

# THE ROLE OF GAMES IN THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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## Abstract

The article deals with such an important aspect of learning a foreign language as a game. The game is an active way to reach many educational purposes, and is of important pedagogical value.

The value of the game is that the process of mastering of the material is easier and faster because it is pleasant to do it in such a way and therefore the information is usually remembered for a long time. However, it should be remembered that the game is a serious thing. [4] According to D.B. Elkonin (D.B. Elkonin Psychology of a Game (Psikhologiya igry) - M., 1978.), the game has four essential functions for humans: means of need-motivational sphere, means of knowledge, means of development of mental actions and means of arbitrary behavior.

The article discusses features of the game, its purpose and specificity. Attention is also paid to the organization of the games. Examples of games in accordance with the goals you want to achieve in teaching foreign languages are given. The examples are based on the English language. The focus is on the role of games in teaching a foreign language of students.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The game as well as education is one of the basic types of human's development, they are both amazing phenomena of our existence. According to the scientific terminology of the game it is a kind of activity in the situations which are aimed to reproduce and acquire society's experience. Whereas, foundation and improvement of person's behavior self-control are the integral components of that activity. We cannot consider the game to be only a part of entertainment and recreation; it is, in the same time, the process of studying, creativity, therapy and simulation of people's relationship, labor and education.

From ancient times people practiced the game as a method of transferring experience to younger generation. Nowadays teachers all over the world have elements of game in the methodology of teaching. The efficiency and effect of these types of lessons are easily visible on the progress of students of all ages.

Therefore the paper presented examines the role of games in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) to students of the English for specific purposes (ESP) classroom. We discuss features of the game, its objectives and specificity. Attention is paid to the choice and applying of the games in teaching as well. For more definitive results a research among teachers and students is held. In the course of our inquiry the goal is to identify the role of games and their importance in the process of teaching EFL to students of non – language departments, like: Economics, Management, Information technologies (IT), Physics, Mathematics and Mechanics. For that, we are to answer the following research questions:

- 1 Is it necessary and important to use the games in the class of EFL?
- 2 Are games effective being a method of teaching?
- 3 Do games motivate to learn English in an ESP classroom?

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The research method contains the questionnaire form for students with open and close questions, which is aimed to define their awareness of the mentioned method of teaching and their opinion concerning the games on the lessons. The survey is held among 215 first –year and second – year undergraduate students of the departments of: Economics, Management, IT, Physics, Mathematics and Mechanics. The audience is of a various level of English knowledge. Second-year students have

already practiced immersion and communicative methods in combination with games on English lessons at the University whereas first- year students experience this for the first time. The methods above are used because earlier made comparative analysis shows greater results in language improvement of non- language faculties students.

### **3 GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR ESP CLASSROOM**

We came up with the idea of researching the games matter in teaching because every year educating a new generation becomes more accomplished. Having discussed the games topic with colleagues we are strongly getting assured that now the tasks of our classes, besides teaching the language, are: to arise interest to the subject of English language from the first lesson up to a graduation moment, to make an atmosphere of search and creativity on the lesson, to make lessons more informative in language as well as in other social and scientific spheres.

#### **3.1 Games as the method of teaching**

The method of games turned to be one of the most interesting and catching, also effective from the educational point of view. Moreover, it's applicable for students' audience of unlimited age range. For infants – the stage of development and obtaining the model of reality; for juniors – a prevailing activity in a day-to-day life with the function of physical and brain training; for teenagers – it is mostly the process of communication in the society and forming of the world outlook; for adults – it's a conscious activity for memory training and practicing of new skills as well as a way of abstraction from routine life.

The game being one of the forms of reflection of people's activity in everyday life can either correspond to a particular age of humans' development or become an instrument of reproducing earlier age, or acting older than an actual age is.

According to the nature of gaming techniques we divide games into:

- 1 Subjective;
- 2 Narrative;
- 3 Role-play;
- 4 Business games;
- 5 Imitational;
- 6 Competition.

