Games as a tool for teaching English vocabulary to young learners

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the issue of vocabulary teaching with the use of games and plays. The main aim of the paper is to examine the effectiveness of the use of games in vocabulary teaching. Chapter one, first of the two theoretical chapters, defines basic terminology related to vocabulary. It is based on research literature, and it focuses on the understanding of ‘vocabulary’ and ‘the word’, provided by various researchers. Chapter one also reports the role of L1 in the language teaching, and an impact of the corporal studies, on the development of the vocabulary teaching practices. Chapter two provides the definition and classification of games. Games have been divided in terms of their structure, function, the use and the required L1 proficiency of the students. The Chapter presents the way teachers introduce games during their lessons, and highlights the factors that contribute to choosing games by the teachers. Moreover, certain possible dangers resulted from playing games have been presented in the Chapter two. Detailed analysis of research literature confirmed previous hypothesis that games constitute a crucial element of teaching English in young children. The empirical Chapter provides the description of three games used for teaching English, and compares their effectiveness. The games have been tested on different age groups. The thesis ends with the conclusions on the theoretical and empirical chapters.

Keywords: games; English teaching; young learner; vocabulary; definition of lexis; definition of vocabulary item; functions of games; classification of games

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching a foreign language to children might often generate controversies since they are not yet fully competent speakers of their first language. It seems, then, that first they should develop their L1 competence before they can go to another language. There is, however, a different point of view on that matter showing that just as children develop their L1 competence they can also develop L2 competence at roughly the same time and under very similar circumstances. It is natural, of course, that teaching a foreign language to children needs to have a completely different form than a regular language instruction at secondary school, for example. In this way, developing appropriate conditions for teaching is based on implementing the elements of L2 into a number of games and entertainment-oriented activities which children participate in with enthusiasm. The main focus of this thesis, then, is to examine the effectiveness and enjoyment of vocabulary games for teaching foreign language to children.

The opening chapter of the MA thesis concentrates on vocabulary showing it as an important component of L2 competence. Thus, the concept of a word is defined and the knowledge of vocabulary explored showing that there is much more to this issue than the meaning of words. The first chapter discusses also how vocabulary may be acquired and stored by learners as well as what particular factors determine selection, presentation and processing of vocabulary with learners.

The second theoretical chapter looks at the nature of games by exploring its pedagogical potential. Thus, basic features and types of games are discussed along with factors determining the choice and implementation of games in order to achieve a specific pedagogical aim. The entertaining nature of games as well as the possible problems or challenges in using games are also discussed in some depth.

The last chapter looks at the subject matter taking a practical perspective. It contains a description of a personal study focused on using games for teaching L2 vocabulary to children. The features of subjects, conditions of teaching, tools as well as the entire procedure are, then, provided in some detail. Moreover, the chapter also presents the results obtained with reference to the effectiveness of teaching as well as the enjoyment brought by particular games.
1. CHAPTER ONE. TEACHING AND LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGE VOCABULARY

The content of this chapter concentrates on the process of teaching and learning L2 vocabulary items. The opening part defines what vocabulary is showing also various levels of word knowledge which reflect particular levels of L2 competence that learners reach. The chapter also looks at the criteria which determine selection of words to teach as well as the role of corpora in developing learners’ L2 lexicon.

1.1. Definition of vocabulary

In general terms, vocabulary as such can be perceived from various perspectives since, as Finch (2000: 102) notes, it can be seen as an all words of a given language or an internal knowledge possessed by speakers of that language. It is also possible to state that “Vocabulary is the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together and … vocabulary facilitates comprehension” (Rupley, et al. 1998: 99). The main idea of the definitions presented above is considering vocabulary as a separated unit of instruction in second language acquisition. At the end of the 1980s, Lexical Approach represented by Lewis and Wollis (1998, as cited in Rupley, et al.: 99-102), proved the essential role of vocabulary in SLA.

Insights of Basanta (2010: 170-175) were significant and in her psychopedagogic model of learning vocabulary, she declared that: “lexical competence lay at the heart of communicative competence and hence was crucial to ELF teaching/learning. At the glance, vocabulary in perceived as an important part of foreign language acquisition, and numerous research are conducted in this field” (Basanta 2010: 175).

As Ur (2003: 60) notes, vocabulary can also be referred to as a set of words. However, such a description seems to be very simple failing to reflect all the important features of a lexical sphere of language. Various dimensions of vocabulary as such can be noticed when taking a look at the areas from which vocabulary is explored and examined such as psychological, corpus linguistics, language competence, formulaic speech and the like. As Ur (2003: 60) continues:

Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than just a single word: for example, post office, and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. A useful convention is to cover all such cases by talking about vocabulary ‘items’ rather than ‘words’ (Ur, 2003: 60).

Taking a closer look at the depth of vocabulary it explored with the development of tools within corpus linguistics it can be seen that a word and vocabulary are two related, but distinguishable elements of linguistic study. Moreover, apart from words alone vocabulary encompasses a wider number of units (Wray 2002: 9). The table below illustrates this number of units.
Table 1. Vocabulary parts according to Wray (2002: 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chunks</th>
<th>Formulaic speech</th>
<th>Multiword units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collocations</td>
<td>Formulas</td>
<td>Prefabricated routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventionalized forms</td>
<td>Holophrases</td>
<td>Ready-made utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>Lexical bundles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When referring to longer lexical units, Nation (2001) uses the term ‘patterns’ which can be used interchangeably for all kinds of collocations, idioms etc. As, naturally, vocabulary is about words, its better understanding can be gained when explaining what a word is.

1.2. Defining a word

On the surface, it seems natural to recognize what a word is so that a person with no specific knowledge in linguistic is able to state that the items such as black or run are words which are used for a specific reason and so, they serve particular functions in sentences. However, taking a deeper look at words, there is much to be considered (O’Grady 2004: 117).

In order to explain what a word is it could be useful to resort to some basic definitions. Therefore, Finch (2000: 132) states that a word constitutes: “a unit of expression which native speakers intuitively recognize in both spoken and written language”. For Frawley (2003: 377), words are not fully independent elements as they are composed of yet smaller elements. The author defines a word as “a linguistic unit that carries meaning and consists of one or more morphemes which are linked together”. A more detailed and a longer definition is provided by Crystal (1994: 226) who defines a lexeme in particular describing it as follows:

Lexeme: the smallest, distinctive unit in the lexicon of a language; also called a lexical item. The term was introduced to avoid ambiguity in the term ‘word’ when discussing vocabulary. A lexeme may consist of a single word e.g. table or more than one word i.e. phrasal verbs. Also a lexeme is an abstract notion, subsuming a range of variant forms (Crystal 1994: 226).

As can be seen, the definition pinpoints that there is a difference between a lexeme and a word as such. The first one is a single unit while the latter can be more elaborated as it can include two words. A word is an independent meaningful unit of language being pronounced in some particular way. An important feature of words is that their meaning is arbitrary. It means that their physical attributes are not related with the attributes of the things, objects or places they refer to (Poole 1999: 9).

Taking yet deeper look at words, the elements such as if, the, or by are considered words even though, they do not (on the surface) meet the criterion that words need to be meaningful units of language. Therefore, these words do have their own meanings but it cannot be easily noticed when they are used in isolation. Comparing them to such words as
book or doll the meaning of such words is completely different. The other two words are immediately associated with specific elements while the first three words need to further context to be interpreted somehow. This shows that word as a linguistic item can be examined and defined from different perspectives (Todd 1995: 40-50). In this way, Todd (1995: 50) states that there are some basic criteria in describing words. The first one is a morphological criterion on the basis of which book as a noun and book as a verb (e.g. to book a ticket) are a single word because their form is unchanged. However, book and books are two different words because their form is different. Another criterion is based on orthography so that words are separated with a space in a piece of text. This means that each element with a space on both sides in a text is a separate word. It cannot be used to differentiate between words in spoken language. There is also a lexical sense of a word so this time book as a noun and book as a verb are seen as two separate words because their meaning is different.

As can be seen although it seems relatively easy to state what a word is a closer look at this matter reveals various layers from which words can be examined. This also affects learning new words since, as could be noticed, there is many more elements concerning words than their meaning. The element accounting for the knowledge of words are discussed in the next section.

