

## INTEGRATING VOCABULARY GAMES INTO A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

## ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ЛЕКСИЧНИХ ІГОР НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

*The article is devoted to the analysis of the vocabulary games as the way of forming and developing students' communicative fluency.*

*It is stated that using vocabulary games can help to turn the potentially boring and unexciting procedure of learning new vocabulary into something really useful, entertaining and worthwhile. It is shown that well-arranged vocabulary games give the opportunity of making memorizing new words easy as well as help the students to integrate new lexical units into their existing knowledge. It is stated that the communicative approach to foreign language teaching requires the development of vocabulary proficiency. It is proved that versatile by nature vocabulary games can be used both for making memorizing easy and for developing all language skills regardless of proficiency level.*

*Vocabulary games can be classified from the structural point of into simple single-stage games and more complex multi-stage games. The games belonging to the first group play on the physical aspect of words. They can be used both as warming-up activities and time-fillers. It is shown that the appropriate choice of the content for single-stage games proves to be the major factor for stimulating learners' interest as well as for creating the enabling atmosphere for noticing and remembering new words. It is stated that learning vocabulary can be especially efficient when it is based on attaching meaning to the word rather than just remembering the form of the word. Playing vocabulary games students learn to experience the meanings of the words in context by using them for the purposes which matter to them. The single-stage games can help the teacher to develop team spirit in the group as well as to prepare the students for dictionary work.*

*It is shown that multi-stage vocabulary activities can help the students to gain and accumulate knowledge about various aspects of the word. Taken creatively such interactive activities can help the teacher to increase the range of possibilities considerably and to add the quality of knowledge so that the words can be fluently accessed in communicative situations. It is stated that the multi-stage vocabulary games are demanding language activities as the materials necessary for this type of games should be more varied and more complex to suit the multi-layered structure of this activity. The multi-stage vocabulary games are designed for training all language skills and may constitute several episodes. Both single-stage and multi-stage vocabulary games can be adapted to suit the certain learning goals as well as the needs and interests of the students.*

**Key words:** *vocabulary game, single-stage game, multi-stage game, communicative skills, motivation.*

*Стаття присвячена аналізу лексичних ігор як засобу формування та розвитку комунікативної компетенції студентів.*

*У статті зазначено, що використання лексичних ігор може допомогти перетворити потенційно нудну і нецікаву діяльність з вивчення нової лексики на щось дійсно корисне, цікаве та ціннісне. Показано, що добре організовані лексичні ігри надають можливість полегшити процес запам'ятовування нових слів, а також допомагають студентам інтегрувати нові лексичні одиниці в їхні вже наявні знання. Стверджується, що комунікативний підхід до навчання іноземної мови потребує розвитку словникового запасу. Доведено, що універсальні за своєю природою лексичні ігри можна використовувати як для полегшення запам'ятовування, так і для розвитку усіх мовних навичок незалежно від рівня володіння мовою. З точки зору структури лексичні ігри можна розподілити на прості одноступеневі та більш складні багатоступеневі ігри. Ігри, що належать до першої групи будуються на фізичному аспекті слів. Такі ігри можна використовувати як для розминки, так і для заповнення вільного часу під час заняття. Показано, що правильний вибір змісту для одноступеневих ігор є основним фактором для стимулювання інтересу студентів, а також для створення сприятливої атмосфери для того, щоб помічати та запам'ятовувати нові слова. Стверджується, що вивчення лексики може бути особливо ефективним, якщо воно базується на наданні значення слову, а не просто на запам'ятовуванні слова. Граючи у лексичні ігри, студенти вчать відчувати значення слів у контексті, використовуючи їх у важливих для них цілях. Одноступеневі ігри можуть допомогти вчителю розвинути командний дух у групі, і також підготувати студентів до роботи зі словником.*

*Показано, що багатоступеневі лексичні ігри можуть допомогти студентам отримати та накопичити знання про різні аспекти слова. Творчо побудовані інтерактивні лексичні вправи допомагають вчителю значно розширити діапазон можливостей і підвищити якість знань студентів так, щоб вони вільно використовували лексику у необхідних комунікативних ситуаціях. Зазначається, що багатоступеневі лексичні ігри є комплексним видом мовної діяльності, оскільки матеріали, необхідні для цього типу ігор, мають бути різноманітними та складними для того, щоб відповідати багаточаровій структурі цієї діяльності. Багатоетапні лексичні ігри призначені для розвитку усіх мовних навичок та можуть складатися з декількох частин. Як одноступеневі, так і багатоступеневі лексичні ігри можуть бути адаптовані відповідно до певних начальних цілей, а також потреб та інтересів студентів.*

**Ключові слова:** *лексичні ігри, одноступенева гра, багатоступенева гра, комунікативні навички, мотивація.*

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**Problem statement.** If we take a foreign language as a system, we will obviously see what essential and vital role vocabulary plays in this

system. How many times do we want to express ourselves or to say something important and urgent in a foreign language but we can't find the words?

