

DISCUSSION GAMES AS THE WAY OF DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

ДИСКУСІЙНІ ІГРИ ЯК ЗАСІБ РОЗВИТКУ КОМУНІКАТИВНИХ НАВИЧОК

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

Discussion game is viewed in the article as efficient cooperative learning strategy that can help the teachers to get the students immediately involved in communicative activity. The main intention of a discussion game is to get the students to talk and stimulate their interest, creativity and imagination. It is stated in the article that creating both natural and artificial communicative situations appears to be the most topical problem any teacher is to solve in the classroom. The close-to-reality situations in which the students are given various social and interpersonal roles help to learn the language by communication. It is emphasized that discussion games can help the teacher to create the contexts in which the language appears to be useful and meaningful. It is stated that discussion games offer a reason for speaking as well as allow students to form and share their opinions. A well arranged discussion is characterized by energy boost and emotional intensity what can create special atmosphere in a foreign language classroom. It is shown that discussion game appears to be one of the most multifaceted teaching methods as it can include elements of role play, simulation, searching, matching and guessing games.

It is shown that in ranking exercises the rearranging phase is followed by a period of discussion when students explain and defend their choices. It is proved that discussion games based upon "value clarification approach" contribute a lot to stimulating students' activity and enhancing their motivation. It is stated that well arranged discussion game can combine values clarification techniques, problem-solving exercise and dramatizing. It is proved that for the discussion game being a success it is important to create a positive emotional climate which will contribute a lot to more open interaction both inside the group and between the students and the teacher. It is more reasonable to use discussion games at the final stage of work at the topic as they are a good way of revising, practicing and consolidating targeted vocabulary in active interaction with fellow students as a lot of language units can be used during a discussion.

Key words: *discussion games, ranking exercises, values clarification techniques, motivation, communicative skills.*

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

Дискусійна гра розглядається у статті як ефективна стратегія кооперативного навчання, яка може допомогти викладачам негайно залучити студентів до комунікативної діяльності. Основна мета дискусійної гри – спонукати студентів до розмови, стимулювати їхній інтерес, креативність та уяву. У статті зазначено, що створення як природних так і штучних комунікативних ситуацій є найактуальнішим завданням, яке має вирішувати будь-який викладач на занятті. Наближені до реальності ситуації, в яких студенти виконують різні соціальні та міжособистісні ролі, допомагають вивчати мову шляхом спілкування. Підкреслюється, що дискусійні ігри можуть допомогти викладачеві створити контексти, в яких мова виглядає корисною та значущою. Зазначається, що дискусійні ігри надають привід до розмови, а також дозволяють студентам формувати свої думки та обмінюватися ними. Добре організована дискусія характеризується зарядом енергії та емоційною інтенсивністю, що сприяє створенню особливої атмосфери на занятті з іноземної мови. Показано, що дискусійна гра є одним з найбагатогранніших методів навчання, оскільки вона може включати елементи рольової гри, симуляції, пошуку, встановлення відповідності та відгадування. Показано, що у вправах на ранжирування за фазою перегрупування слідує період обговорення, коли студенти пояснюють та захищають свій вибір.

Доведено, що дискусійні ігри, засновані на «підході з'ясування цінностей», значною мірою сприяють стимулюванню активності студентів та підвищенню їхньої мотивації. Зазначено, що добре організована дискусійна гра може поєднувати методи з'ясування цінностей, вправи з розв'язування проблем та драматизацію. Доведено, що для успішного проведення дискусійної гри важливо створити позитивний емоційний клімат, який сприятиме більш відкритій взаємодії як всередині групи, так і між студентами та викладачем. Дискусійні ігри доцільніше використовувати на завершальному етапі роботи над темою, оскільки вони є гарним способом повторення, відпрацювання та закріплення цільової лексики в активній взаємодії з одногрупниками, оскільки під час дискусії може бути використано багато мовних одиниць.

Ключові слова: *дискусійні ігри, вправи на ранжирування, методи з'ясування цінностей, мотивація комунікативні навички.*

UDC 811.11:378.147.091.33–027.22:796
DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-6085/2024/73.17>

Shcherbyna V.V.,
PhD in Philology, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor
at the Department of Philology, Translation
and Communicative Strategies
National Academy of the National Guard
of Ukraine

