

Exploring the Organic Integration of Games and English Education in Upper Primary School

Zishuo Geng^{1,a,*}

¹College of Foreign Languages, Xinyang Agriculture and Forestry College, Xinyang, Henan, 464000, China

a. 20201611120@stu.xyafu.edu.cn

*corresponding author

Abstract: Game-based teaching is a proven teaching method, and it has received widespread attention in recent years. However, its promotion and application has not been as successful as it should be. Another major aspect here, in addition to the basic principles and game play that need to be met by game-based teaching itself, is that it is constrained by objective conditions. Based on an analysis of the current constraints on games, this study presents the ideological underpinnings of game-based teaching and proposes some specific game scenarios that are consistent with the principles of game-based teaching. These scenarios are analyzed and the necessity and correctness of implementing game-based teaching in the upper primary English classroom is concluded. The findings of the article show that the integration of games with English language education in the upper primary school is effective. The article also provides an outlook on how games can be integrated with the teaching of English in upper primary schools and looks at future trends.

Keywords: English education, upper primary English, educational games, gamified learning

1. Introduction

As one of the most widely spoken languages, English is playing an increasingly important role in the international arena. In a document issued in 2011, China stated that the introduction of English language courses at the basic education level can lay the foundation for improving the overall national literacy in China and cultivating talents with innovative abilities and cross-cultural communication skills. Since the autumn of 2001, the study of English has been brought forward from the junior high school level to the primary school level, and English courses have been introduced in cities, counties and villages throughout the country from the third grade of primary school, and to the first grade in areas where it is possible. However, the effect of teaching English in the upper primary grades is not satisfactory, and many difficulties or problems have been encountered. What are the root causes of these difficulties and problems? The author argues that the important thing about learning a language is to develop habits, just like learning a mother tongue, which is influenced by subtlety, and that language learning focuses on accumulation on the one hand and interest on the other. In teaching English, the most important thing is to stimulate students' interest in learning, so that they can have fun and develop good learning habits, which in turn will make it easier to train their pronunciation and intonation. More importantly, it is about developing core English literacy in upper primary school students. However, this is only a prelude to a deeper exploration of how to raise English language

proficiency above core English literacy. For example, students' English proficiency can be improved by developing their interest in learning, their study habits and their language skills. At the same time, students' English can be improved through a variety of teaching techniques, such as using multiple language practice and increasing opportunities for practice. In addition, more interesting teaching methods can be used to improve students' English [1], for example, games [1]. With the development of the new era, the concept of games is expanding, from video games represented by new media to other types of games. Children in upper primary school, on the other hand, may already be familiar with the game. Therefore, the author suggests that if children in upper primary school are able to take to games like fish to water and are fully engaged in them, then is it possible to incorporate games into the teaching of English in the upper primary grades? By combining games and English language teaching, not only can children learn English more easily, but they can also increase their interest and engagement in the language and thus gain a better grasp of it. Therefore, the author believes that an analysis of the organic integration of games and English language education is necessary [2]. It can provide a different experience from the traditional learning model and can be more effective in terms of learning outcomes than traditional learning methods. Why do poor learners spend a lot of time playing games, but are unable to concentrate in their studies; why do they complete certain tasks perfectly in games, but never finish them on time in school? What is there in the game that will firmly engage them that is not present in the teaching? Can a game-like system be devised that allows them to have fun while learning? It is not just fun that is involved, but more importantly a sense of value and identity. This is why the author argues that several games should be designed to be used as a form of usual teaching and learning, to provide an organic blend of game teaching and English education, the fundamental aim of which is to stimulate and sustain motivation to learn [3].

2. The Concept Behind the Game Supports

From Plato to the present day, numerous educators have studied the relationship between 'education' and 'play'. Some have seen play as a means of education; others have seen education and play as being integrated in the original sense. Ultimately, the consensus is that play is a catalyst for education. This is because play is in fact an advanced form of learning, so essentially play and learning are not opposites; play is a concrete expression of play, another form of learning [4].

