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**The role of play in early English language learning in primary
grades 3 and 4**

**Uloga igre u ranom učenju engleskog jezika u trećem i četvrtom
razredu osnovne škole**

Završni magistarski rad

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine whether and to what extent are didactic games present in teaching English in 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school as well as to examine whether English teachers are willing to implement didactic games into their classes and what are the challenges that they might face when trying to do so. Apart from that, the purpose was to examine to what extent schoolbooks being used are motivating English teachers to implement didactic games into English classes. Benefits and challenges of implementation of didactic games into English classes are presented as well as several examples of different types of games.

Quantitative and qualitative methods of research were applied. The data was gathered by means of students' poll, teachers' questionnaire and schoolbook analysis. The results confirmed hypotheses and revealed that both teachers and students enjoy using didactic games in English classes and that teachers use them as much as possible. When it comes to schoolbook analysis it has been revealed that analyzed schoolbooks offer varieties of games as well as elements of games that could be successfully implemented into the classroom. It can be concluded that games can be really beneficial for teaching students of third and fourth grade of elementary school.

1. INTRODUCTION

"The beginning is the most important part of the work."

Plato

Every beginning is difficult, and every change that we face will probably at first scare us but soon after we will realize it is not that scary and that we are bold enough to move on. It is important that we start; otherwise, we won't do anything. Children are really sensitive; every new beginning and change is difficult and stressful for them. First school years can be really difficult for them, new environment, new teachers, new classmates, etc, it all affects children in one way or another. Learning a foreign language is another stressful task for them because it is something unknown, yet it doesn't have to be that way. Our task as language teachers is to create a nice environment for learning that will be stress-free and comfortable for students as well as for teachers. We should motivate and inspire our students to love English language from an early age because a good foundation is a key to success. Children like to play, they spend most of their time playing at home, and if we can enable them to continue playing in school; we will help them to learn something new unconsciously in an enjoyable atmosphere. Using games in the school context has many benefits; it can be useful for students and for teachers. There are many positive sides of implementing games into English classes, and in this paper, we deal with some of them. On the other hand, there are some challenging aspects of including games into the classroom, so it is important to mention it as well.

In the second chapter of this paper characteristics of young learners are mentioned. More specifically the chapter deals with developmental characteristics of 9 and 10 years old children. There are many theories that tried to explain children development and its relation with first and second language acquisition. The paper further deals with constructivism, social constructivism, behaviorism, innatism and Stephen Krashen's "monitor model".

Children are unique learners, some of them learn faster while others might acquire and learn some things at a slower pace. As language teachers, we must be aware of it. Individual differences play an important role in first or second language acquisition, so chapter three of

this paper was dedicated to individual differences such as language aptitude, motivation, multiple intelligence and, learning styles.

In the fourth chapter, the characteristics of play and play-based learning are mentioned. Play represents an important part of children's mental and physical development so adults should stop seeing play as something that children do for fun and entertainment. It is far more serious and important for children. In this chapter characteristics of good games will be mentioned together with benefits and challenges of game implementation into the classroom. Also, the role of the teacher is really important in choosing the right game, so it will be discussed in this chapter. Many factors should be observed before choosing a game for the classroom so some basic guidelines on how to choose the right game will be given in this chapter as well. Further, the chapter deals with typical types of games. The games are divided according to four macro skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Also, grammar and vocabulary games will be briefly mentioned. For each type of game one example of the game is given.

Chapter five is concerned with the study that was conducted in two schools in Breza. The study is divided into three parts: students' poll, teachers' questionnaire, and schoolbook analysis. Two schoolbooks, for 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school are analyzed in order to see if they offer enough games or games elements for successful game implementation in the classroom. Also, two teachers in two schools were given a questionnaire in order to see what their opinion about educational games is, and students were asked to complete the poll for the same purpose.