1.3. The knowledge of a word

Defining what does a word mean is one thing, but it is also important to note how the knowledge of words is acquired. Thinking about little children who learn to speak, then they always start with words used for labelling, so that the concept, for example, of a cat has a name cat. But of course not every animal is a cat. The child needs to learn how far to extend the concept of a cat. “In other words, acquiring a vocabulary requires not only labelling but also categorising skills” (Thornbury 2002: 18). The child has to realise that these common words like cat can be replaced by superordinate terms like animals. It is important for child to make a cognitive judgement about the word. Children have to develop some kind of network building – constructing some complex idea. Than during this process they will realise there also exist words like synonyms, homonyms, etc. (Thornbury 2002: 18-23). Nation (2001:27) provides concise account of range of word knowledge:

- Meaning
- Written form
- Spoken form
- Grammatical characteristics
- Collocation
- Register constraints
- Frequency
- Associations

These are known as types of word knowledge. These types are acquired by language learners at various stages of their cognitive and linguistic development. As far as young learners are concerned, they acquire many new words but this knowledge is only partial as they are not able to spell the words they know. This part of word knowledge is acquired later once they develop their general literacy skills. In this way, developing an internal system of
L2 vocabulary constitutes a continuous and a long-lasting process (Nation 2001: 21-27). As Nation (2001: 23) asserts, the complexity of vocabulary causes that “there are many degrees of knowing”.

Cameron (2001:76-77) explores various aspects of word knowledge which are presented in the table below. The researcher relied on the study by Schmitt and Maera (1997:18) as well as Ellis and Sinclair (1990:99), who, in turn, followed Richards (1976) and Nation (1990). The elements of word knowledge present as follows:

**Table 2. Knowing about a word (Cameron, 2001: 77)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of knowledge</th>
<th>What is involved</th>
<th>example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receptive knowledge: Aural/decoding</td>
<td>To understand it when it is spoken/written</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memory</td>
<td>To recall it when needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual knowledge</td>
<td>To use it with the correct meaning</td>
<td>Not confusing <em>protractor</em> with <em>compasses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the spoken form: phonological knowledge</td>
<td>To hear the word and to pronounce it acceptably, on its own, and in phrases and sentences</td>
<td>To hear and produce the endings of verb forms, such as the /n/ sound at the end of <em>undertaken</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical knowledge</td>
<td>To use it in a grammatically accurate way; to know grammatical connections with other words</td>
<td><em>She sang very well</em> not <em>she sang very good</em>; to know that <em>is</em> and <em>be</em> are parts of the same verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collocational knowledge</td>
<td>To know which other words can be used with it</td>
<td><em>a beautiful view</em> not <em>a good-looking view</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthographic knowledge</td>
<td>To spell it correctly</td>
<td><em>Protractor</em> not <em>protracter</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic knowledge, knowledge of style and register</td>
<td>To use it in the right situation</td>
<td><em>Would you like a drink?</em> Is more appropriate in a formal or semi-formal situation than <em>what can I get you?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotational knowledge</td>
<td>To know its positive and negative associations, to know its associations with related words</td>
<td>To know that <em>slim</em> has positive connotations, when used about a person, whereas <em>skinny</em> is negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic knowledge</td>
<td>To know explicitly about the word, e.g. its grammatical properties</td>
<td>To know that <em>protractor</em> is a <em>noun</em>; to know that <em>pro</em> is a <em>prefix</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is an interrelation between the number of aspects known by learners about a given word and a type of word knowledge. This leads to a distinction between active and passive knowledge of words which can also be discussed in terms of receptive and productive acquisition of vocabulary (Cameron 2001: 76-79). This issue is discussed in the following section.

1.4. Vocabulary knowledge – mental lexicon

At this point, it might be useful to note not only what is acquired together with a meaning of new words but also how the knowledge of words is structured. In other words, the features of mental lexicon, according to Hulstijn (2000: 210) constitute “a memory system in which a vast number of words, accumulated in the course of time, has been stored”.

1.4.1. Receptive and productive acquisition of vocabulary

As Nation (2001: 26) notes, “Passive vocabulary, according to Corson (1995), includes the active vocabulary and three other kinds of vocabulary -words that are only partly known, low-frequency words not readily available for use and words that are avoided in active use”. Corson’s (1995) idea is not based on receptive and productive mastery of words but rather on whether or not a given word is used by the student. A learner might know a given word well being able to use it at any moment in speech or writing even though s/he does not use these words very often (names of holidays for example). In many cases, though, the less often a given word is used the poorer the knowledge of these words learners have so that they can forget some of the aspects (remember meaning but forget spelling for example).

DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996) prove that receptive and productive knowledge require different forms of practice. They question the fact that receptive acquisition provides all knowledge needed to productive use. On the contrary Ellis and Beaton (1993: 548-549) show a slightly different perspective stating that receptive and productive knowledge need to be accessed differently especially at the early stage of developing L2 proficiency. Foreign word > L1 translation means that the only way for young learners to access a foreign word is to rely on their L1 and translate it.

The study on receptive and productive acquisition involves many areas and various perspectives. Nevertheless, it is important to explore this area in order to understand why learners are able to use some words actively while other ones are only recognized by them in a text or during conversation. Noting how this process takes place might be useful while preparing and designing lessons and tasks focused on vocabulary optimising the effects of teaching (Ellis-Beaton 1993: 532-561).

1.4.2. Process of learning vocabulary in children’s second language learning

Young learners acquire the language beginning from single words going upwards to entire sentences. Learners explore syntactic rules by learning new words and observing how they function next to one another in sentences. As was already mentioned, knowing a given words is based on getting to know its various aspects which means that there should be a specific order at which specific elements of words should be known. As Ur (1996: 60) states, after the form of a word learners should focus on its grammar, collocations, meaning and
word formation. In the form pronunciation and spelling should be mentioned. “The learner has to know what a word sounds like (its pronunciation) and what it looks like (its spelling)” (Ur 1996: 60).

The grammar of a new item also needs to be taught. Again, depending what level the learners are they should be taught to follow some grammatical rules. For example, when teaching nouns, it might be useful to present their plural forms, also regular and irregular (girl-girls, mouse-mice). When teaching verbs, learners’ attention could be drawn to their past forms, especially if the verb is irregular (forget-forgot). The meaning of the word is firstly word’s reference to the real world, named also word denotation (Ur 1996: 60-65).

Discussing how new words are learnt by students, Nation (2001: 23) mentions the concept of the so called ‘learning burden’. The author states, that the more an item represents patterns that learner is already familiar with, the learning of this item is easier (Nation 2001: 23). Taking this into consideration can be helpful for teachers in preparing the lessons and tasks focused on vocabulary which require from learners much less mental strain to acquire new words. It might be useful, then, to help students rely on their L1 when learning L2 words (Nation 2001: 23-28). Thus, the words which do have similar equivalents in L1 are much easier for students to learn, e.g. computer in English and komputer in Polish.

As Cameron (2001) underlines, immersion language learning “younger children (7-8 years) seem to pay more attention to sound and prosody (the ‘music’ of an utterance)”. It is also important to remember that young learners still develop their L1 competence which means that some elements of language can be difficult for them to discuss as they do not know them well enough even in their mother tongue.

At 7 years of age, children are still learn the skills needs for discourse. in telling narratives, for example, children are still learning how to create thematic structure through language, are still developing the full range of uses of pronouns and determinates” (Karmiloff-Smith 1986-175).

Harmer (2007: 81) states that: “we might expect children of primary age to acquire much of a foreign language through play, for example, whereas for adults we can reasonably expect a greater use of abstract thought”. Children are generally believed to memorize new words easily perceiving intonation and pronunciation. Young age might, then, be an advantage in developing L2 proficiency as children’s speech apparatus is still forming. This means that it is still flexible enabling learners to produce various kinds of sounds of L2 which are generally not encountered in L1. Moreover, openness of young learners to novelty and various forms of interaction might also be an advantage in learning L2 (Okoń, 1987). However, as Komorowska (2005: 120-121) pinpoints, it is also important to remember that young age of children entails some negative aspects. Learners encounter and memorize many new words but they also quickly forget them. In addition, they have a very short attention span which makes it necessary for the teacher to use a wider number of short activities in order to keep learners interested and focused on L2 content.

