ORIGINAL PAPER

Didactic Game in the Teaching Process

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Abstract:
The didactic game is an attractive activity in a lively, humorous and motivating atmosphere where the teacher and students carry out instructive-educational tasks. This prevents fatigue and monotony in language classes. We use educational games as a method to reinforce knowledge, whether it's spelling, grammar or vocabulary. The games maintain the feeling of challenge – a mix of skill, difficulty and continuous feedback. This activity is part of the action-based approach to the teaching/learning process, as described: learning by doing.

During language classes, role-play exercises help the teacher in creating concrete communication situations, to facilitate the transmission of information. Students are actors who play specific roles to develop their linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. Role-playing can be used in language classes motivating students to express themselves in a language other than their native language and by encouraging to interact with their classmates. Teaching must always be based on a specific context, always in accordance with the communication needs of the students, favoring the vocabulary and the communicative approach. When a teacher engages his students by his way of teaching his discipline, we say that he "has method," not particularly referring to a specific method, but simply to the totality of his knowledge and skill, to the way in which the teacher manages to apply the theoretical methods in teaching practice. There is no perfect teaching method, be it traditional or modern. There are ways to apply one or more teaching methods to suit students' needs, potential, aptitudes and abilities.

Keywords: *didactic game, teaching method, traditional, modern.*

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Introduction

We live in complicated times, marked by instability and change. There are challenges that extend beyond school boundaries, such as the Covid pandemic, online and digital teaching. First of all, formulas such as online or hybrid courses, starting from 2020 and up to now, have led to a reduction in student motivation in terms of learning. And, as a consequence, it was necessary for teachers to renew their methods and find new ways to interact with students. It is obvious that we must not neglect students' dependence on technology, which makes them impatient and rebellious, and develops their ability to operate with several things simultaneously (multitasking). All these changes converge towards increasing pressure on teachers who have to deal with the unpredictability because students differ from one series to another, from one faculty to another, according to specialization. Professors' classroom experiences with students are under the sign of renewal and adaptation.

Teachers must be agile and spontaneous because interaction with students requires *hic et nunc* action. But what could be the tool in the immediate vicinity of the teacher, which would respond to these increasing pressures? The answers are multiple, but the focus is on teaching approaches and methods. The teacher must have a multitude of methods, processes and techniques to use carefully, while adapting them to the specifics of each class and varying them when he feels it is necessary, because that variety, together with progress and challenge represents one of the basic conditions of effective teaching. It is said that the teacher must not only be a good connoisseur of his own discipline, but he must know how to transmit his own knowledge to his students and adapt it according to their needs and intellectual potential.

According Stoian, "although it is true that in the learning process, intelligence plays a major role, we as teachers should not make differences between students". (Stoian, 2023:93)

Didactic theorists have classified foreign language teaching methods into four categories: 1. Informative-participatory methods (dialogue, conversation, demonstration, text commentary); 2. Informative-non-participatory methods (explanation, presentation, story); 3. Formative-participatory methods (action, game, research, discovery); 4. Formative-non-participatory methods (exercises, algorithm).

These methods refer to the transmission of information (conversation, approach to texts, solving exercises), which allow students to explore individually or in teams, or which put students in various life situations, such as role-playing (at the market , at the theater, at the cinema, at the airport, at a restaurant, at a meeting, at a job interview, at the town hall, at the dentist, visiting grandparents or parents, etc).

Among the most used methods are exercises, conversation, demonstration, didactic play and learning through play. At any age, man loves to play, and through play, man manages to learn information that he can retain more easily.

The didactic game is useful both at school and at university. Role-playing games have multiple benefits, they are very easily adaptable according to age, environment, needs and intellectual abilities. Teachers must adapt didactic games

according to the potential of their students, but also according to the level of the foreign language, the needs of the students and their culture.

According Bălănescu, "coming from various countries around the globe, the students have different nationalities, different linguistic, cultural, social, ethnic, religious backgrounds". (Bălănescu, 2022:35)

Didactic game
The didactic game is an attractive activity in a lively, humorous and motivating atmosphere in which the teacher and students carry out instructive-educational tasks.
This is the element that prevents the appearance of fatigue and monotony in foreign language classes.

