

GRAMMAR GAMES AS THE WAY OF MOTIVATING STUDENTS

ГРАМАТИЧНІ ІГРИ ЯК ЗАСІБ МОТИВАЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ

The article is devoted to the analysis of the grammar games as the way of motivating students and developing their communicative skills.

It is stated that the desire to develop fluency in speech encourages teachers to look for such methods that can make studying grammar non-routine as well as keep learners being interested and active during the whole class. It is underlined that grammar remains the basis for learning a foreign language.

It is emphasized that the ability of using new grammar patterns in a funny or unusual way makes students more confident in their everyday communication and gives them the opportunity to experience language rather than merely study it. It is stated that Interactive grammar games can be used as an efficient strategy both for achieving educational goals and encouraging students to develop communicative skills.

It is shown that the material used for interactive grammar games can be classified according to the group formats, worked out by the researcher N. McIver. It is stated that grammar games can be organized in pairs at different stages of a foreign language class. Pair format can be more efficient for practicing grammar with beginners or learners with elementary and pre-intermediate proficiency levels.

The way of organizing the learners in triads can give the opportunity to practice grammar structures as well as revise vocabulary connected with the topic. It is stated that the materials for grammar games organized for triads should be more varied and complex and require more preparation from the teacher. Grammar games for triads are as a rule more highly structured and contain more diverse elements.

Pyramid is suitable for practicing language functions and structures with the learners of intermediate and upper-intermediate proficiency levels. This group format involves acting and fun components.

Mingles is seen as the most chaotic and may be suitable for light relief between periods of hard work at some complicated grammar structures. It is stated that this group format can help the teacher to get students into the right mood and continue practicing grammar but in more relaxed and unofficial way.

It is proved that involving students into grammar game can help to create learning environment, which leads students to success and joy of learning.
Key words: grammar games, group format, pair work, triad, pyramid, mingles, communicative skills.

Стаття присвячена аналізу граматичних ігор як засобу мотивації студентів та розвитку їхніх комунікативних навичок.

У статті зазначено, що прагнення розвивати вільне мовлення спонукає викладачів шукати

такі методи, які можуть зробити вивчення граматики не рутинним а також допоможуть підтримувати зацікавленість та активність студентів протягом усього заняття. Підкреслюється, що граMATИКА залишається основою для вивчення іноземної мови.

У статті наголошується, що вміння використовувати нові граматичні моделі в кумедний або незвичний спосіб робить студентів більш впевненими у повсякденному спілкуванні і надає їм можливість використовувати мову свідомо, а не просто вивчати її. Зазначається, що інтерактивні граматичні ігри можна використовувати як ефективну стратегію як для досягнення навчальних цілей, так і для заохочення студентів до розвитку комунікативних навичок.

Показано, що матеріал, який використовується для інтерактивних граматичних ігор, можна класифікувати відповідно до групових форматів, розроблених дослідницею Н. Маклівер. Зазначено, що граматичні ігри можна організувати в парах на різних етапах заняття з іноземної мови. Парний формат може бути більш ефективним для опрацювання граматики з початківцями або зі студентами з елементарним або середнім рівнем володіння мовою.

Спосіб організації студентів у тріади дає можливість практикувати граматичні структури і одночасно повторювати лексику, пов'язану з темою. Зазначено, що матеріали для граматичних ігор, організованих для тріад, мають бути більш різноманітними та складними і вимагати більше підготовки від викладача. Граматичні ігри для тріад, як правило, більш структуровані та містять більше різноманітних компонентів. Піраміда підходить для відпрацювання мовних функцій та структур зі студентами середнього та просунутого рівня володіння мовою. Цей груповий формат передбачає інсценування та наявність розважальної складової.

Мішанина вважається найбільш хаотичним форматом та може підходити для розвантаження між періодами напруженої роботи над деякими складними граматичними структурами. Зазначається, що такий формат може допомогти викладачеві налаштувати студентів на подальшу роботу, але у більш розкутому та неофіційному форматі.

Доведено, що залучення студентів до граматичної гри може допомогти створити навчальне середовище, яку сприятиме успіху та радості від навчання.

