

TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS WITH THE USE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES

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Abstract: This study explores teaching English vocabulary to young learners through the traditional game “hide and seek.” It highlights reducing gadget use, promoting cultural values, and creating an engaging learning environment by integrating play-based methods into early childhood education.

Keywords: traditional games, “hide and seek”, English vocabulary, early childhood students, young learners.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqotda yosh o'quvchilarga ingliz tili lug'atini “berkinmachoq” an'anaviy o'yini orqali o'rgatish yoritiladi. Unda gadgetlardan ortiqcha foydalanishni kamaytirish, milliy qadriyatlarni saqlash hamda o'yin asosida samarali ta'lim muhitini yaratish masalalari ko'rib chiqiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: an'anaviy o'yinlar, berkinmachoq, ingliz tili lug'ati, yosh o'quvchilar, maktabgacha ta'lim, o'yin asosida o'qitish.

Teaching young learners requires creative and engaging methods that match their developmental needs and interests. One effective approach is the use of traditional games in the learning process. Traditional games are not only entertaining but also educational, as they provide opportunities for children to learn naturally through play. These games are often simple, interactive, and culturally meaningful, which makes them highly suitable for classroom environments.

English is recognized as a critical skill in the era of globalization, and it is therefore taught at all educational levels, including early childhood education as an extracurricular program. The integration of English learning into early childhood settings is crucial because young learners are at a developmental stage where cognitive, social, and emotional skills are rapidly evolving [3, 2023]. Moreover, cultural knowledge embedded in language, such as proverbs and traditional expressions, supports cognitive and moral development, highlighting the importance of including culturally rich content in early learning programs [4,2024]. However, the rapid advancement of technology has created new challenges. Children often spend excessive time on digital devices, which reduces their engagement with traditional games. This trend has caused a decline in the educational and social values embedded in such games, necessitating alternative teaching approaches that combine language learning with play [1, 2016].

One of the main advantages of using traditional games is that they increase students' motivation and participation. Young learners tend to have shorter attention spans, and traditional teaching methods may not always keep them engaged. However, when learning is combined with games, children become more active and interested in

the lesson. Through play, they are more willing to participate, communicate, and cooperate with others. This creates a positive and dynamic classroom atmosphere.

Traditional games, such as “hide and seek,” have the potential to serve as both educational and motivational tools. By adapting these game-based learning supports learning through interaction, repetition, and contextual usage, which are critical for young learners who acquire language most effectively through multisensory experiences [2, 2018].

The implementation of “hide and seek” in teaching English vocabulary involves structured phases. During the beginning phase, teachers introduce new vocabulary using visual aids, such as pictures representing animals or everyday objects. Students then wear these pictures on their heads or chests, memorizing their assigned words. A designated seeker closes their eyes and counts while other students hide. When a hider is found, they introduce the vocabulary on their picture, reinforcing both memory and verbal practice. This phase emphasizes observation, recognition, and correct verbalization of vocabulary items [3, 2023].

In addition, traditional games help develop important language and social skills. Many games involve speaking, listening, and following instructions, which are essential components of language learning. Children also learn how to interact with their peers, take turns, and work as a team. These experiences contribute to their social and emotional development, helping them build confidence and improve communication skills.

Another important benefit is that traditional games support cognitive development. While playing, children use memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. For example, games that involve counting, guessing, or strategy encourage learners to think actively and make decisions. This type of learning is more meaningful because children understand concepts through experience rather than memorization.

Moreover, traditional games help preserve cultural heritage while making lessons more meaningful. They introduce children to local traditions, values, and customs, creating a connection between education and culture. This not only enriches the learning experience but also helps students develop a sense of identity and belonging.

Overall, using traditional games in vocabulary instruction combines the advantages of play, cooperation, and cultural preservation. Game-based learning environments foster intrinsic motivation, engagement, and a sense of accomplishment among learners [2, 2018]. Consequently, integrating traditional games like “hide and seek” into early childhood English education offers a practical and effective approach to language learning, while simultaneously promoting the continued relevance of local cultural practices. Using traditional games in teaching young learners is an effective and enjoyable method. It enhances motivation, supports language and cognitive development, and promotes social interaction. By integrating traditional games into lessons, teachers can create a more engaging and meaningful learning environment for young students.

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