According Farber "teachers, most of the time, use didactic games at the beginning of lessons, as an introduction. Didactic games are used less during lessons involving the acquisition of new knowledge set". (Farber, 2019:270)

We use educational games as a method to reinforce knowledge, whether it's spelling, grammar or vocabulary. For the younger generation, puzzles, puzzle games, crosswords and games played with visual support are the fascination of the moment.
In today's times, we can use didactic games that are motivating and informative, with rich vocabulary, with various life situations.
This didactic action is based on teacher-student cooperation.
At the end of the didactic game, triumph will go to both of them, but (we have a big *but* here) the teacher only wins if the student wins. The conditions of the game are set by the potential of the student: he is the one who must be the winner, through his skills, through his own intellectual forces, he must acquire knowledge himself.
The teacher is responsible for checking whether the student has really mastered the subject, whether he has understood what he has learned and whether he is able to use the acquired knowledge.

According Cuq, "the advantage of the game is intrinsic motivation, it allows students to "use all their communicative resources in a collaborative and creative way".(Cuq, 2003:160)

The games maintain a sense of challenge – a mix of skill, difficulty and continuous feedback. This activity is part of the action-based approach to the teaching/learning process as described: learning by doing.

The goal of learning is not only to acquire skills, but according Weiss is "to act and react appropriately in different communication situations or in areas where they will have to use the foreign language". (Weiss, 2002:7)

To start a game sequence, it is necessary to know your target audience well and then try to answer some questions aimed at how to use it.
There are six factors to consider:
1. The objective of the game: the skills we want to develop (oral/written production; oral/written comprehension; grammar, vocabulary);

2. Number of students in the group – to decide whether the game will be individual or team;

3. The level of the group and the personality of the students: some will be open to the game, others less receptive, and the rules of the game must be adapted to the profile and specialization of the students;

4. The time available to practice the game: there are some that require more explanations and a warm-up round, others in which the teacher will have to unlock the reluctant groups, relax them and only then get them used to the idea of the didactic game;

5. The available space: the size of the classroom, if the students' desks or chairs are fixed mobile – all these influence the movement of students, their gestures and their way of acting;

6. Involvement of the teacher in the game: his participation in the game, his reactions, facial expression guide the game and simplify the challenge.

Moreover, the didactic game succeeds in breaking down the barriers and removes the stage fright of the learners, and in this way they will be able to highlight their skills and emotions better.

The role play was created as a psychotherapeutic method by Jacob L. Moreno in the early 20th century, who used dramatic play to develop spontaneity in his subjects.

From the point of view of educational use, the didactic game is a creative-interactive method based on the direct or indirect experience of students, which takes place by considering a scenario or roles inspired by reality or imagination. It is about the technique of simulating real trials, of dramatization in the form of a game that explores certain situations or social relationships.

According Burtea-Cioroianu "social and cultural integration is considered today more and more as a process of communicative integration, in which the degree of tolerance towards certain groups increases by initiating certain linguistic and discursive practices". (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2022:138)

Depending on the behavior required by the role played, there are four types of role play: dramatization (improvising behaviors in a given situation); training, with the aim of forming specific skills (to appear at an interview, for example); acquiring certain roles with a variety of specific behaviors (experiencing a profession); transposition into a real, literary or imaginary character, which helps the teacher to assess students' knowledge of the indicated character.

During foreign language classes, these role-playing games help the teacher to create concrete communication situations to facilitate the release of words. Students are actors who play specific roles to develop their linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills. They are encouraged to express themselves, react to unexpected situations and interact with their peers in the target language. Students should be encouraged. Teachers must say that they are allowed to make mistakes because only in this way, they can learn a foreign language correctly and coherently.

According Chirițescu, "we must realize that we are imperfect and we must fight to defeat our fears. It is true that we can all control our emotions. We need to try to control our vulnerabilities". (Chirițescu, 2013:29)

Didactic Game in the Teaching Process

Among the role-playing games that we offer in foreign language classes, we give as examples: on the phone (we suggest a friend to go to the cinema), at the store, at a culinary competition (the student explains what he prepared: the appetizer, the main course, the dessert and method of preparation: ingredients, equipment, procedure), the interview.

