TEACHERS' VIEWPOINT ON THE INTEGRATION OF GAMES IN THE PROCESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH

Japar Saya

Master's student, Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages named after Abylai Khan, Kazakhstan, Almaty

Almashova Kamila

научный руководитель, Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages named after Abylai Khan, Kazakhstan, Almaty

Abstract. Games have become a prevalent alternative in the arsenal of English teachers for instructional purposes. The primary goal of this study was to investigate teachers' viewpoints on the integration of games into English teaching. The research employed a questionnaire as the data collection method, administered to 15 English teachers from diverse schools. The results revealed a positive inclination among teachers toward using games, attributing their efficacy to the enhancement of students' language skills, improved comprehension of grammar, and expanded vocabulary. Despite these advantages, teachers acknowledged the challenges associated with game integration, emphasizing the need for effective time management and crowd control. The study aims to offer valuable insights, specifically from the perspective of teachers, regarding the incorporation of games in English classrooms. It is anticipated that this research will serve as a useful reference for educators and researchers in the field of English teaching, providing a foundation for future investigations in this area.

Keywords: games, teachers' perspective, English teaching, efficiency

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language can be challenging for some learners, requiring considerable effort and an extended duration for comprehension. In Kazakhstan, students undergo twelve years of English instruction from elementary to senior high levels, with an emphasis on developing proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, many Kazakh teachers face difficulties motivating students due to factors such as shyness, large class sizes, and limited exposure to the English language. Research suggests that teachers may lack specific professional development in teaching non-English speaking students, hindering effective language instruction at the primary school level (Yukich, 2013). Furthermore, learners encounter challenges acquiring a foreign language concurrently with their native language, leading to difficulties in the learning process (Fotovatnia & Namjoo, 2013). This sentiment is echoed in a study on Burmese students' vocabulary learning, which identified issues such as time constraints, language course schedules, and exam-oriented educational systems affecting efficient learning (Kyaw & Sinhanety, 2012).

Given these challenges, teachers must explore diverse techniques to minimize difficulties in English learning. One approach is integrating games into the teaching process to create a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere that enhances student motivation (Ersoz, 2000). Games are considered highly motivating in foreign language teaching as they are amusing, interesting, and can address

various language skills and communication (Carrier, 1990). However, teachers need to select games appropriate for their students' language level and align with the class's goals and content. Interested in understanding English teachers' perspectives on the use of games in the teaching and learning process, I aim to conduct research on this topic. The primary objective is to explore teachers' views on incorporating games into English instruction. This study aims to provide insights, from teachers' perspectives, into the use of games in the English classroom, serving as a valuable reference for educators and researchers in the field of English teaching.

Literature review

Games, as defined by Byrne (1995), are a form of play governed by rules, intended to be enjoyable and fun. They go beyond being a mere diversion from routine activities and serve as a means to engage learners in using language within the context of the game. Yolageldili and Arikan (2011) similarly define games as student-focused activities that demand active involvement, while Hadfield (1990) characterizes games as activities with rules, goals, and an element of fun. In essence, games are interactive play that imparts goals, rules, adaptation, problem-solving, and interaction, incorporating factors like rules, competition, relaxation, and learning. The primary focus of using games in the classroom is to facilitate learning while making the process enjoyable for students. Hadfield (1999) classifies language games into two types: linguistic games, which emphasize accuracy, and communicative games, which prioritize the successful exchange of information and ideas.

Semoglou's (2012) experimental study in a Greek primary school revealed that a game-based approach yielded higher test scores compared to the traditional PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) context. Similarly, Azarmi's (2007) study in Iran demonstrated that using adapted authentic childhood games led to better performance in various language skills among experimental group learners. Despite the advantages of using games in EFL teaching, researchers acknowledge potential challenges. To address these, it's emphasized that a game should involve friendly competition, keep all students engaged, encourage language use rather than focus solely on language form, and provide opportunities for learning, practice, and review of specific language material.