When it comes to the relevance of the study, the finding of this study will benefit the future teachers, make contributions to further researches dealing with the topic of the role of play in early language learning in primary grades 3 and 4, and hopefully improve the educational system in our country. Although a lot of research has been done in this matter on the international level, this topic has not been researched enough in our country and the full potential of the games' implementation into the classrooms has yet to be fully recognized.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG LEARNERS

There is no human that is the same. A lot of factors can influence the way children develop and acquire a first or second language. It is of the crucial importance to make a link between children's development and language learning. In order to understand how children acquire language first we must understand their characteristics and stages of their development. Jean Piaget was a famous child psychologist, representative of constructivism; he suggested that all children construct knowledge by themselves by actively making sense of the world around them. According to Piaget, there are four stages of development that all children go through. First is sensori-motor stage (from birth to two years of age), pre-operational stage (from two to seven years of age), concrete operational stage (from seven to eleven years of age) and formal operational stage (from eleven years onwards). Since the focus of this paper is school children in third and fourth grade, for us it is interesting to observe concrete operational stage. Piaget asserted that children at this phase begin to resemble "logical" adult-like thinking. So it means that they are able to apply logical reasoning in several areas of the knowledge at the same time, however this ability is restricted to the immediate context, they are still unable to generalize their understanding. (Pinter, 2006).

It is very important to be aware of the phrases that children go through in order to understand their abilities at a certain age, and in order to give them tasks that are appropriate for their levels of cognitive, social and emotional development. As it was already stated above children make sense of their environment by actively participating and making sense of things around them. Play can be a very good way to explore the world around them, because through games they learn indirectly. They are actually not aware that they are learning, they find it fun and interesting and it increases their motivation. However, we should be very careful when choosing the right game for a certain age, because if we give them an activity that is too easy for them they will probably lose interest very soon; on the other hand if the activity is too difficult they won't be motivated to work more. Piaget's contemporary Lev Vygotsky was representative of social constructivism, a theory of children's development which emphasizes the social side of development while constructivists emphasized the biological basis of the development.

”The social environment, the cultural context, and in particular the influence of peers, teachers and parents engaged in interactions with children are also major sources of learning and development.” (Pinter, 2006, p. 10)

Vygotsky came up with the concept of “zone of proximal development”. According to this concept there is a “zone” between the knowledge that a child already possesses and potential knowledge that children can achieve with the help of an adult or more knowledgeable peer. The ZDP concept is very important for teachers, because we are those who will be a bridge between these two zones, so we should be really careful in order not to spoon-feed our students with all information, but to just give them enough hints to motivate them to solve the problem by themselves. Play is a great way to motivate children to keep working without giving them too many hints. Teachers are well aware of the fact that children of this age have a shorter attention span than adult learners, however if we come up with interesting activities children will be engaged in the activities and on that way through active learning they will learn far more.

2.1 Developmental characteristics of children ages 9 and 10

Children at this age are not just experiencing physical change but also cognitive, emotional and social changes. It is of crucial importance to closely observe these changes, in order to be able to understand the processes that they go through in their development, and in order to choose right approaches and activities for them. The following table presents changes that are specific for this age group:

Physical changes	Social changes	Emotional changes	Intellectual changes
They experience a steady increase in large muscle development, strength, balance, and coordination	They generally see adults as authority	They are accepting parent/family beliefs	Their academic abilities vary greatly
They are very active, with a lot of energy	They follow rules out of respect for authority	They admire and imitate older youth	They have an increased attention span, but many have interests which change rapidly
There will be different maturation rates between the sexes; girls will tend to mature faster than boys	They are loyal to groups, clubs, gangs, etc	They are developing decision-making skills	They are learning to use good judgment

They will experience an increase in small muscle coordination	They approach solving problems with a negotiating style, compromising with peers	They find comparisons with others difficult to process	They have interests in collections and hobbies
	They enjoy code languages and passwords	They are beginning to question authority	They judge ideas in absolutes, right or wrong not much tolerance for middle ground
	They identify with individuals of the same gender	They need involvement with caring adult	
	They prefer to work in groups in cooperative activities		

(Stewart, 2013)

Table 1. Developmental characteristics of 9-11- year- olds.