Role-playing games are educational recreational games that require time and patience on the part of both the teacher and the students.

Their advantage is represented by the use of a foreign language without the existence of a language barrier. All we need is a good mood and the rules of the game.

Planning the game will make it better received by the students and bring success to the activity.

Let's follow the stages of integration in the didactic game:

1. Describe the situation we will address!
2. Secure the materials you will need to complete the tasks!
3. Decide on the vocabulary used!
4. Exemplify the situation in context!
5. Make activity balance!

To make the games more interesting, various props related to the topic can be used, and as vocabulary prepared for the game situation, it will be discussed in class, while adding new words to the list.

According Lăpădat&Lăpădat "it is indeed evident that a healthy society demands strong dialogue and an exploration of relevant topics". (Lăpădat&Lăpădat, 2022:148)

For small group work, students have the opportunity to choose their partners to be on the same team with.

The teacher will help them prepare the didactic game, but it is recommended that, during the performance, they do not immediately correct errors related to the didactic game itself, but only grammatical mistakes.

The conclusions will be discussed at the end, and the teacher's recommendations should preferably be written in their notebook by the students. In this way, students will have the opportunity to review at any time both the rules of the didactic game they played, as well as any difficulties they had, and how to avoid them in the future.

Types of didactic games

We will give examples of some didactic games preferred by students.

Icebreaker games bring together a complex array of elements, incorporating simple processes and independent methods. Trying to classify them, didacticians talk about three categories of icebreaker games: collaborative and non-competitive exercises, competitive games whose goal is to win, and simulation games. Considered as short interaction activities before the start of the lesson, these games give students a little relaxation and enough energy and motivation to leave their comfort zone and adapt to start the actual activity. Drawing attention to what is to come and making the transition to the new targeted content is an intrinsic value of icebreaker games that can be addressed whenever we feel the need to pique learners' interest and refresh their minds or combat "social laziness". For the teacher, who integrates this activity into the foreign

language class, it is easier to assess the language level of the students and build group cohesion.

For a beginner level, ice breaker activities should be simple without much explanation (the ball game, getting to know us: the teacher says his name and then throws the ball to a student while saying his first name, the bingo game , etc.).

From A2 level, the games are formulated as language sessions to work on oral expression: coat of arms (on a sheet of paper, each student creates his own coat of arms on the theme defined by the teacher. The objective is not to write complicated sentences, but developing ideas orally, brainstorming, speed dating (the act of telling a story) are all possibilities to attract students' attention.

Story cubes are a great way to mix up your classroom conversation by adding a little spontaneity to the questions you ask. Teachers and students can create conversation cubes that include questions that cover everything from the student's goals to what they already know about a particular topic. When students roll the cubes, they can answer the question, tell a fact about themselves, a goal they have, or something they learned last year, depending on what is written on the faces of the cube.

It is preferred that conversation cubes are used at the beginning of a new chapter. This method provides compliance and stimulation in foreign language classes. Used frequently, the method can be effective in speaking.

Brainstorming is work done in a group that aims to solve a clearly defined problem.

The teacher proposes a topic to the students and then, using the technique of brainstorming, they express their opinions on it. The activity is carried out through collaboration between team members.

Brainstorming is a method that teams use to generate ideas to solve clearly defined problems. Under controlled conditions and in a free-thinking environment, teams approach a problem by asking questions like "How could we do…"

They produce a wide range of ideas and make connections between them to find potential solutions.

The usefulness of this didactic game in large groups is clear, because each individual student can propose one or more ideas, and in the end, the most effective solution can be found.

Action learning belongs to the active pedagogy of role-plays and simulations for beginners and intermediates and dramatizations for advanced ones. This type of method, which "plays theater" and uses everyday events, makes speaking much easier. These situations mobilize language skills by practicing exchanges between learners while maintaining motivation. What must be emphasized is the fact that the more expressive an action of this kind is, the richer the linguistic exploitation, it requires a lot of physical and intellectual dynamism on the part of the actors and has an important role in strengthening interpersonal relations.

Group interaction of "actors", development of social and civic competence of students - are some of the advantages of this method. The method requires creativity from the members of the teams involved in the didactic game.