From the perspective of English teaching, games hold significance for several reasons. Firstly, they add an element of fun, crucial for activating students' interest, particularly those who may have been disengaged previously. Games can serve as communicative, enjoyable, safe, and non-threatening activities, fostering self-confidence, satisfaction, and positive relationships among learners and with teachers (Orlick, 2006; Hussin, Maroof, & D'Cruz, 2001). Language learning is acknowledged as a challenging and prolonged effort, and incorporating games into teaching strategies can enhance engagement and sustain interest over time (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2005).

METHODS

This section describes the context of the study, the participants, and the data collection procedure.

Context of the study

The present study is a descriptive one, for the collected data was gathered through an online questionnaire for English students.

The Participants

The participants are English teachers of different public schools. They were selected based on some following reasons. First, they were teachers of younger grade in which games are used actively in the class. Second, they came from the same background as English educators, and finally, they speak English actively during their class. These reasons will help me to find out their perspective on the use of games in English teaching.

Data Collection Procedure

The purpose of these questions is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the efficiency of game technology in teaching foreign languages. The survey aims to gather insights from educators and professionals involved in language education, seeking to understand their perspectives on the impact of game technology on various aspects of the learning experience. The questions cover key areas such as engagement, motivation, retention, cultural understanding, practical language skill development, and the ability of game-based assessments to evaluate linguistic skills. The data collected through these questions will contribute to a nuanced understanding of the strengths and challenges associated with integrating game technology into foreign language education, ultimately informing discussions on best practices and potential improvements in language teaching methodologies.

The data was collected through questionnaire in Google (По запросу Роскомнадзора сообщаем, что иностранное лицо, владеющее информационными ресурсами Google, является нарушителем законодательства Российской Федерации — прим. ред.) Form. They were given to the participants to mark from 1 (I agree) to 4 (strongly disagree) with the help of these 10 statements. The poll was an individual and anonymous and it was conducted in English. The data obtained from the interview is capable to answer the research question which is what the teachers' perspective about games and the efficiency of using games for English teaching.

Analysis Procedures

After the data collection, the results from the participants were transcribed and analyzed. The next step was calculating average scores for each question to determine the overall sentiment and interpreting the results in the context of the initial research questions. Finally, it would be discussed how the findings might impact the integration of game technology in foreign language education.

1. **Enhancement of Student Engagement:**

   - A significant majority (71.4%) agreed that game technology enhances student engagement in foreign language learning, with an additional 28.6% strongly agreeing. The absence of disagreement underscores a consensus on the positive impact of game technology on engagement.

2. **Positive Influence on Motivation:**

- A combined 57.1% strongly agreed and 42.9% agreed that game technology positively influences students' motivation to learn a foreign language. This indicates a strong belief in the motivational benefits of incorporating game elements in language education.

3. **Contribution to Retention:**

- An overwhelming 100% agreement was observed regarding the contribution of game-based language learning to better retention of language concepts and vocabulary. This unanimous consensus underscores the perceived effectiveness of games in reinforcing language retention.

4. **Promotion of Cultural Understanding:**

- The majority (71.4%) agreed, while an additional 28.4% strongly agreed that game technology is effective in promoting cultural understanding in foreign language education. This suggests that games serve as valuable tools in fostering cultural awareness among language learners.

5. **Support for Practical Language Skills:**

- A combined 85.7% agreed and 14.3% strongly agreed that game mechanics effectively support the development of practical language skills in real-world scenarios. This indicates a high level of confidence in the applicability of game features to real-life language contexts.

6. **Sustained Interest Over Time:**

- While 71.4% agreed that the use of game technology leads to sustained interest in foreign language learning, a notable 14.3% strongly agreed, highlighting the potential for games to maintain learner interest over an extended period.