2.1. Building an Ecological Classroom

The classroom as the forefront of the education position, schools should pay attention to its development and practical role. The construction of biology classroom is a crucial step that education must take; ecological classroom is mainly about the students as the main body; all the students are interested in, want to understand, want to do in the classroom. It should be a place that students can be free to speak, talk about the democratic equality between teachers and students, and be natural harmony, focus on the needs, awareness, and desires of each student, abandon the traditional classroom teaching model full of teaching, while taking into account the development of student personality. It should combine with modern classroom teaching methods and diversified assessment methods, to achieve the unity of teaching and student development. The essence of the eco-classroom is to allow people to interact and enhance themselves in the classroom and environment, abandoning high-pressure learning and reducing the usual pressure in the classroom, thus releasing their authentic selves, and increasing their ability and interest in independent learning [5].

2.2. Cultivating Children's Interest in Learning

Interest is the key to learning a language well. Stimulating students' interest in learning English is an important task of English teaching at primary school level. English teaching should pay attention to

the psychological and physiological characteristics of children and should be conducive to arousing students' interest in learning. Confucius said, "A person who loves is better than a person who knows, and a person who loves is better than a person who enjoys." "Joy" means "interest". This statement fully demonstrates that cultivating interest in learning plays an extremely important role in students' learning [6]. This statement fully illustrates that the cultivation of interest in learning plays an extremely important role in students' learning. The German educator Flaubert once said: "Play is a characteristic feature of child behaviour: the child's mental activity and spiritual life become in play the outward expression of independence and autonomy, enabling the child to experience joy, freedom and satisfaction and to maintain a balance between inside and outside. Play is often accompanied by talking, which has a positive effect on the child's language development [7]."

2.3. Learning English as a Reflection of the Quality of Modern Society

As the process of global economic integration continues, it will certainly lead to an era of new global education. The mastery of the international language, English, is a characteristic that reflects the quality of modern people. The idea of learning English from an early age is also valued by many parents and educational institutions. Many psychologists and linguists agree that the best age for children to learn English is between the ages of 2.5 and 12. Children at this age are very sensitive to language and are the most receptive children. Therefore, paying attention to early childhood English education and exploring the implementation of English teaching in kindergartens and primary schools is an important direction in the current development of early childhood education [8]. However, as English education does not have years of practice and effectiveness unlike the five major areas of health, science, society, language and art. So English education needs to be careful that people are clear about what the purpose of children learning English is. Teaching English in primary schools should focus on developing students' experience of language ontology and language use so that they have a sense of English [9].

2.4. Helps Build an Open English Classroom

Under the new curriculum reform, building an open and independent English classroom has become the goal of teachers to implement the teaching reform tasks. The previous English teaching methods are not innovative enough, resulting in a lack of vitality in the English teaching atmosphere, which cannot effectively develop students' English core literacy. The greatest advantage of game-based teaching is that it has a wide range of applications. Teachers can update the content and methods of English classroom introduction through game-based methods, and can also guide students to conduct in-depth English exploratory learning through a variety of games, which is of great significance to the construction and improvement of open English classrooms and the harmonious development of students' English language skills and creativity [10].

2.5. Teaching Games Serve Teaching Objectives

The goodness of a teaching game should be evaluated first of all by its consistency with the teaching objectives. Therefore, when designing teaching games, teachers should firstly consider the playfulness, based on making the atmosphere more active for the students, in order to serve the teaching objectives. Secondly, in the design of teaching games, teachers must also focus on the educational aspect, so that students can learn and master and consolidate the corresponding knowledge and thus develop their abilities. In addition, there is a balance between the playfulness and the educational nature of the games. If the subject is taught at a lower level, then the games can focus on entertainment, but if the subject is taught at an upper level, then the games need to focus on knowledge and practice. It is only by combining the two that the teaching games can be better utilized.

3. Current Game Restrictions

3.1. Environmental Factors

The objective environment, which is favourable, is one of small numbers and large space. In today's schools, the number of students in each classroom is at least 40, and in some cases more than 50, and the average area occupied by students in the classroom is about 0.7 square meters, which is not easy for individual activities. As a result, classes are too big to organize is a reason why some teachers are reluctant to teach games [11]. However, the superiority of play teaching is seriously challenged by environmental constraints that may affect student learning outcomes. Therefore, it is important to think more actively about how to exploit the advantages of game teaching, rather than putting it on the shelf. More active consideration should be given to the choice of play methods or the extent to which play is integrated into teaching and learning, and practical play activities should be arranged wherever possible. For those elements of teaching that cannot be met, teachers may even try to break the mould and arrange it outside the classroom. This approach not only allows students to make better use of learning resources, but also stimulates their interest and motivation and enhances their motivation to learn. The author believes that a reasonable break with stereotypes will eventually be accepted at a time when humanism is increasingly valued.