According Scorțan "These positive and activating emotions promote the use of cognitive strategies that are more beneficial for learning. They promote both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. They promote self-regulation of learning.

They are linked to a greater effort provided as well as greater attentional resources allocated to the task". (Scorțan, 2022:148)

Drama technique as a didactic game

This technique is specifically used by teachers who are familiar with the idea of drama modules in foreign language classes. The road that leads the dramatic art to the teaching of a foreign language is a winding one and loaded with specialized techniques and ideas.

Usually, role-playing games are used to prepare students for communication situations in the target language, situations that they often find in everyday life.

According Chirițescu, "the theater represents a real support facilitating the acquisition of new information about the traditions and history of a people by integrating them in foreign language classes. The motivation of approaching the roots of a language and the traditions and history of a people is a concept on the one hand intrinsic that depends on the desire of each individual to study, and on the other hand extrinsic being caused by an external force that can be embodied by the teacher which has the capacity to induce students to love theater and to be aware of its importance in learning a foreign language". (Chirițescu, 2022:6-7)

The exercise is the way to learn about the language system, to understand how it works in order to be able to apply it to the foreign language class.

Exercises develop intellectual skills and help to better order mental operations.

During the lesson, the teacher must alternate between group exercises and individual exercises, to make the foreign language lesson more dynamic.

Depending on the grammatical problem, on a sentence or on a text, the exercises are classified into:

- cognitive exercises (explanation, identification, analysis), directed exercises, semi-directed exercises, application exercises on the structure of a sentence (contracting, transformation, correction);

- creativity exercises (compose, invent, imagine).

The exercise, in whatever form it appears – written, audio, online – is an interactive and relaxing activity that promotes writing and maintains students' foreign language level.

The demonstration in the foreign language class represents the teaching/learning process using traditional (tablets, markers, chalk/colored marker) or modern (short films, videos) or authentic documents (cooking recipes, press articles, culture and civilization texts).

In this way, students learn to communicate faster and are in direct contact with authentic interactions. Furthermore, access to information is easier and learners' interest increases when they work in this efficient way.

Discovery learning method is made possible by fun pictures that depict adventures, projects or journeys. The joy of learning is triggered by approaching these games and non-formal activities such as visits to the library.

Knowledge transfer occurs through discovery, and the goal is to make the student enjoy learning and improve what he has learned by applying it to different situations.

Based on three stages of cognitive development, this type of method develops the ability to learn to learn, but also the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship.

The first of the stages, the inactive stage, captures the manipulation of objects, the imitation of gestures, the pronunciation of words or a sports movement. All this allows students to be dynamic and not get bored during classes.

The purpose of the main stage is to read pictures. Observing and interpreting images qualitatively or quantitatively develops oral communication skills, especially imagination and critical thinking.

The last is the symbolic stage which deals with concepts and the capacity to conceptualize. Through this stage, students are stimulated by activities of associating phenomena with words. This is the stage of representation where each object has its mental image.

The symbolic stage takes into account the semiotic approach, it is the system of signs that is based on the signifier/signified dichotomy, the first with symbol value, the second considered as a preconcept.

During discovery learning, the child plays the role of facilitator and the teacher is the mediator who makes the environment conducive to his students, who makes them find pleasure in discovery and who helps them connect the knowledge they possess with discoveries. The student expresses himself in the foreign language, thinks and becomes aware of what is happening around him. He develops his research skills, which facilitates better understanding and easier memorization.

If the above methods use the visual and auditory faculties, a new method called *multisensory activation* is being tested around the world and facilitates learning by using the five senses. Known in the specialized literature as VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile), this method is based on the idea that students learn better when information is presented in different sensory modalities.

The advantages of this method are appreciated for all age levels, as the ability of the human being is part of the possibility of learning with the whole body coordinated by a multisensory brain.

As examples of activities for this approach, there are some for each sensory modality.

> According Turkington, students are encouraged to "see the words (visual), hear the words (auditory), write the words with their fingers in the air (kinesthetic), and leave a trace of the word on a surface with some texture (tactile)". (Turkington at el., 2006:234)

For visual stimulation we use images, drawings, posters, colored pencils with which we underline parts of sentences in the texts. Songs, mini-stories, word games are used for auditory stimulation, and movements related to didactic tasks are specific to kinesthetic simulations.