It is also important to note that Young Learner aim at active communication in L2 which can be seen in the way they use language schemes and content words as entire phrases. Single word sentences used by students do not include morphological markers but they do carry meaning. This type of communicating is referred to as telegraphic speech and it can also be noticed as one of the phases in developing L1 competence (Patton et al. 1994: 111-112).
A further set of skills and features of young learners which can also be related in acquisition of L2 vocabulary are identified and put forward by Halliwell (1992: 3), who states that young children:

- are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words;
- already have great skill in using limited language creatively;
- frequently learn indirectly rather than directly;
- take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do;
- have a ready imagination;
- above all take great delight in talking (Halliwell 1992: 3).

Keeping in mind the basic characteristics, skills and predispositions of young learners might be highly useful in helping them develop L2 vocabulary as some are directly and others indirectly involved in this process. Another important aspect in developing L2 lexicon is interrelation between L1 and L2 words. This issue is discussed in the subsection below.

1.4.3. Influence of first language in building vocabulary of second language – Competition Model

Cameron (2001: 14) introduces the notion of ‘Competition Model’ of linguistic performance is a theory that explains how first language learning may affect subsequent second language development”. In light of this model it is assumed that there are “cues” at all levels of proficiency which enable learners to encode meaning. As Cameron notes: “studies carried out across different languages have led to the important conclusion that children become sensitive to the reliability of cues in their first language from early infancy” (2001: 14). They try to implement L1 structures to communicate in L2. This, however does not refer to bilingual learners.

As McCarthy (1994: 41) holds, when a learner notices a given word in a written form s/he is able to provide its meaning. As a result, there need to be some links in learners’ brains between the particular pieces of information concerning new words. In fact, the examination of the way L2 lexical items are remembered is not easy as it is naturally linked to lexicon of learners’ first language. A general view on storing L1 and L2 words assumes functioning of the so called three-dimensional model. The knowledge of grammatical properties, in turn, is interrelated with the knowledge of semantics. McCarthy (1994: 41) underlines that the links between these areas concerning vocabulary are often fragile which can be inferred from the fact that learners can remember only one element. For example, they might know the spelling of a given word being unable to recall its meaning or they can write a given word down being, at the same time, unable to pronounce it correctly.

The interrelation and interference of L1 with L2 vocabulary is also based on the way the words of the two languages are stored in the brain. The researchers put forward various hypotheses concerning this theory (Hulstijn 2000). Hulstijn (2000: 216) presents four basic hypotheses such as:
a) The extended system hypothesis – there is a single store in learners’ brains for L1 and L2 vocabulary. This might generate greater interference of L1 vocabulary with L2 lexicon.

b) The dual system hypothesis – in light of this hypothesis there are completely two separate stores in learners’ brains. One stores vocabulary of the native language while the other vocabulary of a foreign language.

c) The tripartite hypothesis – in light of this hypothesis learners have three stores at their disposal. One of them stores vocabulary items in L2 and L2 which share some range of semantic characteristics (cognates). The other two stores are to keep vocabulary items unique to L1 and L2.

d) The subset hypothesis – assuming the existence of one single store irrespective of the number of languages that a learner speaks. It is, however, subdivided into various subsets with one for each language a learner speaks so that vocabulary items of L1 and L2 are not stored together.

Teachers might follow one of these hypotheses and adjust the process of teaching accordingly which indicates that they might have a direct influence on how vocabulary is presented, processed and practiced in the FL classroom. It often happens that learners do not concentrate that much on the relationship between words in terms of their semantic properties as they more often focus on the similarities or any kinds of relationship between L1 and L2 words. It appears that phonological similarity between L1 and L2 words constitutes the most reliable point of reference for the learners expanding L2 vocabulary (Takac 2008: 14).

1.5. Criteria for vocabulary selection

The important issue in teaching vocabulary is designing the vocabulary component of language course. Following the model presented below, Nation (2001: 381) indicates that selection and implementation of vocabulary for teaching in the FL classroom is determined by a number of interrelated factors. The figure below illustrates this number of factors. The aim in teaching vocabulary is not developing L2 lexicon alone but also linking it with learners’ needs, examination of the teaching conditions as well as following specific rules in student-teacher interaction. Nation (2001: 380) distinguishes four basic types of vocabulary such as “high-frequency, academic, technical or low-frequency words”. Following the model presented above, it is necessary to examine the overall environment in which learners develop their L2 proficiency and lexicon. The exemplary environmental factors and the effects they have are presented below:

Table 3. Some environment factors and their effects on vocabulary course design (Nation 2001: 384).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment factor</th>
<th>The effect on the course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learners</td>
<td>Use translation to define words and to test vocabulary knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set graded reading and direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The learners share the same L1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The learners will do homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in the model presented, the basic rules in teaching vocabulary are highly important for the final effect of the entire process. Nation (2001) puts forwards some ideas which stand in opposition to general accepted norms and states that: “All vocabulary learning should occur in context”, ‘The first language should not be used as a means of presenting the meaning of a word’, ‘Vocabulary should be presented in lexical set, ‘Monolingual dictionaries are preferable to bilingual dictionaries’, ‘Most attention should be paid to the first presentation of a word’, and ‘Vocabulary learning does not benefit from being planned, but can be determined by the occurrence of words in texts, tasks and themes” (Nation 2001: 384).

**Figure 1.** Course-designing elements Nation (2001: 381)
The principles of vocabulary teaching are based on the assumption that learners are taught but they can also learn something themselves. They include the following points:

- **Principle of content and sequencing** – (guide) determines the type of vocabulary to be taught and the order in which particular types of words should be taught. It assumes that words should be presented in the way they are used naturally rather than in groups of synonyms or antonyms.

- **Principle of format and presentation** – make certain that target vocabulary occurs in 4 strands (meaning focusing input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output, fluency development). The table below presents 4 strands in techniques and activities focused on vocabulary: (Nation 2001: 185-188).

**Table 4.** The four strands and their application with a focus on vocabulary (Nation 2001: 187).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>General conditions</th>
<th>Vocabulary requirements</th>
<th>Activities and techniques</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-focused input</td>
<td>• Focus on the message</td>
<td>• 95%+ coverage (preferably 98%)</td>
<td>• Reading graded readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some unfamiliar items</td>
<td>• Skill at guessing from context</td>
<td>• Listening to stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understanding</td>
<td>• Opportunity to negotiate</td>
<td>• Communication activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Noticing</td>
<td>• Incidental defining and attention drawing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language-focused learning</td>
<td>• Focus on language items</td>
<td>• Skill in vocabulary learning strategies</td>
<td>• Direct teaching of vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Appropriate teacher focus on high-frequency words, and strategies for low-frequency words</td>
<td>• Direct learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-focused output</td>
<td>• Focus on the message</td>
<td>• 95%+ coverage (preferably 98%)</td>
<td>• Intensive reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Some unfamiliar items</td>
<td>• Encouragement to use unfamiliar items</td>
<td>• Training in vocabulary strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Understanding</td>
<td>• Supportive input</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Noticing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency development</td>
<td>• Focus on the message</td>
<td>• 99%+ coverage</td>
<td>• Reading easy graded readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Little or no unfamiliar language</td>
<td>• Repetition</td>
<td>• Repeated reading</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Pressure to perform faster</td>
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<td>• Speed reading</td>
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<td>• Listening to easy input</td>
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<td>• Rehearsed tasks</td>
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<td>• 10 minute writing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>• Linked skills</td>
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</tbody>
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The final principle:

- **Principle of monitoring and assessment** comprise – it concentrates on testing learners’ knowledge of vocabulary and monitoring their progress in order to keep learners motivated and encourage them to make greater effort in learning new words so they can keep making progress (Nation 2001: 188).
1.6. Corpus in teaching and learning vocabulary

Corpus as such can be used directly for teaching and learning a foreign language or it can constitute a basis for more in-depth linguistic analysis. Defining corpus or corpora in the plural form, Sinclair (2005: 16) states that it constitutes a set of pieces of language text in digital form. The pieces of language are selected in accordance with external criteria. The aim of the selection is to represent as far as it is possible a diversity of language and this diversity is a source of linguistic study. (Sinclair 2005: 16-17). The advantage of corpus is that it does not constitute a mere list of words but encompasses larger texts showing how words are used in context. What is more, it is descriptive rather than prescriptive. For this reason, corpus presents various uses of words present in a given language (concerning variety of contexts) which regular dictionaries fail to mention (McCarthy 2002: 1-10).