Problem statement. The efficiency of foreign language teaching depends a lot on the correlation between its theoretical and practical orientation. The nature of this correlation is predetermined by the methodological approach preferred by the teacher. As we teach English in non-English environment, creating both natural and artificial communicative situations appears to be the most topical problem any teacher is to solve in the classroom. The

close-to-reality situations in which the students are given various social and interpersonal roles help to learn the language by communication. Interactive games can help the teacher to create the contexts in which the language appears to be useful and meaningful. Properly arranged all kinds of role plays and communicative activities help to create a bridge between the classroom and the real world as well as provide concentrated practice of target vocabulary

and grammar structures. The systematic use of all types of language games and cooperative learning contribute to the situation when students long to communicate with each other than with the teacher. Discussion games offer a reason for speaking as well as allow students to form and share their opinions. A well arranged discussion is characterized by energy boost and emotional intensity what can create special atmosphere in a foreign language classroom. Discussion game can be a good diagnostic tool indicating the psychological climate in the group. If the students are willing to cooperate, to take part in the discussion, to tell about their feelings, likes, dislike, to interview and to be interviewed by others, communication will be a success and the educational goals will be achieved. If the discussion game is organized as a friendly conversation, the students feel confirmation and confidence resulting from the successful use of the language.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

Discussion games as a way of developing communicative skills has been the object of research in the studies of many both native and foreign linguists. J. Hadfield takes into consideration "language games containing discussion component" [2]. In the researcher's opinion most types of games "can be easily transformed into classroom discussion or followed by the discussion" [1, p. 5]. The puzzle-solving activities and simulations, designed by J. Hadfield are especially suitable for arranging as a discussion.

The researcher F. Klippel focuses attention on the importance of the friendly and relaxed atmosphere within the class or group of learners. In F. Klippel's book "Keep Talking" discussion games are viewed as "activities for intensive practicing a foreign language which have left the narrow path of purely structural and lexical training and have expanded into fields of values education and personality building" [3, p. 6]. Class discussions appear to be efficient for shaping the learner's personality as they are focused on the sharing of feelings, opinions and ideas. Communicative activities such as interviews, talk shows and discussion games "play an important part in education towards cooperation and empathy" [3, p. 7].

M. Lewis' work is devoted to the analysis of the teacher's role in creating classroom climate as well as in education towards cooperation in general. The researcher outlines a number of metaphoric images of a teacher according to the stage of a lesson and the targets that are set. The teacher of "grammar-based class is described as a tap pouring water into empty vessels. The teacher has the knowledge about the new language and the empty vessels have to be filled with the grammar rules and the meaning of words" [4, p. 64]. When the emphasis is on revision, the teacher is viewed as a conductor of the orchestra. In communicative language classes the teacher becomes "a gardener, supplying materials for growth

and rearranging the environment for this to happen" [4, p. 65]. While organizing a discussion game in a foreign language class the teachers have to combine all three roles as they have to set the tone of the discussion, to direct the students, to motivate as well as manage a number of situations predictable and unpredictable.

Emphasizing the importance of fun involvement into teaching process the researcher P. Watcyn-Jones designed a set of discussion games, the majority of which are based upon humour in various form, jokes and humorous stories. Fun activities organized in the form of a discussion "can be a good alternative for more traditional and serious types of interactive games, can be viewed as light relief encouraging and stimulating students" [7, p. 5].

In J. Umstatter's opinion, "the classroom is an ideal place to discuss something topical and worthwhile, to exchange ideas and opinions, to argue, to prove and stand one's ground" [6, p. 7]. The communicative activities and discussion games, designed by the researcher, give students the opportunity to be actively involved in the learning process as well as enjoy themselves. Through the discussion organized properly the students "will absorb more information as they learn, review and retain concepts in a foreign language classroom" [6, p. 8]. The discussion games that include poetry interpretation, examination of techniques and styles of various writers, literary and character analysis, creative thinking can help students to become more versatile and intelligent learners. The discussion games focused on the students and the world around them are designed to make the students think more maturely and insightfully as they appreciate the world around them.

The aim of the article is to define the role of discussion games in developing students' communicative skills and to offer a set of activities which can be used for developing learners' speaking competence at different stages of the English lesson.

Presenting the main material. Communicative games of all types have already incorporated into the language classroom providing students' motivation, enjoyable interest and raising their competitive power. Mastering communicative skills appears to be the most essential for mastering a foreign language itself. We learn English in a group and don't realistically expect all the students to speak English all the time and eagerly take part in various language games. Some learners can be reluctant to do oral activities, the others can feel confused and embarrassed to speak in front of the whole class. The question arises: how to get all the students to speak up in class? How to encourage even the most reserved and shy learners to practice speaking, participate in games and cooperate with others? The student-centered communicative activities and efficient group dynamics can help the teacher to answer

these questions and to solve the problem. Interactive games make use of variety of techniques as variety is important in language teaching. Discussion game appears to be one of the most multifaceted teaching methods as it can include elements of role play, simulation, searching, matching and guessing games. In the definition given by W. Wilen, M. Bosse, M. Hutchison and R. Kindsvatter the versatile nature of a discussion game is emphasized: "The discussion game is an educative, reflective and structural group conversation with and among students about subject matter" [8, p. 124]. In researchers' opinion, classroom discussion can be used as an efficient strategy to achieve curricular purposes that could vary from encouraging students to practice speaking language to developing understanding of cultural issues or problems and challenging students to assume responsibility for their own learning and thinking back on what they have learned and how they have learned.