3.2. Insufficient Game Reserves and Lack of Innovative Content

The game teaching method is a common teaching method in primary school English teaching, but how to design and carry out the game brings teachers a great challenge. Because of the teachers' busy teaching work and the lack of access to game materials, there are not enough cases of primary school English teaching games, and the games seem to be monotonous and repetitive. These traditional games are often used repeatedly at high frequencies, and students tend to lose interest in them [12].

3.3. Struggling Students Are Difficult to Integrate into Teaching

If teachers do not take into account the actual situation of students of different levels in the design of the game, students with difficulties often find it difficult to participate in the activities in the English language environment, and teachers are unable to instruct most of the students with difficulties in the limited class time, so it is difficult for students with difficulties to gain a sense of participation and achievement in the game activities [13]. Not only does it not arouse students' interest in learning, but it also makes students feel that English lessons are boring and tedious, and they even become bored with learning, thus losing their confidence in learning English and their motivation to learn.

3.4. Games for the Sake of Games, Ignoring the Content

When teachers use the game teaching method, they often apply it in the introduction stage of the classroom, however, they do not combine the teaching content with the game form and elements, but only use it as a means to liven up the classroom atmosphere. The educational aspect of the game teaching method is ignored, and it is applied in the classroom only for the sake of the game, which cannot really improve the teaching efficiency [14].

4. Examples of Scenarios for the Game

In primary English, the design of games should follow certain principles, aim to improve students' learning ability, be fun-oriented and life-oriented. Specifically, game design should satisfy the following basic principles: the principle of purpose, the principle of fun, and the principle of lifelike. The principle of purpose requires that the game can provide students with enough motivation to learn,

stimulate their interest and make it easier for them to accept the learning content. The principle of fun requires that the game design should be in line with students' cognitive level, so that they can gain a sense of achievement in the process of playing the game. The principle of lifelike requires that the game design should be in line with the actual needs of life, so that students can really learn knowledge in the process of playing the game. Through these principles, the game design can effectively promote students' learning and language skills, laying a good foundation for future language learning. At the same time, this 'game-like' approach to learning helps teachers to change their educational philosophy and to become more aware of the importance of teaching English in the upper primary school.

4.1. Simon Says

One person acts as "Simon" and the person who acts as "Simon" must announce the command by starting with "Simon says" and the others must follow the command of "Simon". For example, "Simon says jump". If the person acting as 'Simon' just says 'Jump', the others are not allowed to do anything or they are eliminated, which tests the children's reflexes. The task of the 'Simon' is to get the others out of the game as quickly as possible, while the others try to stay in the game by reacting correctly. The winner of the game is the last person to stay in the game other than the one who is acting as 'Simon'. This game not only tests the students' reflexes but also their vocabulary of English verbs.

4.2. Adverb Action

The teacher writes an activity like "Brush your teeth" on the blackboard. Each group sends a representative. The teacher shows the representative a card with an adverb on it, for example 'slowly'. The representative student needs to understand and then do the action in an adverbial way for the other students to guess the adverb, and the group that guesses correctly gets a point. A more advanced version of this game is to name the comparative and the highest degree of the adverb. This game tests students' mastery of adverbial vocabulary and requires them to perform physical actions to enhance their memory and understanding of the content. In addition, this game can also liven up the classroom and stimulate students' interest in learning, thus improving the quality of teaching.

4.3. Apple Pass

Have all students form a circle and throw a fake apple (or other object) at one student, saying an English word as they do so, and that student catches it and immediately throws it at another student, saying a different English word at the same time. If it falls to the ground, the student is out. The game continues until there is a winner. The game can be played using different categories such as food, animals, or the word being taught, sentences etc. Note that the pronunciation and range of words should be within the knowledge of the students.

