to take the notes or to record the descriptions the students give. As soon as the students have completed their descriptions, they are allowed to turn round and to look at the partner. Then the participants listen to the recorded or written version, compare with the original and evaluate their ability of being observant.

Step 3: After a few minutes the music starts again and the students renew walking around the room. When the music stops, the procedure described in Step 1 is repeated with a different pair of students. Three or four descriptive phases are sufficient. The game may have a few variations. A student can be allowed to keep making statement until they are correct. As soon as he or she mentions something wrong, the partner is given the floor to start describing and to show his or her good memory. The game can be also organized as a completion. The class can be divided into two teams A and B. The teacher asks the representative from team A to leave the classroom. The task for members from team B is to describe the person who's left the class using as many details as possible. The members of team A are asked to take notes or record the description. When the description

is ready, the student from team A returns to the class. The description is listened to or read aloud while the students have the opportunity to evaluate its accuracy. It's natural for the students to make mistakes in naming the shades of hair colour or eyes colour, in recollecting the items of clothes their group-mates are wearing. No wonder that such interactive games can contribute to creating amusing situations that make the students laugh and enjoy themselves.

Whereas the ice-breaker "Back to back" is likely to cause the learners to focus on the use of particular vocabulary units, the warming-up activity "The three wishes game" is aimed at practicing the use of the modal verbs and the sentences in the Conditional mood. It is the whole class activity and it is essential to do this exercise in supportive and relaxed atmosphere.

Step 1: The teacher prepares the "granting cards" for each student in the group, then puts them in a "magic hat" or a "magic bag".

Step 2: Each learner is given a slip of paper and asked to write three wishes on it, as follows: *I wish I could..., I wish I was..., I wish I had...* Each student folds the slip of paper up and keeps it in the pocket.

Step 3: The teacher passes round the hat or bag and asks each student to take one granting card. The teacher explains the learners that the card gives them some magic powers to grant any wishes to do with that subject. There is only one snag: they can't grant their own wishes. The object of the game is to find people to grant their three wishes.

Step 4: The students start moving round the class, telling people their wishes until they find someone who can grant them. When they have had all their wishes granted, the game is over. The activity "The three wishes game" is connected with values clarification techniques as it helps the students to become aware of their own values and express their desires according to them. The game can have several variants. The teacher can ask the learners to express their wishes on behalf of their favourite fictional characters or film heroes. The desires can be also limited by the use of the certain topical vocabulary. Expressing preferences in food, clothes, travelling, domestic appliances can get students interested and amused and keep them from getting bored. It's essential that the interactive games representing the first group help the teacher to maximize the ways of making every learner experience success and have fun. The students are involved in the process and even working in different teams they don't necessarily play against each other.

Our everyday life is full of acting. We perform certain roles in the street, in the transport, in the shop and even at work without being aware of it. All of us at least once tried to manipulate other people in order to get what we wanted. We can pretend to be ill or tired when we don't feel like doing something,

to be too busy to avoid being given a new task to do. Why not use artistic skills in a foreign language class? Dramatizing and story-telling may function in various forms and may be used at different stages of a foreign language class. Merely reading aloud a short amusing dialogue or a children's fairy-tale may become an exciting and funny task for the learners regardless of their age and proficiency level. The activity that looks easy and undemanding makes the students realize how important their pronunciation and intonation are in making yourself understood as well as in creating the image of the person or fictional character they represent.

Let's have a closer look at the activities based upon the use of dramatizing and story-telling techniques. The game "Help Favourite Fictional Characters" involves miming and role-playing. The activity consists of several steps.

Step 1: The class is divided into two groups. The first group is a rescue team. It includes readers-life-guards whose task is to save a fairy-tale hero or a fictional character from disappearance. The second group consists of fictional or fairy-tale characters which were enchanted by the evil witch and were deprived of the ability to speak. The list of the characters can be suggested by the teacher or made by the students themselves. It can include well-known images from various books and fairy-tales. The teacher explains the representatives of the first team that the enchanted know how to save them but they are not able to tell, they can only mime. In order to save them the learners from the second team are to ask ten questions to guess which characters are before them and find out the secret of their rescue.

Step 2: The learners from the Rescue team start asking questions in turns. The representatives of the second group start miming in reply. The teacher encourages the students from the first team to watch the mime attentively and try to identify what is being mimed. If the players from the Rescue team manage to name the fictional characters correctly and identify the information that is mimed, the teacher announces that the evil spell is broken and favourite heroes are rescued.

The interactive game "Creating a situational comedy" is suitable for practicing all language skills. The activity is aimed at developing students' imagination as it involves creative writing. The game is viewed as a long-term activity and its preparation requires taking efforts.

Step 1: The teacher prepares the list of the most popular situational comedies or youth series and offers the list to the students. They discuss advantages and disadvantages of each series together and choose the most exciting and suitable for further dramatizing. Their task is to select the comedy with funny and attractive characters with the plot that can be easily transformed and modified.

Step 2: The teacher explains that each episode of the series is to be made up by the students themselves. The general directions of the plot for the first episode are proposed by the teacher who can also introduce the event or life situation that can be acted out. It is essential to get all the students involved. The teacher encourages the learners to create a number of new characters focusing on their identity and the influence on the development on the story made up.

Step 3: When the story is ready the students dramatize it. It is essential that the plot of the series should be open and there should be the opportunity to prepare next episodes, add new characters and continue acting. The episodes of the series can be recorded. Watching the film in which all the students take part both as actors and creators can become really exciting and unforgettable experience. Such activities are likely to keep the learners from getting bored and give them opportunity to see how well they can communicate in English. The images the learners created may be used as their guiding models in discussing all topics or problems arising in the class. This sort of dramatizing may last within a term or even for the whole year. It leads to more language flexibility and cooperation. Making up a new plot, creating a fictitious community the students can combine realism and fantasy in any way. The interactive game "Creating a situational comedy" is a good way of recycling language as well as stimulating students' creativity and imagination.

Conclusions. A friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the group appears to be the most essential requirement for productive communication. If the atmosphere is hostile and stressful, the students are likely to feel anxious and reserved. Fun class activities are viewed as the best way of improving psychological climate in the group. It is in human nature to react to jokes, anecdotes and comic situations by laughter. Even a short witty remark

or comment causing a smile can change the mood of the whole class and get the students motivated. The interactive games involving fun make the time at the lesson informative, enjoyable and entertaining. Warming-up activities and ice-breakers are suitable for all levels of proficiency and easily adoptable to different learners' needs. These games are easy to organize and adapt to any classroom goals. Fun class activities based upon the use of dramatizing and story-telling techniques require more preparation on the part of the teacher and cover a wide spectrum of individual preferences in ways of learning. These games can train the students to use their knowledge of the foreign language flexibly. They are suitable both for developing all language skills and using learners' creativity and imagination. The interactive long-term games involving acting and creative writing require extra effort but prove to be rewarding for both the teacher and the students.

The **further research** in this area is to be devoted to the analysis of creative writing technique as the way of encouraging and motivating students.

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