Following McCarthy (2002: 1-2) it is possible to identify a number of specific pieces of information on L2 vocabulary which learners might be provided with. Thus, corpus, and general area of corpus linguistic focuses on:

- The most frequent words and phrases,
- The differences between spoken and written discourse,
- The frequency with which speakers use particular tenses,
- The co-occurrence of prepositions and verbs,
- The use of words in formal as well as informal contexts,
- The use of idioms,
- The depth of lexicon that speakers need to take part in a regular interaction
- The depth of the lexicon actually used by native speakers of a given language in everyday interaction (McCarthy 2002: 1-2).

The array of aspects included in a corpus indicates that corpora can constitute highly useful tools in developing L2 vocabulary. At the same time, the analysis of language with the use of corpora is based on some particular principles and ideas which combined together are referred to as corpus approach. According to Biber et al. (1998: 4), corpus approach reflects four main characteristics. The first one is that corpus approach is empirical in nature which means that the analysis of particular patterns of language is based on natural language produced by the speakers on a daily basis. The following feature is that the analysis is based on large principled collection of texts which are generated naturally. What is more, computers are used extensively for the analysis of language based on corpus approach. Finally, the analysis involves both quantitative as well as qualitative techniques.

Summarising, vocabulary constitutes a highly important component of language as it is the source of all the meaning conveyed during interaction. In teaching vocabulary it is crucial to incorporate appropriate tools of teaching. Therefore, poor L2 vocabulary prevents learners from understanding others and expressing themselves successfully. However, it can be seen that there are various means of teaching vocabulary and various tools which can be used for this purpose. This makes it possible to adjust the form and intensity of teaching vocabulary to learners’ skills, characteristics and preferences.
2. CHAPTER TWO. GAMES IN TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

In this chapter, the attention is paid to pedagogical use of games in teaching a foreign language to children. The opening section provides a definition and a description of basic features that games have looking also at their entertaining character. A central part of the chapter is focused on various types of games depending on the criterion taken. The issues concerning selection, implementation and challenges which teachers might encounter when using games constitute the focus of the closing part of the chapter.

2.1. Play, games and simulation

In many cases, the words play, game and simulation are used interchangeably since they serve the same general purpose focused on implementing fun in the FL classroom and exposing learners to a given form of L2 input. However, taking a closer look at each of these forms of interaction it is possible to pinpoint subtle differences between them. Play can be described as the activity that is performed for pleasure and enjoyment. In many cases, play is culture dependent. Young learners show a natural need for play which makes it a highly useful and effective form of interaction in the foreign language classroom. Play refers, then, not so much to the language content or the actual physical materials, tools, or aids that children handle but rather the atmosphere and the specific setting in which they interact (Siek-Piskozub 1995). With such a view on play it is possible to identify its basic characteristics such as:

- A voluntary character – play is naturally appealing for children which causes that there is no need to encourage learners to take part in it. If, then, the teacher needs to encourage learners to take part in play it may not have all the necessary features.
- Isolated and limited – play is based on some rules concerning time, space, organization and actions that the learners need to conform to. First of all, learners need to be aware that all the actions they undertake during play are a part of this play rather than an authentic interaction.
- Involving an element of uncertainty – play needs to be based on open tasks which do not have one possible solution. This makes learners curious and creative which, in turn, makes play more appealing for the learners.
- Unproductive – a cognitive or educational element may but does not need to be involved in play. It can be based on fun and entertainment alone but, whenever possible, an educational element is included as well.
- Based on especially designed rules – each time play is used it is based on a specific context with learners playing specific roles, the classroom being some other place, at some other time etc.
- Fictitious – play can include imagined elements, situations, individuals and the like (Jeffcoate 1992: 192-193).

According to Okoń (1997: 36-37), play generates facilitating conditions for children to develop social relations and social skills. Play also makes it possible for the teacher to create the conditions for interaction which learners would not have much change to face in real life.
situations. At the same time, the learners realize that play is only fun which means that they are not inhibited to use the language even though they might lack adequate skills.

As far as simulation is concerned, Ments (1993: 4) asserts that it is closely related with real life situations. It is to help children familiarize with a number of authentic situations which they can face one day outside the classroom setting. As a result, simulation does not involve imagined rules, concepts or characters. Furthermore, they might not be an element of competition in simulation. Even though simulations are based on real-life situations they still involve the element of fun creating a relaxed atmosphere so that they are also appealing and interesting for learners. In some cases, it might be difficult to draw a clear-cut boundary between a simulation and a game as they share some range of characteristics.

Exploring games, then, it can be stated that they are more elaborated with a greater range of rules and principles. As a result games often require greater degree of preparation, more intensive observation and control on the part of the teacher. A closer look at games involving definitions, features, functions and types is taken in the further part of the chapter (Siek-Piskozub 1995).

2.2. Defining and describing games

As far as definition of a game is concerned, Okoń (1992: 64) perceives it as a variant of a play that depends on sticking to strict rules and achieving a determined outcome. Byrne (1986: 100), in turn, defines games as a form of play governed by certain rules or conventions. Moreover, Toth (1995: 5) provides a more expansive definition explaining game as follows:

A game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. There are two kinds of games: Competitive games, in which players or teams race to be the first to reach the goal, and co-operative games, in which players or teams work together towards a common goal. The emphasis in the games is on successful communication rather than on correctness of language (Toth 1995: 5).

In addition to the definition a greater insight into the nature of games can be provided by looking at an array of basic features they have. Following Juul 2002 in Whitehead (www1), games reflect the following characteristics:

1. Games are based on rules.
2. Games have variable, quantifiable outcomes.
3. The outcomes of games might have a positive or a negative value.
4. Games provide a degree of challenge which means that learners need to make effort in order to achieve a given objective.
5. Students taking part in a game attach a significant importance to its outcomes – they know that a player will be the winner and happy if a positive outcome happens, and loser and unhappy if a negative outcome happens.
6. Negotiable consequences: the same game [set of rules] can be played with or without real-life consequences.
As can be seen, even though games are already based on rules and principles they can often be modified in order to adjust a game to learners’ characteristics, needs or skills so that it can serve its purpose as effectively as possible. A yet better understanding of games can be gained by discussing the functions that games serve. This constitutes the focus of the following section.

2.3. Functions of games

It has already been pointed out that games include an element of fun, but, at the same time, they are rule-based and they have a more elaborated character. As a result, then, it means that games are not implemented by teachers just for the sake of playing a game itself but there are some specific functions which games can serve for the classroom setting as well as for teacher and learners (Siek-Piskozub 1995).

As Siek-Piskozub (1995: 20-23) notes, organization of work and classroom interaction is one of the functions that games serve. During a game learners are active and focused on the content of the less. What they do, how they handle L2 input and how much attention they pay to the lesson is all shaped by the features and rules of the game. As a result, the teacher can skilfully manage classroom dynamics by selecting and implementing particular types of games at a particular moment. The author also adds that games serve a motivational function.

The context of interaction generated by games is naturally interesting and engaging for young learners. This means that learners are often willing to take part in a given activity based on a game so their level of motivation is high. Furthermore, games also serve a didactic function. The element of fun and entertainment in games is only a background context provided so that learners can develop their L2 lexicon, the knowledge of grammar or a habit of using a particular pattern in a conversation (Siek-Piskozub 1995: 20-26).

Following Mróz (2006: 166-167), another two functions of games can be provided. The first one is a cognitive function. It is closely related with the didactic function but this time, the focus is placed not on teaching in particular but on the effect of teaching which is learners’ cognitive development. The final function of games is educational. It means that apart from developing their L2 skills by playing a game learners can also develop their knowledge of the world and observe as well as acquire various patterns of behaviour so they can generally become more educated.

The array of functions served by games points at their flexibility and advantage as language teaching materials. In fact, the function a given game serves can also be interrelated with its structure, rules and other basic features. Thus, discussing types of games can also shed some light on how games can be used and what particular advantages they can bring (Siek-Piskozub 1995).