It's not surprising as any communication stops if we lack the necessary words. Realizing this fact students have to take efforts and spend hours on memorizing new lexical units. The procedure appears to be absolutely necessary as well as time-consuming and tedious. Learning new words can be compared with moving around the maze full of surprises and unexpected discoveries. The teacher's task is to get the students interested and motivated making their travelling through the maze enjoyable and exciting. Using vocabulary games can help to turn the potentially boring and unexciting procedure of learning new vocabulary into something really useful, entertaining and worthwhile. Well-arranged vocabulary games give the opportunity of making memorizing new words easy as well as help the students to integrate new lexical units into their existing knowledge. The researcher, teacher trainer and materials writer J. Feher points out: "For a word presented to a student to become a part of their active vocabulary, we need to create opportunities for them to experience and use the word in a memorable way soon after the first encounter, and then at longer and longer intervals" [1, p. 65]. Learning a language means that you start with a few simple words and phrases and gradually add new lexical units to them. It appears to be very hard in the early stages, as there is so much you want to say but you only have a small number of words. Integrating vocabulary games into a foreign language class can give the opportunity to increase students' vocabulary as quickly as possible and to help them with their writing and speaking skills.

#### **Analysis of recent research and publications.**

The use of vocabulary games and activities has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. The work by J. Feher is devoted to the creative aspect of vocabulary games, designed for connecting the form of the words with their meanings. The researcher emphasizes the importance of repetition of lexical units necessary for making memorizing new words easier. In J. Feher's opinion, "the vocabulary activities containing visual component can be creative alternatives to typical classroom procedures" [1, p. 72].

I.S.P. Nation takes into consideration psychological conditions necessary for successful vocabulary learning. The researcher points out that "noticing, retrieval and creative use are three important general processes that may lead to a word being remembered" [6, p. 144]. Motivation, the choice of content and interest can be viewed as major factors that can affect the processes aimed at efficient integrating of new words. In I.S.P. Nation's opinion, "interactive activities based upon repetition are especially helpful because vocabulary items must not only be known, they must be known well so that they can be

fluently accessed. Repetition thus adds to the quality of knowledge and also to the quantity and strength of this knowledge" [6, p. 147]. The researcher analyses the conditions favouring vocabulary learning and reveals the features of the activities that encourage them.

The researchers N. Schmitt and D. Schmitt consider the principles which can serve "as a guide in the creation of a pedagogically-sound vocabulary notebook" [5, p. 174]. Emphasizing the importance of integrating such a notebook into classroom activities, N. Schmitt and D. Schmitt point out that "this way of personal word store can help to facilitate learning and to simplify memorizing" [5, p. 177]. *Recycling and expanding rehearsal* are viewed as the most efficient ways of learning vocabulary. It is stated that "vocabulary notebooks completed by the students should be kept relevant by integrating them into as many activities as possible" [5, p. 178]. The vocabulary notebook organized according to the principles suggested by N. Schmitt and D. Schmitt can help students to learn words from different perspectives, encourage them to choose the activities which are the most interesting and efficient for them and to foster independent vocabulary study.

Pal Heltai focuses attention on the connection between oral translation and teaching vocabulary. In Pal Heltai's opinion, "oral translation can be streamlined so that under given condition it can be fitted in with the latest approaches to foreign language teaching" [3, p. 181]. A translation exercise integrated with other activities in various ways can be much of an advantage itself as well as become enjoyable additional practice for the students. Properly organized such exercises can contribute a lot to the learning of vocabulary and help teachers to develop students' communicative fluency. The researcher F. Klippel considers vocabulary games to be the most efficient technique that may help students to develop their "feeling of the language", which appears to be a necessary requirement for formation and development of their communicative skills [4, p. 6]. In his works the linguist views vocabulary games as an integrative part of role-play exercises and simulations which he considers to be at the heart of learning communicative skills. In the interactive games, designed by F. Klippel, there is a particular emphasis on high-frequency vocabulary in everyday spoken English. In the role play exercises, aimed at introducing new vocabulary, the lexical units are presented in manageable quantities for learners. In F. Klippel's opinion, the vocabulary games can provide opportunity for intensive language practice and contribute a lot to the development communicative fluency [4].

