

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIDACTIC GAMES IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES: MODERN APPROACHES

Olimova Gulrabo Amin qizi

Master's Student of Samarkand State Pedagogical Institute

Tel: +998(99) 124-15-27

E-mail: komilov.ruzi@mail.ru

Abstract. *This article discusses the fact that play is one of the leading types of activities for children and describes methods for developing vocabulary through didactic games and modern technology. Didactic games and visual materials ensure the effectiveness of activities and increase the child's interest in the learning process. Thus, the article also highlights the importance of didactic games in teaching children to work in groups, to pronounce words correctly.*

Keywords: *didactic games, activity, motivation, visual method, education, preschool education.*

INTRODUCTION.

Didactic games are a pedagogical method designed to achieve educational objectives while being grounded in play-based activity. Such games ensure a natural, engaging, and highly motivating learning environment. Since play is the leading activity for preschool children, didactic games enable them to acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies in an emotionally rich, interactive, and accessible way. The main purpose of didactic games is to develop a positive attitude toward learning, increase children's cognitive activity, and foster mental processes such as communication, thinking, memory, auditory perception, and attention. While completing tasks given by the teacher through play, the child feels free, thinks independently, and approaches problems creatively. Didactic games help children firmly retain words, phrases, sentences, and sounds through repeated use. This is especially important in learning foreign languages, as the child acquires the new language in a natural speech environment — through play. Play activity evokes positive emotions, which in turn increases the effectiveness of learning.

In academic research, psychologists and educators have developed the theoretical and methodological foundations of didactic games. Scholars such as L.S. Vygotsky and A.N. Leontiev consider play to be a decisive factor in a child's psychological development. According to their theories, through play, children internalize surrounding reality, enter the adult world, and develop linguistic, social, and moral qualities. Play influences not only cognitive processes but also contributes to the formation of positive personality traits.

L.S. Vygotsky referred to play as the child's “zone of proximal development,” meaning that during play, the child operates at a level slightly above his or her actual capabilities, which becomes a key source of development.

According to J. Piaget, play reflects the child's level of cognitive development: through play, the child explores the world and reconstructs personal experiences.

Therefore, didactic games, as a teaching tool, serve not only educational purposes but also support the child's personal development, socialization, and creative thinking.

According to J. Bruner and D.B. Elkonin in child psychology, children acquire language most actively through play activities. During play, the child associates newly learned words with real objects, actions, or images. Therefore, using didactic games in foreign language teaching creates a natural communication environment in which vocabulary is learned through playful interaction. For example, while singing the song “Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes,” the child reinforces the words through physical movement, which supports

conscious memorization and active use of the vocabulary. By their nature, didactic games are not merely simple games; they represent an important and effective component of the educational process. In other words, during play, the child not only engages in gaming activity but also learns simultaneously. For this reason, didactic games possess several essential features, and understanding as well as applying these features correctly contributes to improving the effectiveness of teaching. These features include the following:

1. Educational orientation.

First and foremost, the primary purpose of didactic games is to teach children new knowledge and skills. Through games, the child easily memorizes elements of the environment, objects, colors, sounds, or English words and expressions.

For instance, in the game “Find the Color,” the child not only identifies colors during gameplay. The child not only identifies colors but also learns to use the English names of colors in practice. In this way, the teaching process becomes natural and meaningful through play.

2. Interest and emotional engagement.

One of the strongest advantages of didactic games is that they evoke positive emotions in children. During gameplay, the child feels free and enjoys the learning process. Knowledge acquired through interest is retained for a longer period of time.

For example, games such as “Simon Says” or “Move and Say” generate laughter, excitement, and joy in children while simultaneously helping them easily learn new words, commands, and actions. Every small success during the game—for instance, a correct answer or a quick reaction—encourages and motivates the child even more.

3. Activiness and interactivity.

In didactic games, children are not merely listeners but active participants. They speak, move, and respond throughout the game. This transforms the learning process from “one-way teaching” into “two-way learning.” The teacher takes on the role of facilitator and guide. Interactive games strengthen cooperation among children, teaching them to work in groups, listen to one another, and express their thoughts clearly. Thus, didactic games can be used for various purposes and in different forms: for some children they expand vocabulary, for others they improve pronunciation, and for yet others they enhance spoken communication. Regardless of the type of game, it places the child in an active, curious, and learning-ready state.

In the development of vocabulary among preschool children, play-based activities hold particular importance. During this period, the child’s speech, thinking, memory, imagination, and creativity develop rapidly. Play-based instruction fully aligns with one of the core principles of the preschool education system the idea of understanding childhood through play. Therefore, games help integrate foreign language teaching with national cultural values in preschool educational settings.

Games play an important role in teaching children a foreign language. The content, rules, and language used in the games must correspond to the children's age characteristics. Games should increase children’s speech activity, help them memorize words quickly, and develop their communication skills.

During the learning process, play-based activities are organized in the following stages:

1. Preparatory stage.

The topic of the game, necessary vocabulary, commands, object names, and action verbs are selected. New English words are explained to children using pictures, gestures, or real objects.

For example, when teaching the topic “The Weather,” children can learn words such as cloud, rain, cold, hot, sunny, foggy, winter, and wind.

2. Game stage.

The teacher manages and monitors the game using English expressions such as:

Run! Jump! Stop! Clap your hands!

Who has the ball? — I have it!

While performing the actions, children learn and practice the pronunciation of the words.

3. Outcome stage.

Children try to use the words and expressions learned during the game independently and express their ideas in short sentences.

For example, the game “around-around” can be adapted for English lessons as follows: children hold hands, move in a circle, sing, and express the meaning of the words through actions. As a result, they develop a sense of rhythm, improve pronunciation, and strengthen memory skills. In the process of teaching foreign languages, several criteria must be considered when selecting didactic games. These criteria include. For example, in the topic “Family,” a suitable game would be “Who is this?” – “She is my mother.”

Age appropriateness – the game should be short, dynamic, and based on simple rules suitable for the child’s developmental level. For preschool and early school-aged children, interactive and multimedia-based games are most effective. Ensuring active participation – one of the teacher’s key responsibilities is to ensure that every child participates actively in the game. Children should not remain passive observers; each learner must be involved in the activity.

Use of visual aids – it is recommended to use pictures, real objects, flashcards, colorful markers, or audiovisual materials during the game to enhance understanding and engagement.

Motivational value – the game should evoke positive emotions, a sense of competition, interest, and a desire to achieve success. It is important to make the learning process enjoyable for children. Games naturally become a part of this process because through them children express their emotions, learn new words, and engage in communication. Communicative method play important role to teaching foreign languages. It is said that, educator should communicate with their children in English and other languages children learn better when they can see, hear, and touch. Flashcards, , toys, and visuals make abstract concepts more concrete and memorable. It helps growing worldview of children. Learning foreign languages will be interesting and useful by interactive methods, interesting games. Thus, in preschool education organization, qualification of educator plays essential role for teaching foreign languages effectively implement. It requires to use modern technology, interesting methods, pedagogical approach from educator. Nowadays, it is believed that, modern technology while can offer interactive experiences like digital tools songs is useful for children in learning foreign languages. They can make meaningfully and can be useful during the training.

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