2.4. Types of games

There is a number of ways in which games can be put into particular types or categories which means that much depends on the criterion followed. It can be the general function that games serve. As a result, there are games focused on fun and entertainment, interaction, developing learners’ knowledge of the world or focused on some particular element of language. Another possible criterion could be the way games are organized, and so, there are games which engage entire group of learners interacting in the classroom or
subdividing them into smaller groups. Moreover, all learners can be engaged at the same time or they can have their roles to play at different stages of the lesson. In addition, learners can be active all the time or some of them can drop out after some time waiting for others to finish the game. Each type of game serves a specific function for both teachers and learners. At the same time, the types can also be mixed within one single game as it can be whole-class teaching game focused on interaction and the use of specific vocabulary items (Hong 2002: 3).

As can be seen, classification of games constitutes a relatively flexible area of study which makes it necessary to focus on some specific criteria in order to pinpoint and discuss the detailed features and functions they serve. The typologies discussed in the subsections below are based on the function and structure of games, language skills that learners develop and proficiency level of students.

2.4.1. Types distinguished on basis of function and structure

Considering the function of games reflected in the purpose for which a game is used, Mróz (2005: 166) distinguishes games focused on linguistic accuracy or general communicative goal. The first one guarantees success when a learner uses correct forms during a task that can be based on a drill or translation whereas the latter aims at developing students’ communicative skills and, at the same time, skilful transmission of information during a conversation.

Focusing on classification of games provided by Lee (1991: 18) it is possible to list a wider range of games with their focus being at the same time their main function. The classification includes structure games (focused on syntax and technical aspects of language, vocabulary games (focused on developing learners’ L2 lexicon), spelling, pronunciation or number games, listen-and-go games, games and writing, miming and role-play, as well as discussion games.

Shifting the focus on the structure of games it is possible to distinguish various types depending on the tools and various physical materials used in order to play it. Such a classification is put forward by Lewis and Bedson (1999: 17), who distinguished the following:

- board games - all kinds of games which require moving pawns or markers along a board. Games of this kind can be highly beneficial in terms of language learning because they can involve a range of tasks for learners to do e.g. ask everybody two questions, count to twenty etc.
- card games – games based on assembling cards, disclosing, exchanging, sorting, and counting them. The cards can have a gist or usefulness in a game, or clearly serve as symbols for actions or objects. As a result, learners can develop associations between the names of the activities in English, the pictures and the subsequent movement - dice games. Games of this sort are very flexible. It is important to note that the dice need not only to have numbers on the faces. Dice games can have colours, numbers or letters of the alphabet. It is very easy to attract the attention of young learners with dice games because they contain the element of unpredictability and luck (Ellington et al. 1998: 4).
- **drawing games** - these games show a relatively specific feature since they traverse a gap between the fundamental functions of the brain. On the one hand, drawing stirs inventiveness and susceptibility towards the world but on the other hand, children need to be able to understand directives and describe their art. Games based on drawing might be useful when working with sheepish children who are reluctant to talk. Despite the fact that children may not be ready to describe their picture thoroughly by themselves they will definitely reply to questions with yes or no answers. Furthermore, drawing games can also be used to include a degree of competitiveness as well as enable children to memorize new vocabulary items better (Lewis - Bedson 1999: 17).

- **guessing games** - such games may be used to practice the use of particular linguistic forms such as: ‘do you, are you, is it, etc. Moreover, they also display the element of competitiveness which motivates learners creating in this way good learning and teaching atmosphere (Lewis - Bedson 1999: 17).

- **role-play games** - they trigger a child’s imagination and constitute tests of real communication and simulation. Many young learners benefit greatly from role-play games in terms of their linguistic competence as well as their personality development. Therefore, with the use of these games learners are able to get to know some everyday issues and mechanisms as well as the imagined ones. This, again, reflects positively on learners’ motivation (Ellington et al. 1998: 5).

- **movement games** - during these games students are physically active which enables them to learn through the application of their natural predispositions and inclinations. Movement games make children very excited and interested. Moreover, because of the dynamic character these games show, learners need to be constantly monitored when playing such games (Lewis - Bedson 1999: 18).

Byrne (1986: 114) highlights the usefulness of board games focusing especially on their high motivational drive. They can be characterized as real-life activities that have been brought into the classroom. Three basic types can be distinguished.

First, a map of pictures/images is employed. The players are asked to take various guesses while moving around the board. Second, this type of a game depends on moving along a continuous track and making varied language-based specific actions when they stand on different squares, for instance, giving a few names of animals, singing a song, and suchlike. Third, although it is a separate type of game, it also takes advantage of a track board. Respective squares are characterized by particular roles and actions to play. This board involves START and HOME fields and the goal is to pass through multifarious circumstances (Byrne 1986: 114-115). “To make full use of the board, therefore, you must invent different contexts or situations in which good or bad things happen” (Byrne 1986: 114).

Taking a closer look at above classification of games it can be noticed that they can be mixed in one particular game. For example, learners can use dice or cards during a role-play game. Moreover, such a game can also involve movement. The more elaborated game the greater range of tools and objects it can implement. Yet alternative typology of games (based on function) is provided by Masheder (1989: 1), who distinguished co-operative and competitive games. The names and the functions of such games are, then, self-evident. The former type, then, is focused on enabling learners to work together in order to achieve a common goal.
Games of this kind entail much student-student interaction which also helps them develop their social and communication skills (even if they interact in L1 in order to process L2 input). The latter type pushes learners to think and act fast in order to handle the task before others. Moreover, games of this kind can also push learners to reach for more non-standard options and solutions in order to handle the task which means that they boost learners’ creativity (Masheder 1989: 1).

2.4.2. Types distinguished on the basis of language skills

The division of games focused on a particular language skill is, naturally, based on the actual activities implemented. However, it is also natural that such games can also be categorized in some other way since they are based on some particular tools and rules for learners to follow. This typology makes it possible to divide games into listening and speaking games. It is often the case that listening ones also entail much reading while speaking ones can implement writing as well (depending on learners’ skills). In this way, it is also possible, then, to call them receptive and productive games respectively. In receptive games, learners are exposed to auditory input so their task might be to order the likes of a song, provide missing words to a song lyrics or provide entire lines (or even blocks of text) to stories. Productive, or speaking games, in turn, can be used as a way of reinforcing vocabulary covered previously. Such games are focused on oral production so learners can be engaged in games such as taboo or ‘find someone who’. In the former learners need to describe a given word or an idea in order for another learner to guess it. In the latter game learners may walk around the classroom asking one another a number of questions in order to find a person who shows some specific features (a someone who has a pet, who does not like orange juice etc.). The specific type of game and the level to which learners come up with oral input depend on learners’ age, proficiency level and speaking skills they have (Sugar 1998: 63-65).

2.4.3. Types distinguished on the basis of learners’ skills and second language proficiency

The typology based on students’ proficiency level is related directly with the structure of games as well as the amount and difficulty of the language used. Moreover, it can also involve the roles that students play during a game so beginners might be rather passive (reacting to input, identifying words in listening or reading, matching etc.) while more advanced learners can be engaged in oral interaction. The game might have an open-ended character which means that there would not be one single solution or outcome for learners to reach. It is important for teachers to explore games focusing on various levels of proficiency since, for example, games for beginners might help them get used to processing L2, handle anxiety in speaking or be helpful for the teacher in developing good rapport with students. Games used at a later stages can remind learners that learning L2 can also be fun. In addition, games at this level are helpful in generating the context for interaction and competition so learners have the opportunity to put their skills and knowledge to the test. The more advanced learners become the less often games are employed (as higher proficiency level also goes along with learners’ age) but it is important for teachers to keep in mind their educational value and the positive influence on the atmosphere of the lessons (Greenall 1990: 58).
2.5. Factors affecting the choice of games

Looking at the typology of games discussed above it is possible to notice that these criteria (such as learners’ proficiency level for example) can be directly involved in choosing games for the lesson or the entire language course.

According to Markunas (1993: 93-4), a proper choice of a game for the lesson needs to begin with analysing learners’ skills, predispositions and needs. On the basis of such information the teacher can explore what various types of games can bring to the FL classroom. In addition to these constant factors there are also more flexible variables such as the time of the lesson at which the game is used (as sometimes, the teacher can make a spontaneous decision that a given element of language could be processed with the use of a game). This determines the amount of time available to play the game.

What is more, as Koluch (2003: 43-44) notes, games can be used either as a background or an introduction for other, more elaborated activity or they can constitute the main focus of the lesson providing the context for presentation and practicing of L2 input by students. Depending on this basic function the choice of a specific game can be limited to a particular category of games.