The language games worked out by the researcher A. Wright [7] are aimed at developing students' imagination and creativity. In the researcher's

opinion vocabulary games can motivate students to express themselves more fully and in a more sophisticated way.

The works by J. Hadfield are devoted to the analyzing “the process of acquiring vocabulary as well as the ways of practicing new lexical units” [2, p. 4]. The activities created by J. Hadfield, are aimed at motivating learners “in order to form and develop communicative competence as well as improve creative, critical and analytical skills while using vocabulary games” [2, p. 5]. Taking into consideration a vocabulary game, J. Hadfield points out that “the game containing “element of fun” is viewed as the key to the successful and enjoyable learning” [2, p. 12]. J. Hadfield classifies vocabulary games into *memorizing*, designed for fixing the meaning of the word in students’ minds, *personalizing*, aimed at getting the students to relate the new words to their personal experience and communicating focused on the successful use of the new vocabulary in communicative activities. Formatted as riddles, guessing games, jumbles, crosswords, word generators, magic squares vocabulary games can help the teacher to motivate students and perceive the language more astutely.

**The aim** of the article is to define the ways of integrating vocabulary games into a foreign language classroom and offer a set of interactive vocabulary activities which are aimed at forming and developing students’ communicative fluency and can be used at different stages of the English lesson.

**Presenting the main material.** Remembering and learning new words is usually hard and time-consuming. There are many ways of introducing, recalling and recycling new lexical units. Being versatile by nature vocabulary games can be used both for making memorizing easy and for developing all language skills regardless of proficiency level. Using vocabulary games can help the teacher to solve the most difficult problems: how to integrate new words into already existing students’ word store and how to do it successfully. The communicative approach to foreign language teaching requires the development of vocabulary proficiency. No wonder that the lexical units the students use when they speak or write can significantly add or detract from what they want to say. Taken creatively and properly organized vocabulary games can help the students understand what they read or hear as well as to increase their effectiveness as communicators.

Vocabulary games can be classified according to a number of principles. From the structural point of view they can be divided into simple single-stage games and more complex multi-stage games. The games belonging to the first group play on the physical aspect of words. They can be used both as warming-up activities and time-fillers. The game “Pass on a word” can help the teacher to create

friendly and relaxed atmosphere as well as to get the lesson off to a good start. It is aimed at introducing and practicing new vocabulary. The game consists of several steps.

Step 1: Write some new words on the blackboard and ask the students to look at the words for two minutes. Clean the blackboard.

Step 2: Ask the learners to form a line. Give the first student the card with the new word and ask him/her to read the word and to pass it on to the next student in the line.

Step 3: Ask the last student in the line to write the word, passed on by his/her group-mates, on the blackboard. Choose another learner to start passing on and to write the second word from the list. The game is over when all the words are written on the blackboard correctly. The game requires attention and concentration. The students feel responsibility and do their best to copy exactly what they hear. The game can help the teacher to develop team spirit as well as to prepare the students for dictionary work.

The game “All the words you know” is aimed at boosting the students’ confidence by compiling a list of familiar English words. This activity can be suitable for all levels of proficiency and can be used at various stages of a lesson as an icebreaker, a warmer or time-filler as well as a revision exercise.

Step 1: Choose the topic for revision. Ask the students to brainstorm on to the board all the words connected with the given topic.

Step 2: Challenge the learners to remember all the words by erasing them one by one.

Step 3: Divide the group into two teams and ask each team to reconstruct the list of the words together and to write it down. The team whose list of words appears to be more complete is a winner.

One-stage games are related to “the *noticing*, the important psychological condition, which appears to be necessary for encouraging and motivating students and reaching learning goals” [6, p. 144]. The appropriate choice of the content proves to be the major factor for stimulating learners’ interest. The interactive vocabulary activities can help the teacher to create the enabling atmosphere for noticing and remembering new words.

Learning vocabulary can be especially efficient when it is based on attaching meaning to the word rather than just remembering the form of the word. Playing vocabulary games students learn to experience the meanings of the words in context by using them for the purposes which matter to them.