From the point of education, they can be:

- 1 Educating, training, controlling, estimating;
- 2 Informative, developing, pedagogical;
- 3 Creative;
- 4 Career- guidance.

Also the method of games is of a great importance for a teacher for the purpose of evaluating the work and knowledge of students. Especially, when we consider groups of students in schools, colleges or universities where children are mostly used to work for marks and scores. But games make them forget about points they can get. The time students play and feel free and liberated, teacher continues to fulfill her controlling and evaluating functions.

#### **3.2 Approaches to studying games in teaching**

Development of a General theory of the game originates in the writings of Spencer and Schiller. A significant contribution to this theory was made by Buytendijk, Bern, Buhler, Vallon, Wundt, Gross, Dewey, Janet, Keira, Colozza, piaget, Freud, Fromm, Huizinga, Stern, etc. In Russian pedagogy and psychology the theory of games was developed by Y. P. Azarov, M. M. Bakhtin, p. P. Blonsky, L. S. Vygotsky, O. S. Gazman, N. To. Krupskaya, A. N. Leont'ev, A. S. Makarenko, V. D. Mendzheritskaya, V. S. Mukhin, G. V. Plekhov, S. L. Rubinstein, L. S. Slavina, V. A. Sukhomlinsky, K. D. Ushinsky, E. A. Florina, F. I. Predki, D. B. Elkonin, etc. In some works of scientists the history of the game considered as a way of solving difficulties and problems in utilitarian activities, as the transfer of information about

the real activities of learning, as a means of competition for guidance and entertainment. The holistic concept of culture was formulated by the Dutch philosopher and historian. [9] Huizinga Th. (1872-1945.) in "Homo Ludens; Article on the history of culture" (1938). [6] The concept of gaming the Genesis of culture is also reflected in the writings of G. G. Gadamer, who has studied the history and culture as a kind of game in the field of language, and in [5] E. FinK "Basic phenomena of human existence", as exceptional opportunity of human life. The game is the ability to find themselves in society itself, in human quality, in the Universe (Janusz Korczak). K. D. Ushinsky believed that the game is a unique kind of free and conscious activity that delivers not only pleasure, but also allow to assert themselves in interesting classes, because the game combines aspiration, feeling and performance. N.. Dobrolyubov and N. G. Chernyshevsky regarded the game as one of the effective means of physical, mental and moral education.

### 3.3 The unique feature of the games method in teaching English to students of non-linguistic departments of the University

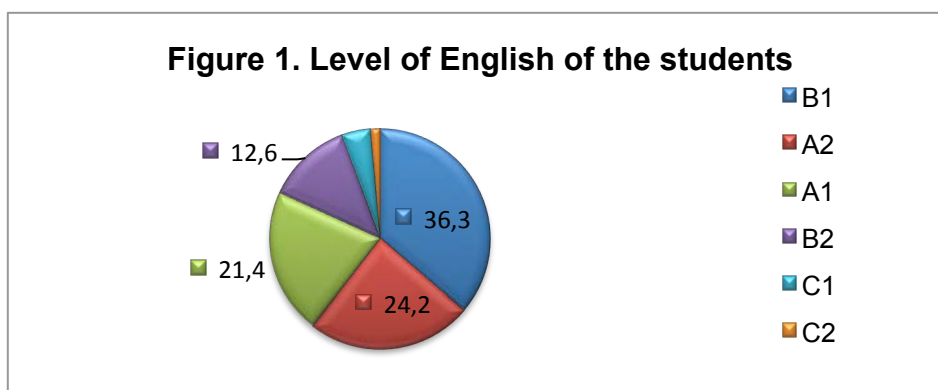
As we can see from the information above the games as the method of teaching has been researched since long time ago, we even can suppose that people started analyzing games as soon as they were able to use their mind.

As for our survey, we consider only the first and second year students of the University. This group of people under the experiment is curious for us because psychological development of the category discussed is rather complicated, but appealing for research.