Ключові слова: граматичні ігри, груповий формат, парна робота, тріада, піраміда, мішанина, комунікативні навички.

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Problem statement. The communicative approach in foreign language teaching has determined the changes in the formation of other language skills and competencies. The traditional format of a teacher explaining grammar rules in front of the class, drawing detailed schemes and tables on the blackboard (either interactive or not) and the students diligently doing endless exercises

aimed at practicing a new grammatical pattern may appear to be a little outdated, obsolete and absolutely unacceptable in the time of innovations and high technologies. The desire to develop fluency in speech has encouraged teachers to look for such methods that can make studying grammar non-routine as well as keep learners being interested and active during the whole class. The interactive

games and activities aimed at developing speaking skills appear to be more enjoyable and absorbing for the learners of all ages. The process of following up the grammar rules, doing exercises according to the given pattern, filling in the gaps or something of a kind may really seem to be tiresome and unexciting. At the same time, grammar remains the basis for learning a foreign language. What should a foreign language teacher do to make the students enjoy grammar and keep them engaged and interested while studying grammatical categories and practicing new grammar rules? The researchers J. Hadfield and C. Hadfield point out: "Using creative techniques for grammar practice will thus motivate students, by making what could be a routine and repetitious activity into something novel and exciting" [1, p. 51]. Game factor can make grammar rules more understandable and new grammar patterns more memorable. Even a little acting or entertaining component introduced into everyday routine of practicing grammar rule can increase the degree of learners' activity and enhance their motivation. The ability of using new grammar patterns in a funny or unusual way makes students more confident in their everyday communication and gives them the opportunity to experience language rather than merely study it.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Grammar games as a method of foreign language teaching has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. The work by S.Thornbury is devoted to the analysis of the various approaches to teaching grammar. In researcher's point of view, "the differences in attitude to the role of grammar underpin differences between methods, teachers and learners" [5, p. 129]. The linguist takes into consideration the main arguments for and against "putting grammar in the foreground in language studying" [5, p. 129]. The researcher focuses attention on two theoretical concepts in teaching grammar, caused by the influence of modern communicative approach. Such factors as "economy, ease and efficacy" prove to be the most important for successful mastering grammar. Analyzing the objectives of grammar activities in his article "Accuracy, fluency and complexity" S.Thornbury distinguishes three distinct types of learners. The first group includes those students "whose language is error free, but who are painful to interact with others" [6, p. 139]. The second group consists of "fast and fluent speakers with unintelligible language because of the errors they make" [6, p. 139]. The researcher gives preference to learners belonging to the third group as they "can control their grammar, make their speech intelligible as well as cope with pressures of real-time communication" [6, p. 140]. Grammar activities properly organized can contribute to achieving a happy balance, combining communicative fluency and grammar competence.

Emphasizing creativity in teaching and training, the researchers J. Hadfield and C. Hadfield offer creative techniques that "can increase retention of the grammar items and lead to deeper processing of the language" [1, p. 51]. In researchers' opinion, interactive games and exercises can contribute to the learners' identity-building and can give them a sense of ownership of the new language" [1, p. 51]. In their works the linguists prove that adherence to the rules as well as following *tightly controlled framework* can have much in common with creativity. Grammar activities, based on the use of *imaginative trigger* can help students to express creative ideas.

The researcher L. Stepanek, whose interdisciplinary and creative approach to language teaching is based on a combination of his formal academic background as well as informal drama education, emphasizes the necessity of "real-life use of grammar" [4, p. 98]. In L. Stepanek's opinion, teachers should make up grammar activities, aimed at engaging students in real-life or creative situation in which they can always succeed. Trying to search the certain grammar feature, presented at the lesson, in the internet, their favourite film or book, the students can develop both creative and critical thinking. The linguist points out the psychological value of such tasks as "they don't expose students to situations with *wrong* or *incorrect* solutions. All the learners can be viewed as successful as "they spend time thinking about and focusing on a practical grammar feature in their real-life preferred contexts" [4, p. 101].