Following Hong (2002: 1), appropriate choice of a game for the lesson needs to be based on a variety of aspects with reference to the purpose, the language focus, the learners and technical factors. This can be done by going over a list of questions such as:

- Which particular component or a language skill can be introduced or practiced on the basis of a given game?
- Is the game one is about to choose adjusted to learners in terms of their age, skills, knowledge or interests. Can they benefit from the use of the game?
- Why is it useful resort to a given game at all?
- Did the use of a given game (or a type of game) bring positive results of teaching? If yes, what were the outcomes in particular?
- Can the game be implemented in its original form or does it need to be altered in any way? If it does, can the necessary modifications be easily implemented by the teacher?
- Is there enough interaction and participation for learners that naturally stem from the game? (Hong 2002: 1).

Answering these questions may limit the change of making an inappropriate choice of a game which, in such a situation, would be a waste of time. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that there is also a variety of other aspects which might be considered which is why each game also needs to be evaluated after it has been implemented. The evaluation of games can be useful when selecting a game next time (Hong 2002: 1-2).

As Siek-Piskozub (1995: 122-137) notes, learners’ age constitutes one of the basic factors which determines the choice of a specific game for the lesson. Young learners undergo a rapid cognitive development but they are still subject to various cognitive limitations. In this way the teacher should be fully aware of that as even the most interesting, dynamic and entertaining game cannot serve its purpose well if L2 content it includes is beyond the current level of L2 showed by learners. Alternatively, the L2 content could also be too easy for students which is also a problem because if learners can handle it easily they do not pay sufficient attention to it. As a result, their motivation and engagement in the lesson lowers
considerably. Other factors determining the choice of games mentioned by the author are based on technical issues such as availability of necessary tools or equipment or availability of space (for movement games for example).

According to Halliwell (1992: 13-14), a game chosen for the lesson needs to appeal to learners’ imagination and involve their creativity. Therefore, games used might contain an elements of fantasy providing a controlled level of imaginary world as this can help children understand the surrounding environment but also generate an interesting context for interaction in the classroom. Just as young learners can introduce fun and play into anything they do, they also create their own view of the reality.

2.6. Implementing games during the lesson

In fact, the issues to consider once a game is used during the lesson are closely interrelated with the factors affecting the choice of a game. One of the basic issues to remember is that once the game is chosen the role and active engagement of the teacher does not end but rather changes. This means that the teacher needs to monitor how learners process and use L2 and how they interact during a given game. The information collected during the lesson and particular activities can be highly useful when designing, selecting and implementing games on another occasion. Following Dobson (1997: 108-109), the issues to consider and follow when implementing games during foreign language lessons include many factors.

Firstly, the teacher should know the rules of the game, gather materials, and plan how to direct conversation during or following the game. Additionally she/he should make sure that activity introduced would be entertaining. When it does not happen so, it is better to change a game, or abandon it for some time. Secondly, teacher should choose a game that allows as many learners as possible to get involved in it. It is vital to care if all children are engaged sufficiently as active participant instead of idling their time as observers only. It needs to be noticed that game is within reach of children capacities. Otherwise learners can be easily discouraged and the opposite outcome can be achieved. Thirdly, somewhere between the middle or the end of the lesson is a more appropriate moment for changing a pace of the lesson and play a game. It is advisable to play some ‘trials’ to make sure if rules of a game are intelligible and to stand in front of the class to act as the leader or referee. If all students cling to the rules, there is little space for cheating, tricking, and breaking rules.

Fourthly, for prevent disintegration during the game is needed a pleasant but firm tone and necessary minimum of discipline in the classroom. The role of teacher is to use proper encouragements and no discouragements. The teacher should ‘see’ which students get disheartened or even abashed and ought to take steps to stop his withdrawal into him-/herself. During team group teacher should assure an equal number of proficient and less proficient learners. Thanks to such a power balance the play or game is fair and every team feels appreciated. As Dobson emphasizes “some methodologists recommend that you set up permanent teams” (1997: 109). Fifthly, if a game activity does not seem to be going well, the teacher should try a different game. The teacher should have a wide variety of games at his/her disposal. Dobson’s recommendation is neither to play a game so long that it begins to bore participants, nor to play the same game too frequently. (Dobson 1997: 108-109).

Even if the teacher does consider a wide range of factors determining the choice of a game there is still no surety that, once the game is employed, no problems can emerge on the
way. As a result, the final issue to consider concerns a number of negative outcomes or problems related with the use of games during foreign language lessons.

2.7. Possible negative outcomes of using games in foreign language classroom

When discussing games in foreign language instruction the attention is paid mainly to the advantages they bring and the benefits for students which they entail. However, it could also be useful to shed some light on possible disadvantages or negative outcomes which, as Scott and Ytreberg (2001: 109-110) note, might encompass the following:

- External disturbances or noises which might be highly distracting for learners. In such a situation the teacher can modify the game, select another one (which matches the context) or reach for a completely different activity. Internal disturbances – there may be a learner who is not interested in playing a game or who generally shows discipline problems, which also distracts other students.
- A class is out of control because of being overactive during a particular part of the lesson. Then, the calming activity may be of use e.g. reading loud.
- A problem might also arise when the game takes more time than originally planned. The teacher might, then, assign it for homework, continue the game at the cost of other tasks or leave it for another occasion.
- If students gradually drop out of game (or if some learners completed the task earlier) it is important not to leave them idle without any supervision. The teacher should, therefore, prepare some additional activities for such occasions or be able to come up with them spontaneously.
- It may also happen that learners are not willing to play the game as they are not in a right frame of mind on a given day. In such situations the teacher may try to choose another game or reach for something completely different.
- At some point, it may turn out that learners cannot handle the game adequately either because they do not comprehend the L2 content or because of the technical difficulties. Quick reaction of the teacher such as skipping the difficult part (if possible) is, again, the best solution.

The problems listed above can occur when resorting to games but, in fact, they can also emerge during a number of other task types. As Siek-Piskozub (1995: 60-63) asserts, the problems with the use of games can be induced by inappropriate organization, students’ attitude or inappropriate choice of a game which does not account for the personality features of all learners as well as their proficiency level.

As far as learners’ behaviour is concerned, it seems that they may often be interested in the game and willing to take an active part in the game but, for some reasons, there are specific problems reflected in learners’ behaviour which can emerge. The first one concerns psycho-somatic conditions. It means that learners can become too excited about playing a game which makes them hyperactive. Another problem emerges when games contain an element of competition. This is mainly a problem for teenagers who could resort to forbidden means in order to achieve their objective of winning. In this way, the teacher needs to be very careful when making use of games involving competition and rivalry. Finally, it needs to be stated that learners could also have problems with understanding the rules of the game. In
such a situation learners can lose interest in the game becoming passive. Moreover, high ability learners might become frustrated as well as the low ability ones lagging behind might slow down the entire group. This generates a negative atmosphere in the classroom (Siek-Piskozub 1995).

To sum up, games are perceived as one of the most advantageous ways of teaching English vocabulary to young learners. Many factors influence the choice of games and implementation of games during lessons. However, games possible disadvantages are worth to be taken into consideration before designing a games-based activities lessons.
3. CHAPTER THREE. THE STUDY

The content of this chapter presents the description and results of the study focused on teaching L2 vocabulary to children. The opening section provides the information on the aim and context of the study. Later on, basic questions to explore are listed. The following part concentrates on participants involved in the study, tools implemented as well as the procedure. The next part focuses on the results obtained while the final section provides a summary, conclusions and implications for teaching.

3.1. Aims of the study

The aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness and usefulness of three game-based activities used in teaching L2 vocabulary to children. The purpose was also to learn about learners’ preferred activity. The questions focused on the usefulness and effectiveness of games employed for teaching vocabulary such as:

1) Which of the three game-based activities is the most effective in helping children memorize new L2 words?
2) What is the nature of the most effective activity (movement, visual or auditory associations)?
3) Which of the three game-based activities can be found most entertaining for children?
4) Is there any relationship between the degree of fun in learning and effectiveness of acquisition?
5) Can the effective and entertaining game-based activities be used by the teacher on a daily basis or do they require any additional and extraordinary preparations?