While working with freshmen of universities teachers come across a lot of obstacles, like: maximalism, a great deal of ambitions, illusions of independence and extra self-confidence. That's why the task of teachers becomes as twice as sophisticated. In combination with all descriptions given the essential moment here is that we are to work with Z generation. It means that children of the ages of 17-20 are inclined to think that they are not children anymore and can rule their life, be responsible for their actions and decisions they make. On the one hand it's close to be truth but on the other hand we confront rampant personalities whom we are to help to keep the correct direction and to channel their enormous energy into an appropriate flow. These students cannot imagine their lives without modern mobile gadgets and internet connection. To meet the needs of their mind development teachers should follow the technological progress, mostly they do. Otherwise, they never see their students on their lessons. And the games unquestionably come handy when our students of highly-technological reality get bored of theory and exercises. However our attempts and work is worth doing, because the majority of groups admit that they come to the classes of English language with a high level of curiosity to learn and practice new opportunities to start speaking a foreign language, which, in turn, motivate and stimulate the work of the teaching staff.

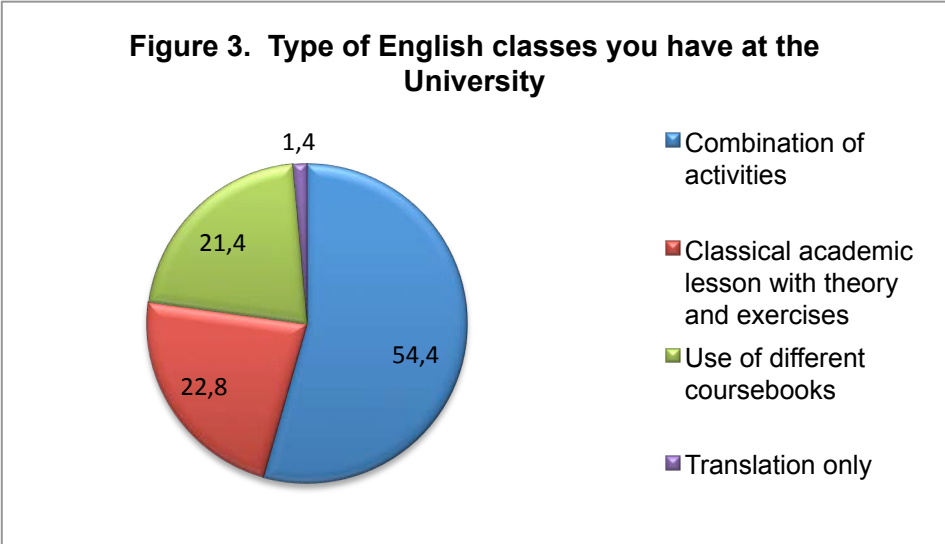
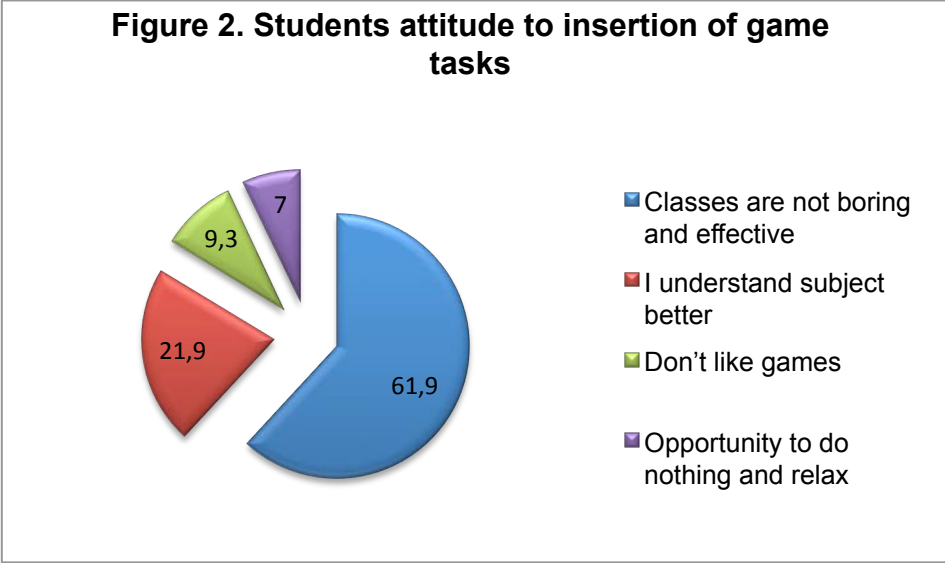
## 4 RESULTS