Let's have a closer look at discussion games which are suitable for all levels of proficiency and can be used at various stages of a lesson. The researcher F. Klippel distinguishes game-like discussions and game-like exercises that lead to discussion. Ranking exercises can be organized as discussions when students explain and defend their choices in pairs, triads, small groups and then in bigger groups. In the ranking exercise "Guarantees" students are to practice interactive language, to agree, to compare, to contradict and give reasons. The game consists of several steps.

Step 1: Divide the whole class into two teams of equal size. One team consists of the brokers, the other team consists of the clients. The brokers' task is instead of insurance to sell the guarantees which assure the buyer that he/she will reach certain personal goals in his/her life.

Step 2: The brokers are given the list of guarantees and prices. Each of them receives one guarantee to handle personally. The brokers are to prepare a short talk to praise the advantages of the particular guarantee. The list of guarantees may include such concepts as Health Guarantee, Popularity Guarantee, Accident-Free-Life Guarantee, Joy-of-Living Guarantee, Adventure Guarantee, Career Guarantee, Patience Guarantee, Stardom Guarantee, Beauty Guarantee.

Step 3: Brokers and clients sit facing each other. In turn brokers tell the client about the guarantee they can offer. While one broker is speaking, the clients and the other brokers are making notes. The clients are to prepare questions concerning the guarantees they have chosen, comment on their choices and explain their motives. When the first broker finishes his/her speech, the other brokers try to persuade the clients to change their minds, emphasizing the importance of the guarantees they represent. The first broker's task is to be persistent, logical and argumentative trying

to defend the guarantee he/she is to sell. If the client doesn't change his/her decision, the guarantee is considered to be sold and the broker gets a new guarantee to advertise. The broker who manages to sell more guarantees becomes a winner.

In this activity students experience a difference of opinions and are stimulated to discuss these differences. Instead of personal goals students can be asked to buy guarantees for their friends, family or people they care for.

In the activity "Looking for a job" the rearranging phase is also followed by a period of discussion when students explain and defend their choices first in small and then in bigger groups.

Step 1: Divide the whole class into groups. Each group imagines that they are members of the local council who have to select somebody for the vacant post of a social worker. The list of four applicants with their CV and the handout with the job description is given to each group.

Step 2: The members of each local council decide on their criteria for selection, based on the job description, background information on the handout as well as their personal judgement. Then the students discuss the four applicants and rank them according to the criteria they've worked out.

Step 3: Each local council selects a speaker who has to report before the whole class, to explain and defend the choice of the group he/she represents. After the reports are given, all the group speakers meet in the middle to discuss the applicants and to stand their ground. The other members of the council can support their speaker, add some facts and arguments, express their opinions and argue the group's position. The task of each council is to prove that the applicant they have chosen corresponds to all the criteria and appear to be the best candidate for the vacant post. Unless a consensus has been reached amongst the speakers after a given time, a vote is taken by all the participants.

The discussion game "Looking for a job" motivates the students to consider various desirable characteristics for people in general and suitable for a social worker in particular. It can help the learners to clarify their own values. Discussion games of this type contribute a lot to stimulating students' activity and enhancing their motivation. Communicative practice can lead students to question their own decisions and increase their tolerance and understanding. The underlying situations, urgent issues or problems for ranking exercises can be taken from widely different contexts. Students' personal values, common sense and general knowledge of the world can be of great importance. In F.Klippel's opinion, "ranking exercises are a kind of preliminary step for the less structured and less predictable values clarification activities that can be also organized as discussion games" [3, p. 59].

The “values clarification approach” was created and introduced by American researchers S.B. Simon, L.W. Howe and H. Kirschenbaum. The scientists assumed that this approach used in education system “must help young people to become aware of their own values and to act according them” [5, p. 88]. In researchers’ opinion, “there are three stages in the values clarification process: prizing one’s beliefs and behaviors, choosing one’s beliefs and behaviors and acting on one’s beliefs” [5, p. 89]. Personal values relate both to one’s own personality and to the outside world, including such areas as education, leisure activities or politics. Students may not always be aware of their beliefs so the discussion games based upon values clarification approach can help learners to discover something new about their moral principles, merits and code of behavior.