As it can be seen on the table above, children of this age go through various changes that can largely affect their success in school. Teachers should be really careful in choosing the right activities for this particular age because students at this age can be really sensitive and still trying to understand the processes that they are going through. Bearing in mind the characteristics mentioned in the table above; Stewart (2013) suggests the following pieces of advice:

Physical implications:

- Plan activities that allow children to move about;
- Vary activities - general physical activities are important; we shouldn't rely just on sports;
- Also, we should avoid competitions between genders.

Social implications:

- Clarify and enforce reasonable limits;
- Plan plenty of time to be with individuals from their same gender,
- Group activities are also very important.

Emotional implications:

- Since students are really sensitive at this age, provide correction quietly, one-on-one;
- Give positive feedback and look for successes;
- Avoid generalized praise;
- Be present at group activities, be visible but in the background;
- Provide a safety net of an adult that will maintain boundaries.

Intellectual implications:

- Youth in this age bracket still very much enjoy “hands-on” activities;
- Help youth form groups/clubs with common interests or hobbies;
- Vary the activities offered to engage rapidly changing interests.

(Stewart, 2013)

Choosing an appropriate activity for our class is never an easy task because we always have to bear in mind physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes that our students are experiencing at that moment. For the experienced teachers bearing in mind all the above mentioned things can be way easier than for novice teachers because they are already familiar with the class and age group that they are working with. However, novice teachers can also be successful; it will just take them more time to choose the right activity.

2.2. How children learn a second language?

For many people nowadays even the first language acquisition is a mystery, and if you are not from the field of linguistics probably you won't be familiar with all processes that are happening in our mind while we are acquiring a first or second language.

“All second language learners, regardless of age, have already acquired at least one language. This prior knowledge may be an advantage in the sense that they have an idea how languages work. On the other hand, knowledge of the other languages can lead learners to make incorrect guesses about how the second language works, and this may result in errors that first language learners would not make.”(Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 30)

A lot of parents are amazed at how their children learn a foreign language so quickly while for them the same thing is a laborious task. Children have one advantage over us; they don't find learning a second language as hard work or study. For them it is all play, they are having fun and learning something new. Usually, children are willing to try to use a new language; it doesn't matter if their knowledge of the language is quite limited. Adults, on the other hand, find it stressful when they are unable to express themselves clearly in a foreign language. A lot of theories have emerged with the aim of explaining how children acquire a second language. Although they all deal with a language in general, their focus is not play as a device which fosters language learning, they have one thing in common they all promote active participation while learning a second language. The first theory that will be mentioned is behaviorism. The best known proponent of this psychological theory which was popular in the 1940s and 1950s is B.F. Skinner. Behaviorists hypothesize that "when children imitated the language produced by those around them, their attempts to reproduce what they hear received "positive reinforcement"... Thus encouraged by their environment, children would continue to imitate and practice these sounds and patterns until they formed "habits" of correct language use." (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 10) Another theory that aimed explaining how children acquire language is innatist perspective. A representative of this theory was Noam Chomsky, he criticized the behaviorist theory of language acquisition. While behaviorists emphasize imitation and practice as primary processes in the language development, innatists believe "that children are biologically programmed for language and that language develops in the child in just the same way that other biological functions develop"(Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 15). Chomsky believed that:

"Children are born with a specific innate ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system on a basis of the samples of a natural language they are exposed to... This Universal grammar (UG) would prevent child from pursuing all sorts of wrong hypotheses about how language systems might work." (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.15).

When it comes to second language acquisition some linguists believe that UG offers the best perspective from which we can understand second language acquisition as well as first language acquisition. However, other linguists disagree and they believe that second language acquisition has to be explained by some other theory other than Universal Grammar. Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition influenced many theories of second language

acquisition. One of these theories is Stephen Krashen's "monitor model". This model was first presented in the 1970s when there was growing dissatisfaction with language teaching methods based on behaviorism. He described his model through five hypotheses:

1. *The acquisition – learning hypothesis* in which he contrasted learning and acquisition. He believes that children acquire the second language the same way as the first one, without conscious attention to language form. While learning, on the other hand, requires conscious attention to form and learning.

2. *Monitor hypothesis*. A learned system acts as "monitor" making minor changes and polishing what the acquired system has produced.

3. *Natural order hypothesis*. Second language acquisition in the same way as the first language acquisition unfolds in a predictable sequence.