The survey conducted among 215 respondents has revealed that the average level of English in the groups researched is between A 1 and B 1 (Fig.1).

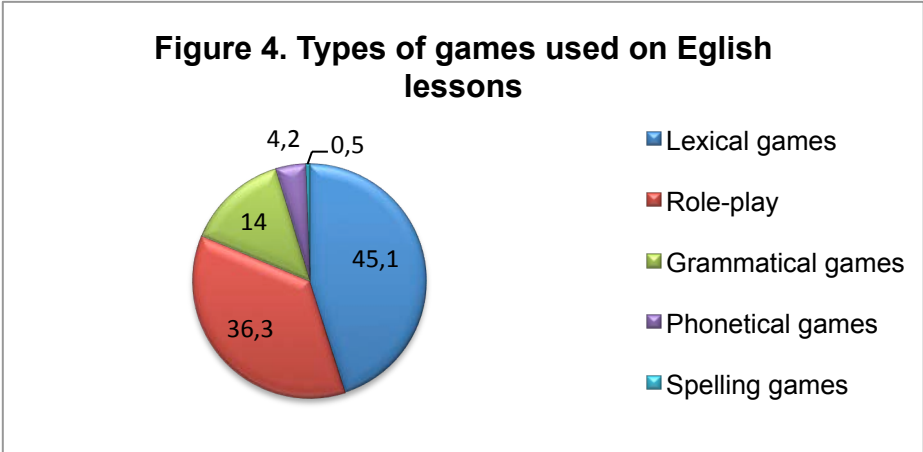


From the questionnaire given is seen that students verify they enjoy the English classes at the university (Fig. 2) and clarify that lessons contain various activities such as: studying theoretical issues

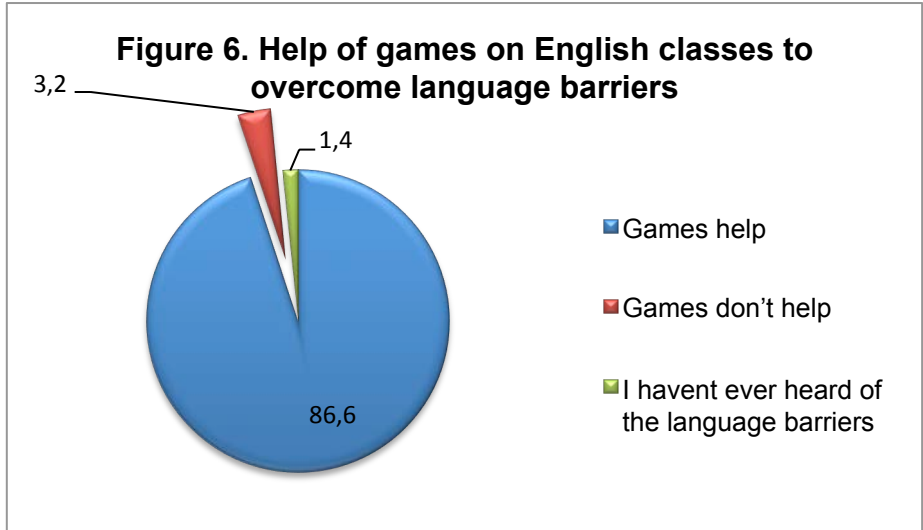
of the English language, reading additional literature, translating, using multimedia equipment and practicing speaking skills in dialogues, discussions or games (Fig. 3).