7. **Effectiveness of Game-Based Assessments:**

- The majority (71.4%) agreed that game-based assessments accurately evaluate students' linguistic skills. However, 14.3% both strongly agreed and disagreed, indicating a certain level of variability in perceptions regarding assessment effectiveness.

8. **Impact of Implementation Challenges:**

- Participants were divided, with 57.1% disagreeing and 42.9% agreeing that challenges in implementing game technology negatively impact its effectiveness in teaching foreign languages. This suggests a need for further exploration of the challenges and potential solutions.

9. **Accommodation of Diverse Learning Styles:**

- A unanimous 100% agreement was observed regarding the belief that game technology accommodates diverse learning styles and linguistic backgrounds effectively in a foreign language classroom.

10. **Variability Across Languages:**

- The majority (71.4%) agreed, and an additional 28.6% strongly agreed that the efficiency of game technology varies when applied to different foreign languages.

Discussion

The overwhelmingly positive responses to the survey underscore the potential of game technology as a valuable tool in foreign language education. The high agreement on aspects such as engagement, motivation, retention, and cultural understanding suggests that educators perceive games as effective and engaging resources. However, the diversity of opinions on challenges in implementation and the effectiveness of game-based assessments indicates that there may be nuances and complexities in integrating game technology into language teaching. Further research and exploration are warranted to identify specific challenges and develop strategies to overcome them.

The study's limitation lies in the relatively small sample size, and future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse participant pool. Additionally, qualitative data from open-ended responses could provide deeper insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the efficacy of game technology in teaching foreign languages, paving the way for continued exploration and refinement of game-based language learning methodologies.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate teachers' perspectives on the use of games in the English teaching and learning process, recognizing the pivotal role teachers play in delivering educational content and ensuring student comprehension. Games, when integrated with the curriculum in moderation, offer numerous advantages that outweigh their potential drawbacks. This aligns with Mubaslat's assertion (2012) that games are both motivating and challenging, providing language practice across speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. Games not only encourage interaction and communication but also foster meaningful contextual creation, making them an effective means of language development in a comfortable environment.

Given these advantages, teachers should consider incorporating games into their teaching practices, especially for specific skills such as speaking and listening. Creating an encouraging atmosphere for simultaneous work and learning is also crucial. However, the study acknowledges a limitation concerning the broad concept of games, as their varied nature poses challenges for teachers in selecting the most suitable game for specific English materials. According to teachers, games are deemed essential in English teaching due to the manifold advantages they offer. Yet, for a game to fulfill its educational purpose, teachers must carefully choose games, consider time efficiency, and make necessary preparations to ensure smooth class organization and activity execution.

The study underscores the importance of teachers being aware of their roles in making game-based teaching pedagogically successful. The incorporation of games into teaching practices has the potential to enhance learning in Kazakhstan's schools, serving as a pedagogical strategy to engage students and enrich their educational experiences. The study recommends further research, suggesting the use of observation methods with a larger participant pool. A well-timed observation could yield more significant results, and a broader participant base would capture diverse perspectives among teachers, maximizing the potential of games in English teaching in the Kazakhstan education landscape.

References:

1. Azarmi, S. (2011). The use of authentic games in English Language Teaching. *Ekev Akademi Dergisi, 15*(47), 411-422.

2. Byrne, D. (1995). Games. *Teaching Oral English*. Harlow: Longman Group UK Limited: pp 315-321.

3. Dondi, C., & Moretti, M. (2007). A methodological proposal for learning games selection and quality assessment. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 38*, 502-512.

4. Lavery, C. (2001). "Games and the language classroom." *Teaching English*. British Council. 2 Dec 2011. Web 13-March-2016.

5. McCallum, G. P. (1980). *101 word games: For students of English as a second or foreign language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

6. McFarlane, A., Sparrowhawk, A., & Heald, Y. (2002). Report on the educational use of games. *TEEM (Teachers Evaluating Educational Multimedia)*. Retrieved from http://www.teem.org.uk/resources/teem_gamesined_full.pdf