The game scenario encompasses, but is not limited to, the fundamental aim of it is to stimulate and maintain students' motivation to learn. In order to give full play to students' initiative, the author argues that students should be actively mobilised and enabled to participate more actively in classroom teaching through heuristic teaching methods. In addition, students' impressions of knowledge should be enhanced so that they can more clearly recognize its importance and usefulness, and the effectiveness of classroom teaching should be improved through interaction between teachers and students [15]. Younger age group students can easily become bored with language learning, which is why play education becomes particularly important. Games can keep students interested in learning, so that they can continue to build on their learning and expand their knowledge base. In addition, play education allows students to learn more and helps them to build good study habits.

5. Conclusions

Based on an examination of the impact of the development of games in modern society on upper primary school students, this paper proposes a combination of English language learning and gamification as a means of enhancing students' interest in learning and improving their learning abilities. By analyzing the current constraints on the implementation of 'games' in upper primary English teaching, this paper identifies the following problems: the large number of students, the small number of resources available for games, the varying levels of students, and the inappropriate use of 'games'. In order to integrate game-based teaching into upper primary English, it is necessary to create an ecological classroom, to develop students' interest in learning and to exploit the advantages of game-based teaching. The author therefore proposes an organic integration of game teaching with the upper primary English classroom and, on this basis, designs specific game contexts. In terms of the purpose of the games, each classroom game is based on the content of the students' learning, which is guided and promoted in a rational and effective way. For the fun of the game, the content of the game is enriched and improved as much as possible on the premise that the game is effective in promoting the content of classroom teaching, so that it always attracts the students' attention in the process. For the living aspect of the game, the design process of the game insists on linking it to the realities of life and completing the game based on correct theoretical guidance.

References

- [1] Li Qinhua. *A new exploration of teaching core literacy in academic subjects: Taking primary school English as an example* [J]. *Shanghai Educational Research*,0(3):93-95(2017).
- [2] Zhao Jing. *Research on the application of game-based learning concept in higher vocational English teaching* [J]. *Journal of Beijing City College*,0(3):87-92(2017).
- [3] Li Qing. *An introduction to the application of classroom games in primary school English teaching* [J]. *Shaanxi Education: Teaching*, (1):126-126(2013).
- [4] Zhang Wei, Dai Zheng. *An analysis of the role of educational games in promoting learning - from the motivational system of learning* [J]. *Journal of Chongqing University of Posts and Telecommunications: Social Science Edition*, (S1):59-61(2008).
- [5] Liu Dan, Li Hongxiao. *The connotation, value and generation of ecological classroom* [J]. *Journal of Corps Education College*, 28(3):49-5262(2018).
- [6] Xia Zhixia. *How to cultivate students' interest in learning in English teaching* [J]. *Essay Writing Guide for Secondary School Students*. (30):0098-0098(2020).
- [7] Cai Lei. *Activating classroom teaching with games* [J]. *Primary school teaching reference: comprehensive version*, (8):57-58(2014).
- [8] Ding Ling. *A brief discussion of English interest teaching* [J]. *Curriculum materials teaching research: primary education research*,0(1):61-63(2017).
- [9] Lin Zhengjun. *English teaching in primary and secondary schools based on the view of embodied language* [J]. *Curriculum. Teaching materials. Teaching Method*, 42(2):95-101(2022).
- [10] Zheng Chengzhou. *Exploring the strategy of teaching English gamification in primary schools* [J]. *Academic Weekly*, (12):112-114(2022).
- [11] Zhang Xiaoling, Li Yuehua. *Investigation and reflection on the teaching of English games in primary schools* [J]. *Journal of Xiaogan College*, 24(4):100-103(2004).
- [12] Sun Yunli. *Analysis of the problems and countermeasures of game teaching in primary school English classroom* [J]. *English Square: academic research*,0(4):138-139(2018).
- [13] Liu Rongyan. *Enhancing the participation of "disadvantaged groups" in cooperative learning* [J]. *Primary School Science: Teachers*, (9):99-99(2020).
- [14] Liu Weiqin, Meng Bin. *The application strategy of game teaching method in primary school English teaching* [J]. *Overseas English*, (4):164-166(2022).
- [15] Jin Xiuli. *The application of game teaching method in primary school English teaching* [J]. *Tianjin Education*, (8):100-101(2021).