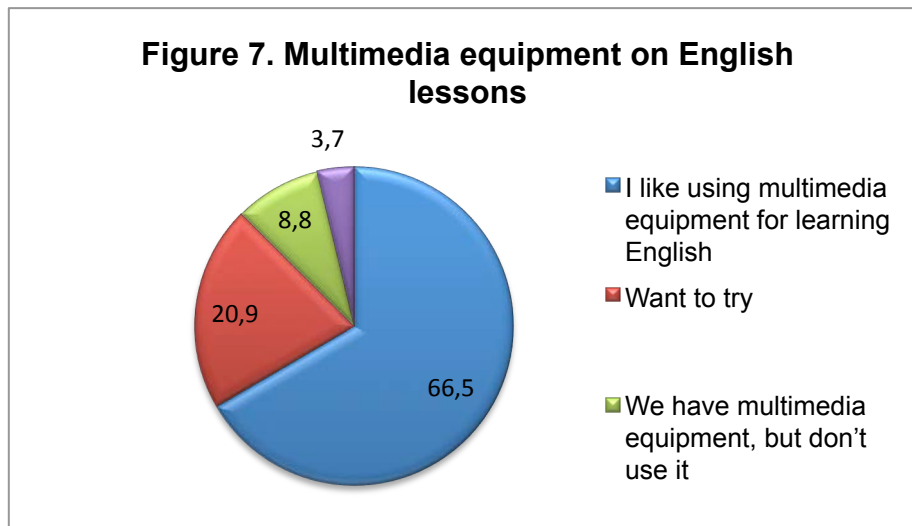
It is inquiring that teachers of English for ESP students mostly use games for learning new vocabulary and speech practise through the role-play tasks (Fig. 4).



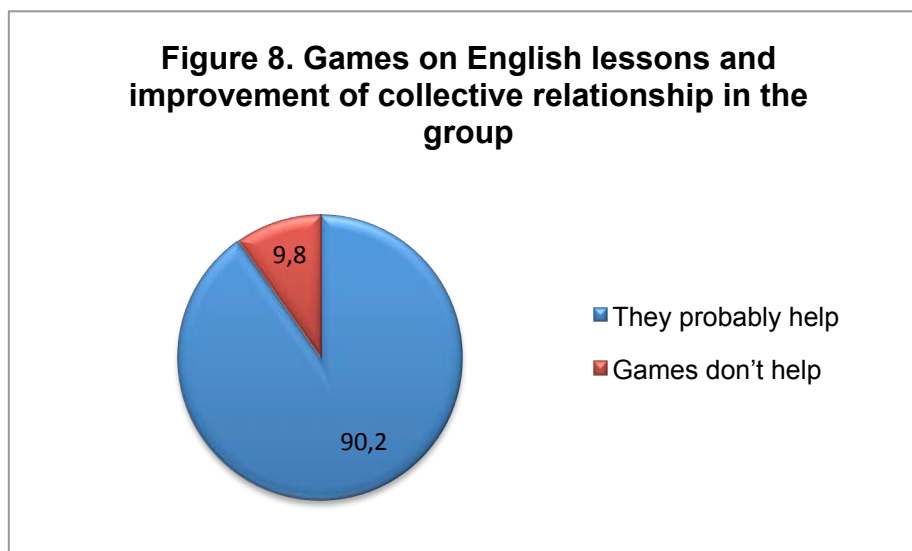
Students themselves acknowledge that using the games makes lessons more effective, especially when they have chance to work in pairs or groups (Fig. 5). In addition to all mentioned, we have discovered that the method of games helps them to cope with the phenomenon called linguistic barrier (Fig. 6). The majority of students confirm that the atmosphere of games brings them very close to a life of native speakers and besides they can immitate scenes, dialogues, even accents they normally see and hear in their favourite foreign movies without any fraction of shyness or stiffness. Teachers also approve of the students' diligence, likewise, they are satisfied by mutual work done so that make them capable to create new and captivating assignments which enrich the method of games they use.