3.2. Description of the participants

The subjects of the study were sixty seven learners from three different groups of public kindergarten. Learners were at age of five or six. All the participants started their English classes at age of four, so they have been learning it for one or two years. They had two English lessons of thirty minutes every week. All children had no contact with English outside classroom. The curriculum which they used was called “My first words” and was based on songs and rhythms from Super simple songs workbook. The groups were randomly selected with no criteria set in advance concerning their predispositions, skills or any other features.

The study involved groups A, B and C who played three games focused on numbers of colours. Group A was composed of twenty four children; fourteen boys and ten girls. There were no children with special educational needs. Group B was composed of twenty children; eleven boys and nine girls. There were no children with special educational needs. Focusing on group B, it needs to be highlighted that the overall number of children in this group was lower in comparison with the previous group (four children fewer). Group C was composed of twenty three children; twenty boys and three girls. One child showed special educational needs based on delayed speech.
3.3. Instruments and procedures

Three types of data collection tools were used during study. The first used by teacher during games-based activities was an observation sheet which focused on the number of correct and incorrect answers provided by children during a given game (Appendix 3). The second tool was a simple vocabulary test (Appendix 4). The third tool was a survey based on three pictures representing games children played. Children were asked to mark a picture of the game they liked the most.

The next type of instruments were instructional games which focused on teaching and processing L2 words as well as entrainment (also involving movement) used during practice sessions. The games presented as follows: a movement game called “Spider is coming”, a board with shapes and colours (Appendix 1) and a board game with a colourful sheet (Appendix 2).

The tools were implemented consecutively with the data collected, analysed and presented later on in the further part of this chapter. At this point, the attention can be shifted to the procedure of the study.

The study started at the beginning of December 2015 and lasted to the middle of January 2016. Groups A, B and C were asked at the beginning of each of three lessons to sing a rainbow song such as red and yellow, and pink and green, purple and orange and blue I can sing a rainbow, sing a rainbow too. After that, the first game was played. The next lesson children played second game, and the next week they played the third game.

The first game was called “Spider is coming”. The teacher played the role of a spider while children were bees flying around. Once the teacher called “spider is coming” she also used a flashcard with one of the colours processed (red, green, pink, yellow, blue, purple, orange). Children were supposed to say what colour the teacher showed. If a child failed to say what colour it was s/he dropped out. In the next stage of the game each child was a spider one by one. This enabled them to not only react and respond to the colours presented by others but also pick the colour themselves. The first game was based on 11 rounds which accounts for the first round during which the teacher was a spider and another 10 rounds during which learners played the role of a spider one by one.

The next game was based on the use of a colourful sheet and based on 13 rounds (Appendix 1). The teacher provided a given colour, e.g. yellow while learners were supposed to hold this particular colour and pass under the scarf. In this way, the game was based on oral processing of vocabulary and movement. Once all the colours were provided by the teacher learners switched roles so they provided the colours one by one while other children were supposed to indicate the correct colour passing under the sheet.

The last game was based on the use of a board with colours, shapes and numbers and based on 12 attempts. (Appendix 2). Similarly to previous games, the teacher pronounced the names of the colours while children were, this time, supposed to tough a given element on the board which had the same colour. The game can be extended to numbers and shapes so the teacher could say square three which limited the scope of possibilities or yellow two which means that only yellow shapes with number two could be toughed. This time, however, the simplest form of the game was used focusing only on colours while shapes and numbers were disregarded. The game also involved oral processing, movement and touch so it again referred to kinaesthetic.
All games lasted about 5 minutes.

During each game the teacher used a simple observation sheet focusing on three issues, i.e. the number of times the colours were processed, the number of learners providing the correct and the incorrect responses.

Furthermore, the teacher used a simple vocabulary test based on coloured dots. The colours were read in different order for each group such as: Group A the order of dots was red, green, pink, yellow, blue, purple, orange. Group B the order of dots was green, purple, yellow, pink, red, orange, blue. Group C the order of dots was yellow, orange, purple, red, pink, blue, green.

The last instrument employed in the course of the study was a simple survey in which learners in each group were asked to state which game was the most entertaining and attracting for them. Learners were provided with three pictures indicating clearly the games they played. They were asked to mark in any possible way the picture representing their favourite game.

On the twentieth of January 2016 the teacher analysed the collected data and described the results.

3.4. Presentation of results

According to the results from observation sheet for group A, during the first game 63% of learners (15 learners) provided incorrect responses and 37% (9 learners) provided correct responses.

Another game provided the following results: only 38% of learners made mistakes, and 62% provided correct responses. The results of the final game present that 21% of participants in the group (that is 24 learners) made mistakes and 79% of learners provided correct responses. As it is shown below percentage of mistakes dropped from 63% to 21%, that more than 40% of progress was made. As it is shown in the Figure 2, the colours were the same for each game in all the groups while the focus is place on a number of students coming up with correct and incorrect responses accounting for all the rounds together. In it necessary to note, at this point that the number of times that particular colours were processed differed. The teacher made sure first that all the colours were mentioned, but learners had their own favourite colours, and so, some colours, such as blue and pink, for example, were mentioned and processed by learners multiple times while others, such as purple, for example appeared only a few times.

It can also be mentioned that some students made mistakes almost each time while others came up with occasional mistakes. This time, it can be noticed that learners were absorbed with the game itself which seemed to have affected their concentration as they were confusing yellow with green, for example. At the same time, pronunciation of purple was a bit challenging for them which caused that they did not use it when they played the role of a spider. Comparing and contrasting the attempts with the number of learners making mistakes it can be seen that there was at least one learner during each round who made a mistake while, in some cases, two children provided an incorrect response.

When looking at the results of second game it can be seen that, learners made a progress. The number of attempts was a bit higher while, at the same time, the number of mistakes lowered from 63% to 38%. In it necessary to note, at this point that the number of times that particular colours were processed was identical due of use of colourful sheet.
When the results of third game were considered 21% of learners made mistakes that mean the progress of over 40%, from 63% to 21%. Nevertheless, the dynamic character of the game itself still caused that some children had problems with providing correct responses by touching the proper colour on the board used.

![Number of children making mistakes. Group A](image)

**Figure 2.** Number of children making mistakes. Group A

Focusing on the results of group B, it needs to be highlighted that the overall number of children in this group was lower in comparison with the previous group (four children fewer). As a result, the 12 cases of mistakes made by learners account for a greater overall percentage of incorrect answers reaching 60% of incorrect answers of all the responses provided by the subjects. It can be seen that the number of attempts or rounds was a bit higher while the number of mistakes dropped. It needs to be noticed that the percentage of incorrect responses for group B dropped from 60% to 21%. That mean the progress of 35%. This time learners did not confuse the colours, but they also had problems with pronouncing the word purple. As a result, this colour did not appear often when learners were supposed to come up with the colours themselves. It could also be noticed that before learners came up with a response to the stimulus (a colour pronounced by the teacher or a peer) they looked at the sheet which helped them react quickly and come up with a correct response.

At this point, the attention can be shifted to the results collected in the second group. The results demonstrate that, during the first game 60% learners made mistakes and 40 % of learners provided correct answers. The results of the second game based on the use of a colourful sheet display that and 50% of subjects or 10 learners provided correct responses and 50% of subjects made mistakes. The results of the last game in the second group demonstrate that 25% of participants made mistakes and 75% participants provided correct answers.
Considering the last group taking part in the study and the results for the first game shown that 74% of subjects provided correct responses and 26% of subjects provided wrong responses.

According to the results of second game, 39% of learners made mistakes and 61% provided correct responses. When the results of the third game were considered, 26% of participants provided wrong responses.

As far as the results of group C are concerned, the percentage of incorrect responses was higher for the second game based on a colourful sheet but it lowered again to approximately 26% during the third game. As it is shown in figure below.

At this point, it may be useful to look at the results of another tool of study named vocabulary test. In general terms, it can be seen that group A showed the lowest performance as only 13% of children were able to provide all correct answers. Moreover, 21% of children made 2 mistakes while 8% of children managed to provide only three colours which was the lowest score in all three groups. In group B, it was 25% of children while in group C it was 27%. Focusing on children who made only one mistake it accounted for 21% of learners in group A, 35% of children in group B and 23% of children in group C. In this way, children marking either seven or six colours accounted for over 34% of group A, 60% of group B and 50% of group C which seem to be fairly reliable results especially for group B and C.