S.W.Woodward works out grammar games which require the active involvement of learners. The activities, created by the linguist, "reflect and give structure to what actually goes on in effective foreign language class. Fun involvement is viewed as essential ingredient of successful language learning since "interaction and group participation engage students and information more memorable and relevant" [8, p. 6]. Grammar activities, worked out by S.W. Woodward, are aimed at "creating authentic communication in a cooperative learning environment" [8, p. 6]. The researcher emphasizes the role of competitive grammar games which can work very well in a conversation class and give the learners the opportunity to react spontaneously as well as develop communicative fluency.

In M. Rinvoluceri's opinion, the foreign language teacher should focus students' energy on "mastering and internalizing grammar" [3, p. 3]. The researcher classifies grammar activities into three groups according to the educational goals. Grammar exercises can be used efficiently before presenting new grammar rule or grammatical pattern, after the presentation of new grammar material and as the revision of grammar area. In any situation grammar "should not be a Friday afternoon reward activity" [3, p. 5]. Taken seriously and creatively interactive grammar games can help the students to move through different stages in

their command of the language as well as realize the progress they make.

Emphasizing creativity in teaching and training P. Watcyn-Jones designed the set of grammar games and grouped them "according to the grammatical structures as well as the types of activities [7, p. 6]. Guessing and discussion games, values clarification techniques, jigsaw tasks and problem-solving exercises, represented in P. Watcyn-Jones' book, are aimed at motivating students and get them interested and deeply involved in practicing grammar.

J. Umstatter, selected Teacher of the Year several times, designed grammar games, aimed at "making students' time in the classroom informative, enjoyable and entertaining" [9, p. 7]. In the researcher's opinion, fun involvement can help the foreign language teachers to introduce true *joy of learning* and make students forget about pressure and stress. The classroom is viewed as "the ideal place to incorporate fun activities as well as introduce and review the various language skills including grammar, mechanics, word development, vocabulary, research, critical thinking and creative writing" [9, p. 7]. Trying to make learning fun, the teachers can help the learners to absorb more information to retain it as well as enjoy the learning process.

The aim of the article is to define the role of grammar games in organizing and motivating students and to offer a set of exercises which can be used for developing learners' grammar competence at different stages of the English lesson, aimed at forming and developing students' communicative fluency.

Presenting the main material. All foreign language teachers know how significant grammar is as well as all students know how tedious and tiresome grammar exercises may be. The communicative approach to learning foreign language has made the instructional format of teaching grammar outdated and unacceptable. The knowledge of the language in general as well as the knowledge of grammar doesn't exist outside of the learners. The teacher's role is to facilitate learning through creative and challenging activities rather than to be the main source of knowledge. The issue of learning grammar is getting especially urgent as more and more students realize that no communication will occur if they lack the correct grammatical structures or forget basic grammar rules. Interactive grammar games can be used as an efficient strategy both for achieving educational goals and encouraging students to develop communicative skills.

The material used for interactive grammar games can be divided into several groups according to a number of principles. As learning English is group work, grammar games can be classified according to the way the students are organized into groups. The researcher N. McIver views group work as a very important aspect of teaching and distinguishes such types of group format: *pair work*, *triads*, *Pyramids* and

Mingles [2, p. 23]. Let's have a closer look at grammar games which can be efficient and suitable for each way of organizing students into groups. There are a great number of grammar activities which can be done in pairs. The introducing of the new grammar rule can be much more enjoyable if the teacher asks the students to discuss this new material with a partner, to prepare questions concerning certain grammar structures, to look for the necessary information or to share it. The results of such cooperation can contribute a lot to students' better understanding the new rule or memorizing the new pattern.

As pair format is considered to be the simplest form of group work, grammar games can be organized in pairs at different stages of a foreign language class. The grammar game "Detective" is aimed at helping students how to ask questions and to use the verbs in the Past Simple tense correctly. The game consists of several steps.

Step 1: Divide students into pairs. Prepare the descriptions of the situation, connected with the crime and police investigation.

Step 2: Assign the roles of police officer and the witness or have the learners choose. Ask the student to write some questions using the Past Simple which the police officer might ask the witness.

Step 3: Have the learners practice asking and answering different types of questions and pay special attention to the use of necessary intonation. Tell each pair of students to dramatize their dialogue before the class.