Besides playing some physical games with educational purpose our teachers use more opportunities modern technologies give them, to keep pace with the time of computers and smartphones. Our students regularly use interactive board for presentation of their projects, watching films, solving quizzes and even to have an online chat or conversation with students of foreign countries (Fig. 7).



From the psychological point of view we learned that students as well as teachers prove games to be a practically useful to open up undergraduates minds and to improve their collective relationship (Fig. 8).



## 5 DISCUSSION

The survey has revealed the fact that the students accept the method of games in learning of English at the University. With the help of the questionnaire given we learned essential moments we are to pay attention to while teaching. Also, the survey pointed out advantages as well as disadvantages when inserting games into the teaching methodology.

After the survey we have made a conclusion about the importance of altering teaching methods in the EFL classroom for students of non-linguistic departments. We introduce the following methods in teaching ESP classroom students:

- the optimal number of game-lessons should be one in a week, as teachers and students approve;
- the most effective way of getting everybody included into the game and conversation is making up small groups rather than working in pairs or the whole group work;
- to achieve the goal of a game task it is necessary to give students time and prior glossary for preparation;
- to use multimedia equipment and smartphone applications to enliven previously used methodology;

As far as we are concerned these recommendations will work for groups of the colleges and universities regardless of nationality, level of English and country they are located in.

After finishing the survey we receive a lot of comments on the questionnaire from the teaching staff and the students as well. Their opinion is that the research was necessary for both parts of educational process. The students admit they eager to try to design their own games and projects to use then on the lesson while the teachers strongly support this idea because sometimes it is troublesome to create new games and google the instructions of the applications or additional programmes used to vary a lesson.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the research held reveals interesting results which are useful both for teachers and students. Since the aim of the study is to learn the role of the games in teaching English in ESL classroom to ESP students we have also studied and tried to undersand the challenges individual students face.

To answer the questions of the survey the students and teachers tested answered the questiones of the questionnaire. The tested audience was of different nationalities and level of English knowledge. These facts didn't influence the results of the survey.

The students were satisfied they had been given the test, because it was an opportunity to express their point of view upon the work of teachers and also to help their instructors in foreign language to redesign and maybe increase effectiveness of the classes.

The teachers could find answers to their questions and ways to enrich their methodology of teaching English to ESP classroom students, who are tend to be a special and a very- Z-generation category, since they study on faculties where people practise innovations every day.

As for motivation, our students as well as our teachers are inspired by these lessons with games inclusions. The teachers see great results and impovement of speech while students forget about humbleness and act as if thet are native speakers of English.

The research of a new generation, their minds and activities arrises new trends in the methodology of teaching. It is a challenge and a creative work for teachers but in the same time it is a huge scope to work on and in.

In our University we have all instruments,equipment and professionals to realize all sorts of games. For example, Moodle educational platform provides a range of opportunities for selfstudy which is of a great practical value nowadays. Tasks as quizzes, crosswords or on-line quests and chats are available there for the students of the University.

Board games also come in handy, especially "Monopoly" for Economics, Finance and Management faculties to upgrade vocabulry of the students and skills of Business speech.

IT, Physics and Mechanics department students like to design their own programmes, computer games and smartphone applications which we use on the lesson.

We carry on studying Z generation and new approaches to teaching EFL to ESP classroom students in order be able to keep their interest to foreign language learning from the first day at the University till the graduation also to motivate them to improve their English knowledge. Moreover, nowadays English language is a priority for people willing to get a qualitative postgraduate education all over the world. In the globalised world the role of [14] English is indisputable. It has become the international language of communication so it is imperative that graduates, postgraduates and novice academic professionals be able to use the language as a tool in the community interactions. They must communicate effectively and professionally in both written and spoken forms. The task of teachers of higher educational establishments to provide necessary foreign language training.

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