The activity “Key words in a topic” is suitable for practicing new words as well as for general revision of the vocabulary. The game can be organized in pairs or in small groups.

Step 1: Prepare the list of topics you would like to practice, for example: *food, sport, hobbies, travelling*.

Step 2: Write several topics on the board.

Step 3: Ask the students in group A to write three words which they associate with each topic. These words can be general or personal associations.

Step 4: The representative of team A shows the list of words created by them to the opposite team B which must try to guess which topic is referred to. Then the procedure is repeated with team B. Instead of showing their words to other students, learners can display their words on the board so that others can read them and decide what topic they describe. The team which names all the topics correctly becomes a winner. Such a game can be a good way into the further practicing and discussion of a topic area. The activity "Key words in a topic" can gradually transform into a multi-stage vocabulary game containing fun and acting components.

The game "Mime and guess" is designed for revising adjectives and adverbs which appear to be more difficult to memorize.

Step 1: Decide what type of adjectives or adverbs you would like to revise.

Step 2: Divide the students into two teams and ask each team to brainstorm a list of twenty adjectives describing human feelings.

Step 3: Ask the representative of team A to write one of the adjective on a piece of paper and hand it to the player from team B. That player must mime the word before his/her team without naming it. If the team guesses right, they get the point.

Step 4: Next it is the turn of team A. The representative of team B writes a word from their list on a piece of paper and hands it to the player from team A. The team with more points becomes a winner.

As a variation of this game the students can be asked to brainstorm the list of adverbs. The student from team A must perform the action in the manner of the adverb written on the piece of paper by team B.

The processes of *retrieval* and *creative use*, worked out by the researcher I.S.P. Nation, are realized in multi-stage vocabulary games aimed at expanding students' vocabulary as well as developing communicative skills. The interactive activities can be based on the repetition of lexical unit. In I.S.P. Nation's opinion, "the repeated opportunity to retrieve the item which is to be learned is more important as it strengthens the path linking form and meaning and makes subsequent retrieval easier" [6, p. 145]. When the learners see or hear the form of the new word, they need to remember and retrieve what they know of its meaning. Vocabulary games can help the students to connect all the ideas and the information concerning the word. The retrieval can be especially productive if the words are learned in groups not in isolation. Multi-stage vocabulary activities can help the students to gain and accumulate knowledge about various aspects

of the word. Taken creatively such interactive activities can help the teacher to increase the range of possibilities considerably and to add the quality of knowledge so that the words can be fluently accessed in communicative situations.

The multi-stage game "Cookery duel" is designed for systemizing target vocabulary as well as developing students' communicative fluency. The activity requires additional preparation, consists of several episodes and includes creative components.

Step 1: Divide the students into two teams and. Explain them that they represent two competing cookery schools. Choose several students to be the judge panel.

Step 2: Give each team several sets of cards concerning cooking. Ask the students to sort the cards according to the following categories: "Food", "Cooking methods", "Equipment and utensils".

Step 3: When all the cards are sorted ask both teams to create the recipes of the main course, salad, appetizer and dessert using the food, cooking methods and utensils they have on the cards.

Step 4: When the recipes are ready, the representative of team A presents them before the class. The members of the opposite team ask questions concerning the details of cooking process. Then it is the turn of the representative of team B. When both teams show their presentations and complete the question and answer sessions, the judge panel announces a winner of the cookery duel. The game can include the discussion about the cooking methods and recipes.

**Conclusions.** Increasing vocabulary appears to be very important for students' general progress in English. The simple single-stage vocabulary games are mainly designed for transferring new words into learners' long-term memory. Being organized around everyday topics these games can help to fix the meaning of the word in the students' minds as well as to visualize it and relate it to their personal experience.

The multi-stage vocabulary games are quite demanding language activities as the materials necessary for this type of games should be more varied and more complex to suit the multi-layered structure of this activity. The multi-stage vocabulary games are designed for training all language skills. These activities may constitute several episodes and contain diverse elements in their content and procedure.

Both single-stage and multi-stage vocabulary games can be adapted to suit the learning goals as well as the needs and interests of the students. The interactive vocabulary activities provide the opportunity for concentrated language practice as well as for real communication. Memorizing new vocabulary appears to be a hard and time-consuming process

but vocabulary games can make it more efficient as well as enjoyable for both the teacher and the students.

The **further research** in this area is to be devoted to the analysis of the development of writing skills.

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