The discussion game “Miracle Workers” concerns the prizing and choosing of values. The activity can include the components of role play.

Step 1: Each student receives a handout with the names and description of 15 miracle workers. Among them may be magicians and wizards who can offer their services in making money, changing appearance, finding friends, getting married, achieving success in career.

Step 2: Each student should divide the miracle workers into three groups of three. The first group should include the most desirable ones for the student himself/ herself. The second group will include those whom he/she would recommend to his relatives or friends. The third group will consist of the least desirable ones whose services he/she would never use. The learners start presenting the first group of magicians whose services they would like to obtain. The students compare their lists, comment on their choices, look for coincidences, find out which miracle workers appear to be the most popular in their group and try to explain this fact.

Step 3: The students present the magicians they would like to recommend to their relatives or friends. They compare two lists of miracle workers and try to discover a pattern in their choices and reveal what values are dominant in their personal choice and in the recommendations for other people.

Step 4: The list of the least desirable workers is presented and discussed. The students find out if they agree or disagree on their choices concerning the least important things in their lives. The game can involve acting. The roles of miracle workers can be performed by the students whose task is to prove the importance of the certain magic gift. Dramatizing the conversation between the miracle works and the students gives the chance to be creative and leads to more cooperation and language flexibility. The game is suitable for revising target vocabulary, practicing the degrees of comparison of adjectives and conditional sentences.

Well arranged discussion game can combine values clarification techniques, problem-solving exercise and dramatizing. The activity “Rescue the Fictional Character” is a good example of such combination. It can be challenging as it requires additional preparation and knowledge of world literature.

Step 1: The students are given the cards with the names of the fictional characters they are to present.

Step 2: The teacher explains the situation: the planet, inhabited by fictional characters, is doomed. All life is going to perish in a few days. A spaceship from the Earth can rescue only seven fictional characters and take them to the Earth.

Step 3: The selection committee is to choose which characters are worth saving. They have to make up criteria which they would use and listen to the arguments given by fictional characters. The students make connections between what they know about the fictional characters and the criteria they have made up. The discussion game is designed for challenging students to assume responsibility for their decisions. The students are encouraged to express their real attitudes and feelings, exchange opinions about favourite characters. Discussing their views on the problem, students are to give arguments, defend their choices and find balance between different points of view. The activity appeals directly to the learners as they feel that they communicate about something meaningful and solve the problem of life and death. For the discussion game being a success it is important to create a positive emotional climate which will contribute a lot to more open interaction both inside the group and between the students and the teacher.

Conclusions. Discussion game is viewed as efficient cooperative learning strategy that can help the teachers to get the students immediately involved in communicative activity. The main intention of a discussion game is to get the students to talk and stimulate their interest, creativity and imagination. Being versatile by its nature discussion game can combine a number of other teaching strategies and techniques. The discussion games based upon the use of values clarification approach make the students think about their values and priorities and do their best to defend them. In order to sustain the students’ interest the topic of the discussion game should be exciting and disputable. These activities give the opportunity to use the language in a natural and authentic way. The discussion games are structured in such a way that everyone will get a turn to express his/her attitude, to exchange opinions with others and to find the balance between different points of view. It is more reasonable to use discussion games at the final stage of work at the topic as they are a good way of revising, practicing and consolidating targeted vocabulary in active interaction with fellow students as a lot of language can be produced during

a discussion. Discussion games can help to improve the emotional climate in the class in which both the teacher and the students demonstrate tolerance and respect for each other.

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

REFERENCES:

1. Hadfield J. Intermediate Vocabulary Games. Pearson: Edinburgh Gate, 2001. 152 p.
2. Hadfield J. Advanced Communicative Games. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson Ltd., 1989. 178 p.
3. Klippel F. Keep Talking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. 202 p.
4. Lewis M. Classroom management. *Reading in Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. P. 60–67.
5. Simon S.B., Howe L.W., Kirschenbaum H. Value Clarification. Warner Books, 2014. 226 p.
6. Umstatter J. English Brainstormers. San Francisco: A Wiley Imprint, 2006. 378 p.
7. Watcyn-Jones P. Fun Class Activities. Penguin Book, 2000. 235 p.
8. Wilen W., Bosse M., Hutchison J., Kindsvatter R. Dynamics of Effective Secondary Teaching. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2008. 368 p.