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marking either seven or six colours accounted for over 34% of group A, 60% of group B and 50% of group C which seem to be fairly reliable results especially for group B and C.

Figure 4. Number of children making mistakes. Group C

Table 5. Test results measuring the effectiveness of games employed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Colours</th>
<th>Number of correct responses in group A</th>
<th>Number of correct responses in group B</th>
<th>Number of correct responses in group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 colours</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 colours</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 colours</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 colours</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 colours</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 colours</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 colour</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final issue to consider are the results of the survey showing which of the three game-based activities children liked the most. Taking even a quick look at the results below it can be noticed that the game based on a colourful sheet was the favourite one in each group. Spider is coming, was the second most entertaining game while the board game was appreciated by much less numerous group of children.

Table 6. Results of a survey showing which game children liked the most in each group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the game</th>
<th>Number of children in group A</th>
<th>Number of children in group B</th>
<th>Number of children in group C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spider is coming</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colourful sheet</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board game</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking an alternative view on these results it is also possible to look at the overall results in percentage showing how many children in all three groups considered particular game most entertaining. As far as results of the survey are concerned 40% of learners chose second game, 39% considered the first game most entertaining and 21% opted for the board game.

Figure 5. Number of learners in percentage in all groups together marking particular game as most entertaining.

Summarizing, it can be seen that a general tendency is that the second game was the most entertaining for children.

3.5. Discussion of the results

As it is shown in the Figure 2, and 3 the number of mistakes of group A and B dropped progressively. It needs to be noticed that in second game learners quickly developed
a visual-auditory association between the way the colour is pronounced and the way it looked like. This shows that learners already made some progress or that they got used to the form of the activity and were able to focus better on the input processed. The lower number of mistakes made by children could also be caused by the fact that the third game was yet another way of processing the same amount of input. As a result the words referring to colours were not new for the children anymore. Nevertheless, the dynamic character of the game itself still caused that some children had problems with providing correct responses by touching the proper colour on the board used. It can also be mentioned that some students made mistakes almost each time while others came up with occasional mistakes. This time, it can be noticed that learners were absorbed with the game itself which seemed to have affected their concentration as they were confusing yellow with green, for example. At the same time, pronunciation of purple was a bit challenging for them which caused that they did not use it when they played the role of a spider. However, the number of mistakes was also lower which is a positive tendency.

Considering group C comparing the results with the other two groups it appears that this group managed to handle the first game (Spider is coming) with the greatest effectiveness as the number of mistakes made by learners was very low considering the number of learners in group (23 learners) and the number of attempts. However, there might be various reasons for this such as, for example, a limited number of colours processed by learners as they came up with only 4 out of seven colours. This means that twelve situations in which one of the learners was a spider included almost exclusively green, yellow, pink and blue. Thus, the colours which learners did not memorize fully from the very beginning were not mentioned by them. The number of mistakes was lower but, taking a closer look at the entire situation, it seems that this group could not memorize all seven colours equally well which lowers the effectiveness of the game as a whole. Similarly to the first two groups, yet another issue to consider is the attempts and mistakes in the other two games.

This showed that children’s distraction negatively affected the organization of the entire task as well as its effectiveness as learners confused green with yellow, blue with purple and the last one additionally caused them some trouble with pronunciation.

The last game of group C demonstrated that learners were much more focused on the game, which facilitated its overall management. This also reflected positively on acquisition of L2 vocabulary. This indicates that it is important to adjust the game to children’s characteristics. Moreover, it might also show that much depends on a variety of variables such as learners’ frame of mind, concentration, etc. In fact, the number of learners in a group and the number of rounds made during a given game also had some influence on the percentage of mistakes generated. In general terms, though, it can be seen that with each next game employed children were more successful with handling L2 words.

Further data focusing on the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary with the use of games employed in the study present the results of the test conducted. It has already been mentioned that the test was taken by all three groups in the same form but the order in which the colours were used differed. As far as the results of the test are concerned almost all learners known at least four names of colours and were able to make visual association between the way the colour is pronounced and the way it looked like.

The results of the last instrument of study show that there was no correlation between learners’ success at responding to colours and the degree to which they liked the game. The
entertaining part is somewhat independent from how skilful children were at handling the L2 content during the game. This, at least, can be noticed examining the limited data obtained.

The view on games and the approach showed by children might also stem from a variety of other factors shaping overall preferences as well as those shaping learners’ frame of mind on a particular day. This indicates the unstable character of young learners’ classroom for conducting studies and experiments.

3.6. Weaknesses of the study

The results show that using game-based activities to teach vocabulary affect children SLA, however a survey part can be regarded as unreliable source of information because of lability in cognitive structure of young learners. Moreover, children could chose the same answer as their classmates. The participants of the study were very young learners and as it shown they distracted easily, also the group was too small to obtain fully reliable data, however the data obtained did provide some insight into the effectiveness of games used.

The study was conducted by a teacher within experience in conducting such kind of study, thus the ideas for games-activities based lessons could not be perfect examples of that type of lessons.

3.7. Pedagogical implications

As far as the effectiveness of teaching brought by particular games is concerned the foreign language teachers should remember that the choice of game-based activity is crucial. As it is shown every group of learners is unique, and teachers should use appropriate activities to teach them. The teachers should make sure that the learners are able to play a game chosen. It is recommended to teacher to choose a game in which as many children as possible can take part. It is essential that teacher care if all learners are engaged sufficiently as active participants of the game.

The next hint concerns entertaining character of games. It is a good idea to conduct a survey after games and learnt about preferences of each group. Additionally, teachers can make use of it in favour of learners because it may help them in planning lessons. Not every game appeals to every learner, therefore, the teachers should have a sound repertoire of games at their disposal. It is recommended neither to play a game so long, nor to play the same game too frequently. Moreover, games make language classes more attractive and relaxing.

Another issue to keep in mind is that the relationship between the effectiveness of teaching and the level to which learners considered a given game entertaining. The teachers should combine preferences of groups and effectiveness of teaching. Young learners are very susceptible to atmosphere of lessons and become disappointed and discouraged very easily. The teacher task is to create friendly conditions in which children’s characteristic features (energy, joy, readiness to play) can be best used.

The final issue to bear in mind is that each game used did not require any extensive preparations on the part of the teacher. It is natural that preparation of a game takes a bit more time since teaching children generally requires creativity and devotion. Nevertheless, the game used required rather standard preparations which means that they can be used on a daily basis for exploring a variety of colours, numbers, shapes of other lexical items which can be
taught at this basic level. Their effectiveness and entertaining character can, therefore, be taken advantage of in foreign language instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

Games as the activities for teaching elements of foreign language and especially vocabulary are already well explored so their potential is, in fact, well-known. It needs to be noticed that games are widespread and appreciated activity in young learners teaching.

Additionally, the scientific perspectives on teaching English vocabulary are complex and still developing. Notion of word and vocabulary, omnipresent in this paper, has numberless definitions. Theory of vocabulary acquisition is embedded in class teaching practices and teachers play a significant role while teaching English vocabulary to young learners.

However, it is still important to explore various possibilities and see personally how children react to a particular game, what they might like about it and what particular challenges might emerge on the way. Each group of learners is different which might also be noticeable on the effectiveness of games or the level to which learners actually liked a particular lesson.

In fact the results of the study obtained showed that children, did have various views on how entertaining the games were. However, the study had its own weaknesses, the data obtained did provide some insight into the effectiveness of games used and their enjoyable character but, of course it cannot be used as a fully reliable source of reference because of its limited character and particular weaknesses of the study. It can, though, be used as a background and an incentive for further exploration of this thematic area modifying the conditions of research which might generate more reliable results.
Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2
Appendix 3

Observation sheet

1. Spider is coming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rounds of the game/attempts</th>
<th>Number of mistakes</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

2. Colourful sheet

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rounds of the game/attempts</th>
<th>Number of mistakes</th>
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<tbody>
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3. Board game

<table>
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<th>Number of mistakes</th>
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Appendix 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colours – test</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Date</th>
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STRESZCZENIE


Praca kończy się wnioskami na temat części teoretycznej i praktycznej.

Słowa kluczowe: gry, nauczaniu języka angielskiego, uczniowie młodzi, słownictwo, definicja słownictwa, definicja słowa, funkcje gier, podział gier