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GAMIFIED LEARNING: USING QUEST TECHNOLOGY TO TEACH ENGLISH TO PRESCHOOLERS

Pedagogy has accumulated considerable experience in teaching preschoolers a foreign language. Early foreign language teaching aims to develop communicative competence in children and support their overall development, considering preschoolers' psychological and physiological traits. The literature emphasizes the peculiarities inherent in younger schoolchildren and preschool children. These include the predominance of visual and figurative thinking, involuntary processes in the perception and memorization of information. Children of this age are characterized by literal memorization, depending on imagery, brightness and personal involvement of the child in the process of cognition [1,2]. There are several factors of involuntary memorization of information – strong and significant physical stimuli, change of action, stimuli significant for the individual, stimuli with emotional coloring, activities that are directly related to the needs of the individual. All these factors should be used in classes with preschoolers to achieve the best results. Moreover, it is essential to create an engaging learning environment that utilizes these elements effectively, fostering curiosity and motivation among young learners. By incorporating interactive and playful approaches, educators can enhance the retention and understanding of new concepts while making learning a joyous experience.

The most favorable period for the beginning of language learning is considered to be the period of 6–7 years, but some younger kids are also ready to start learning languages. This age is considered to be the most sensitive age when children are most sensitive to language phenomena

and can unknowingly master large amounts of information. Game methods are widely used in teaching preschoolers, and allow realizing all the principles of early learning, as well as to take into account the psychological characteristics of preschoolers. The process of learning through games is learning without conscious expenditure of effort and time, it is learning with pleasure, which engages emotions, develops imagination and thinking.

In modern education, there are many game methods that make the process of learning English exciting and interesting for preschoolers. In the arsenal of pedagogical means various game teaching aids, interactive support in the form of audiovisual aids, cards with pictures, as well as computer games that contribute to teaching children English, as well as the development of logical thinking, independence, reaction speed. One of the innovative forms of teaching preschoolers is the quest-technology. Quest allows filling the game with a lot of interesting and informative tasks, allowing the participants of the game not only to perform tasks, but also to strengthen the team spirit in the children's collective, to create a situation of success, and to smooth out the competitive moments between children. A quest at English classes is united by a single theme, which solves several tasks at once: development of children's cognitive abilities, development of children's interest in learning a foreign language, consolidation of the passed material, development of children's creative abilities, attention, memory, logical thinking, fine motor skills, ability to navigate by map or scheme, ability to solve tasks in a team, development of team cohesion and many others. Quest as in classes aimed at introducing new vocabulary and new grammatical skills. Through engaging activities and challenges, children immerse themselves in the language, making the learning process both enjoyable and effective. As they navigate through the quest, they not only enhance their skills but also cultivate a love for learning that can last a lifetime.

A quest can be used as a stand-alone activity, part of a lesson or as a fun activity. There are many fun and educational tasks that can make a learning session engaging. For instance, participants could work together to assemble a puzzle, followed by the challenge of naming

the image it creates in English, which enhances both teamwork and vocabulary skills. In addition to this, they might sing a song or recite a poem in English centered around a specific theme, such as rescuing, entertaining, or enchanting a character, which promotes creative expression. Other activities could involve solving riddles where they identify the clues in English, completing contracts for various purposes, or participating in movement and didactic games that combine physical activity with learning objectives. Children also have to use their artistic skills to react faster, for example, in the game “Picture without naming”, in which the child depicts an animal, an object, and children have to guess what it is and name it in English. Often the quest includes ball games, in which it is necessary to show not only knowledge, but also the ability to throw and catch the ball. At the beginning of the quest is always set a certain goal: find the treasure, save the hero, decipher the map, etc. The teacher performs the role of an assistant, consultant, prompts children if necessary, guides children and encourages teamwork among the participants to enhance their collaborative skills. This engaging approach not only fosters language development but also creates an enjoyable learning environment that motivates children to actively participate [3].

Organizing “Adventures in the World of Wild Animals” quest for preschoolers is a great idea to make learning about nature fun and interactive. Here is an example of a quest that can be done indoors or outdoors.

The *goal* of the quest is to get out and help wild animals by using clues and completing tasks to collect “magic food” to help the animals.

Preparation:

1. Create “stations” or “points.” Divide the space into several zones, each representing one of the stages of the quest. You can use rooms, corners in the garden, or areas outside.

2. Prepare materials: pictures or toys depicting wild animals; clues and tasks written on cards, small “prizes” or “treats” as rewards for completing tasks.

3. Arrange the clue cards: In each area, place task cards to help children progress to the next station.

Quest Stages:

- Introduction: gather the children and tell them that they are going on a journey to help wild animals. Explain that they will have to complete tasks to find “magic food” for the animals.

- Station 1: Animal Riddles. Task: at this station, place pictures or toys of wild animals. Children should guess which animals they are and perform a simple task, for example, sing a song about the animal or make an imitation of it. Hint: the task card will say that the next place is “under the big tree” (or another place).

- Station 2: “Collecting food for the animals”. Task: in this area, place plastic fruits, vegetables, and seeds. Ask the children to collect the necessary “food” in a basket for different animals (e.g. carrots for hares, apples for bears). Hint: After completing the task, children will receive a map showing the next place where they will find the clue.

- Final station: “Magic Food”. Task: at this station, children find a container of “magic food” (such as a set of sweet treats or toys). Celebrate the completion of the quest with the children, perhaps with a small ceremony to award diplomas or medals for successfully completing the quest.

Additional tips:

- Safety: make sure all materials and tasks are safe and age-appropriate for children.

- Interactivity: try to include elements that allow children to move, search and interact with the materials.

- Helpful: be prepared to assist and guide children if they have difficulty completing tasks.

This quest will not only help children learn more names of wild animals and food words in English, but also develop their teamwork, observation and motor skills.

Throughout the course of their quest, children not only solidified and expanded their understanding of a specific subject, deepening their knowledge and exploring various aspects of it, but they also had the opportunity to demonstrate and enhance valuable skills, such as effective teamwork and collaboration. This experience allowed them to learn the importance of working together towards a common goal while respecting and valuing each other’s contributions. Additionally,

their ability to communicate and solve problems collectively was greatly enhanced, paving the way for more profound interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, this quest not only enriched their academic knowledge but also fostered essential life skills that will benefit them in the future. Additionally, this experience highlighted their capacity for logical reasoning and critical thinking, as they navigated through various challenges. Moreover, they learned to identify and articulate cause-and-effect relationships, enhancing their analytical skills in the process. Thus, the quest served as a multifaceted learning experience that went beyond mere content knowledge. Also, the children had to use their imagination and imaginative thinking in order to solve the tasks, and I managed to create a situation of success, to unite the team, to smooth out the competitive moments between children, to check how well the children learned the material, as well as to develop an interest in learning English. Through engaging activities and creative challenges, the children not only practiced their language skills but also cultivated a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. As they collaborated and shared ideas, they forged stronger friendships that would last well beyond the quest itself.

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