This game involves acting component, what makes grammar practice more enjoyable for the learners. The steady repetition of the similar structures is no longer monotonous if the students interact with the others, perform the roles, and dramatize the dialogue, in which the grammar rule they use appears to be useful and meaningful.

For most students nothing can be more boring and tiresome than learning the irregular verbs. The activity "Grammar tennis" is good for memorizing and practicing the forms of irregular verbs.

Step 1: Bring two students out to the front of the class. They are to sit facing each other. The teacher is by the board and has the role of the umpire.

Step 2: To start the game student A serves by naming the base form of an irregular verb. Student B responds to the *service* and gives the Simple Past of the same verb. If the response is correct, student B gets one point. Then it's the turn for student A to serve and name the Past Participle of the same verb. If student A answers correctly, he /she gets one point too. If the answer is wrong, student B goes on *servicing* and chooses the irregular verb he / she knows.

Step 3: The first person to get 20 points is the winner.

Step 4: Repeat the process with a new pair. Keep the game short and snappy.

This game is quite hilarious and absorbing. After several rounds the students will find that they have memorized most of the irregular verbs and their forms as well as have had a lot of fun while studying grammar. Pair format can be more efficient for practicing grammar with beginners or learners with elementary and pre-intermediate proficiency levels.

The game "Grammar tennis" can be also suitable for *triads*, another group format that can be seen as the modification of pair work. In this game the role of the umpire can be given to a student. The way of organizing the learners in triads can give the opportunity to practice grammar structures as well as revise vocabulary connected with the topic. The game "Headless sentences" is aimed at working at Present Simple Passive and recycling vocabulary units on topic "Sports and games". The materials for grammar games organized for triads should be more varied and complex and require more efforts from the teacher. For the game "Headless sentences" the list of 15 headless sentences is to be prepared.

Step 1: Organize your students in three and tell them they are going to compete in finding appropriate head (beginning) for 15 headless sentences. Give out the sentence bodies. Set them the appropriate time limit. Tell them to write in the sentence beginnings they think are correct.

Step 2: When time is up, pick one student from each triad and give them sentence heads. Ask them to go back to the triad that is not their own and score that group sentences.

Step 3: Ask the scorers to tell the results to the class. The triad that finds more correct heads becomes the winner.

This grammar game appears to be the type of exercise in which the students are internalizing the target structure by reading it, considering it and thinking about it. Such grammar games can facilitate production of the Present Simple Passive later in the further learning process. Game factor can make the target grammar structure more memorable and understandable. Competitive characteristic of the game helps to involve every student to work.

Grammar games for triads are as a rule more highly structured, contain more diverse elements and require more preparation. The grammar game "FBI files" are suitable for the students with intermediate and upper-intermediate proficiency levels.

Step 1: Divide the class into groups of three. Give each triad the handout: the photos of criminals and the description of the crimes, they've committed.

Step 2: Ask each triad to write an FBI file on a wanted criminal. Let the students work for 15 minutes.

Step 3: When time is up, take the photos and descriptions away. Put the photos on the blackboard in front of the class. Choose one person from the triad to present the file created by another triad. Ask the

students to recognize the criminal whose description is given in the file.

Step 4: The triads whose description proves to be more accurate and recognizable wins.

Pairs of students can get together and continue their work in groups of four and then can be easily transformed into the group of eight, building something like a pyramid. The researcher N. McIver considers *Pyramid* to be "an excellent way of practicing the language of persuasion and having class discussion" [2, p. 23]. This group format is suitable for practicing language functions and structures with the learners of intermediate and upper-intermediate proficiency levels.

The activity "Business for your town" can be successfully realized in the pyramid. The activity is aimed at practicing the use of modal verbs.

Step 1: Divide the class into pairs, give them their role cards and necessary handout. Tell the students that they are going to research and design a new business for their town. Pair A is going to represent the local authority. The task of pair A is to determine if the business is necessary and if it will be successful. They start the game exchanging opinions and discussing the economic situation and the level of life in the town.

Step 2: Pair B is to represent community members. They are the second to join the game. The task of pair B is to complain, to criticize and demand changes from the authorities.