The snowball method is an interactive technique for developing critical thinking. As its name suggests, it describes how knowledge assimilation takes place – like rolling a snowball that gets bigger and bigger: everything starts with an information/observation/question that generates new ideas/opinions thanks to cooperation with students and thanks to discussions /conversations that take place in the classroom.

Didactic Game in the Teaching Process

This technique can be launched during a new activity because it is easy to do. Students are placed in a reflection process and must reach a consensus of ideas together.

The snowball method allows students to express their opinions in a debating setting, including in their mother tongue. They need to be mobilized by the teacher, put aside frustration and generate ideas, discuss and talk. This method can be applied inclusively in the context of a descriptive, literary or informative text. The snowball method can also be used in a grammar problem.

If we take, for example, a text about the villages of France, we can outline some tasks after reading the text:

1. Specify three ideas from the text about the villages of France; 2. Mention three new words you encountered in the text; 3. Formulate three questions related to the text, the answer to which can be seen in the sentences; 4. Specify the picture in the book that helped you the most in understanding the text; 5. What do you think about the usefulness of the information in the text?

After reading the text, students are grouped into pairs of four and begin to discuss the answers. At the end, each group's answers will be discussed with the whole class, and the teacher will moderate the discussions.

Among the advantages of this method, we mention the involvement of the whole class in the activity, cooperative learning, flexible and attractive for all students; the systematization of information and the development of communicative competence. But at the same time, there is also the disadvantage that this method takes up too much time, so the teacher must be careful about time management in the foreign language class.

According Bărbuceanu "allowing students this flexibility transforms them from passive learners into active ones, from reproducers of information to producer of information, from depended learner to selfdirected one, from individual learner to cooperative one". (Bărbuceanu, 2022:244)

Collective discussion involves the organized exchange of ideas, impressions, information and criticism, the purpose of which is to deepen or study a notion, concept or theory.

Oral expression is the targeted skill of this work technique that explores creativity. The teacher can organize the discussion in small groups (each team gets a different approach to the topic) or in a large group (the goal is for the whole class to express their views on the proposed content).

The role of the teacher in these discussions defines their types and there are at least three: directed discussion – the teacher is active and direct; structured discussion – the teacher allows the students to lead the discussion, taking into account the established rules; open discussion – students lead the discussion.

According Bărbuceanu "today's teachers must learn to communicate in the language and style of their students, re-thinking old-style teaching in education in the digital age, where educators often find themselves as immigrants trying to cope with the digital natives that are no longer engaged with chalk and blackboard and one educational flow from the teacher to the student". (Bărbuceanu, 2020:136)

Debate-style discussions encourage teamwork and are a reference tool for critical thinking. But for any kind of discussion you need preparation before the lesson, the teacher and students need to do research to avoid downtime and a void of ideas.

In order for the dialogue to be instructive, theorists mention four necessary conditions for didactic coherence: the nature of the questions; focusing on the learning objective, promoted through dialogue; encouraging cognitive skills; guidance and teacher training. The plan of questions that trigger the discussion should be developed based on different points of view and well-reasoned arguments.

Conclusions

Any method of teaching a foreign language justifies its effectiveness due to a good systematization of learning: creating or looking for diverse, dynamic and sufficiently repetitive activities for students to assimilate language structures and vocabulary, with the aim of using them orally and in writing. Always teaching in context, following the communication needs of the audience, means promoting the vocabulary of a foreign language and, subsequently, the communicative approach.

When a teacher conquers his students with the discipline he teaches, we say, and the expression is Romanian, that he "has a method", without specifying any particular method - be it the expository, the affirmative, the active or the discovery method, but purely and simply summarizing his knowledge, interpersonal skills and know-how in pedagogy and teaching that he applies to foreign language classes.

Each teacher organizes his foreign language classes taking into account several factors - the needs of the students, the intellectual potential of the students, the number of hours he has allocated for the foreign language course, the possibility of using one or more of the methods specified above.

Whatever is the teaching method or methods used in foreign language classes, is necessary a very good collaboration between the teacher and his students, a mutual understanding, a special desire to learn on the part of the students.

Authors' Contributions:
The authors contributed equally to this work.

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