Step 3: Pair C is to represent reporters from local newspaper. They are to interview the community members and the representatives of the local authorities. Pair D is to represent the environmentalists worried about the pollution a new business can cause.

Step 4: After interviewing and discussing the students make an educated decision about whether the business will fail or succeed.

This game appears to be challenging as it involves dramatizing and requires additional preparation. *Pyramid* can become the ideal group format for the activity "The Successful politician" that provides opportunities both for intensive use of modal verbs, conditionals and speaking practice. It can be suitable for revising topics which have been dealt with in class. The game requires additional preparation and the use of role cards.

Step 1: Divide the class into several pairs. Pair A includes a candidate for an important election and his or her public relations consultant. They start discussing the candidate's chances of success and decide to invite the team of professionals to help the candidate to improve his or her image.

Step 2: Pair B includes hair stylist and fashion consultant. They are to recommend what clothes to wear, how to dress smartly, what colours to choose, what hair style to prefer.

Step 3: Pair C represents the fitness coach and the nutritionist. They recommend the candidate healthy diet and explain the importance of a good physical

form for a positive image and future successful career. Pair D includes specialists in culture of speech and oratory art. They explain the candidate how to sound convincing and manipulate the audience. All the specialists are to use the language of persuasion, trying to show the importance of the sphere they represent.

Step 4: The candidate asks questions to specify the information, follows their pieces of advice and tries to do the changes visible.

Involvement of fun and acting can help to motivate the learners, sustain their interest and keep them active during the whole class.

Mingles is seen as the most chaotic and unguided group format but many teachers consider it to be the best way of involving each student in practicing "maximum language in minimum time". *Mingles* may be suitable for light relief between periods of hard work at some complicated grammar structures. The group format in that each learner stands up and interacts with as many other learners as possible can help the teacher to get students into the right mood as well as continue practicing grammar but in more relaxed and unofficial way. It's essential that this way of organizing students can be efficient for teaching students of different age groups and at various proficiency levels. The game "Pass it on" is aimed at revising the use of adjectives and their forms.

Step 1: Divide the class into two or three groups of five. Choose one student from each group and give them the worksheet with the story containing a lot of adjectives in different forms. Ask the rest of the students from each group to leave the room.

Step 2: Ask the first student from each group to read the story and take the worksheet from him or her. Invite the second student from each group to come in and ask the first student to tell the story to him or her. Continue until they get to the fifth student.

Step 3: Ask the fifth student from each group to write the story and then compare the story each group has memorized with the original variant. The group of students whose story includes most adjectives used correctly wins.

The game "Line-ups" is a good example of *Mingles* format that can be used as a warming up activity as well as the way of practicing modal verbs.

Step 1: Prepare the individual card for each student. Use two or more colours to mark the cards as it makes easier to give directions and see that everyone is where he or she should be. Call the students holding one colour card to stand in front of the class and have them form a line. This is the answer line. The other students come forward and stand in front the students in the answer line and form a question line. If there are more students in your group, they can form two more lines standing to the right and to the left of the question line.

Step 2: The student in the question line reads the situation, written on their cards. The student in the

answer line must give advice using the appropriate forms of modal verbs.

Step 3: After answering the question, the students in the answer line move to the next position. The students in the question line do not move. Continue until the students in the answer line are back where they started (they have give advice to all the students in the question line). Ask the students to change the positions.

This activity sets the tone of the class and contributes to more effective use of grammar as well as more exciting learning.

Conclusions. The communicative approach to teaching foreign languages has caused the considerable changes in developing language skills. All sorts of interactive activities have become the alternative to the traditional teaching format. There is no doubt that, as a rule, students acquire grammatical understanding and accuracy with difficulty. Learning grammar can be very hard and tiresome work. Grammar games are aimed at making this process more enjoyable and exciting. The games can be used as practice exercises to help the learners to understand and to remember grammatical rules and patterns. They can also be designed as fun activities to lighten the load of grammar learning. Language material used for grammar games can be classified according to the way students are organized into group in a foreign language class. Involving students into grammar game can help to create learning environment, which leads students to success and joy of learning.

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

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