4. *Input hypothesis*. L2 takes place when a learner understands the forms that are $i+1$, which means just little more complicated than the current state of learner's interknowledge.

5. *Affective filter hypothesis*. Affective filter (feelings, emotions, affective states, etc) is some kind of barrier which prevents learners from acquiring the second language.

Although Krashen's model has been criticized both by psychologist and linguists, his ideas were very influential at the time when second language teaching was in transition from approaches that emphasized learning rules and memorizing dialogues to using language with a focus on meaning. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Language learning and developmental phases that children go through are closely related, so we should never disregard the phase that our students are experiencing at the moment because it can largely affect the very process of learning the given language. For language teachers, it is very important to understand all theories that deal with first and second language acquisition in order to be able to transmit our knowledge. Knowing the language, forms, grammar; etc can be useless if we are not able to transmit that knowledge to our students.

3. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN L2 ACQUISITION

We are all unique; some people like one thing while others prefer something else and so on. We must be aware of the fact that all children are unique as well, they are developing on their own speed and children like some activities more than others. That is not necessarily a bad thing because when children grow up they will probably do different jobs in different fields, so it is good that we have a group of children that have different preferences. However, if you are teaching a class of 30 children who have completely different preferences than it is a challenging task. These individual differences are really important for language teachers in order to be able to choose the right activities for their students. There are many factors that can influence second language acquisition such as language aptitude, motivation, learning strategies, learning styles, etc.

3.1 Language aptitude

It has been suggested that some people possess a natural ability for second language learning. This ability known as language aptitude is believed to be related to general intelligence.

“In educational contexts such as second language learning, ability is often used to mean ‘learning ability,’ that is, the individual’s potential for acquiring new knowledge or skill. Thus, ‘language aptitude’ means exactly the same as ‘language ability’ and is typically meant to denote ‘language learning ability.’”

(Dörnyei, 2003, p. 32)

John Carroll (Ellis, 1997, p.73) made a distinction between four components of language aptitude:

- *Phonemic coding ability* - the ability to identify the sounds of a foreign language so that they can be remembered later. For example, to identify the sound which “th” stands for. This ability is very important from the beginning of language acquisition. When it comes to school context, children who possess this ability will probably have better scores on dictations.

- *Grammatical sensitivity* - the ability to recognize the grammatical functions of words in sentences. Although grammatical ability does not require any knowledge of grammatical terminology, it implies an awareness of grammatical relationships. For example, persons with developed grammatical sensitivity will easily recognize the subject and object of the sentence, etc.
- *Inductive language learning ability*- the ability to identify patterns of correspondence and relations between form and meaning. For example, persons who possess this ability can recognize that in English “to” can denote direction and “at” location.
- The last component of the language aptitude, according to Carroll is *rote learning ability* - the ability to form and remember associations between stimuli. Basically, those with developed rote learning ability will easily remember large amounts of foreign language materials. School children with this ability will easily remember new vocabulary. (Ellis, 1997)

Many aptitude tests have been created in order to identify the relationship between language learning and aptitude. The most widely used are the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) and Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB). It is also important to mention that although these tests showed a relation between performance on tests and performance in second language learning, these studies have been conducted at the time when grammar translation and audio-lingual method were popular in foreign language teaching. Later, when a more communicative approach to teaching was developed, researchers came to believe that the above-mentioned tests were irrelevant to the process of language acquisition. However, in the Canadian language programme for adult learners of French, Marjorie Wesche, students were divided into two groups. One group was placed in a class which corresponds with their learning aptitude while another group was placed in the class that mismatches their learning aptitude. It showed that a higher number of students and teachers were satisfied when they were matched with a compatible learning environment. When it comes to school it is not easy to offer students an environment that will be compatible with their learning aptitudes. However, we as teachers can pay attention to these differences, and be patient with students who are for example learning grammar slower than others, etc. Also, we can use different types of activities in our classes and in that way enable all students to learn at the same speed.

(Ellis, 1997)

3.2 Motivation

Apart from learning aptitude, another important factor that can highly influence our success in second language learning is motivation. Dörnyei (2003) states that “motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate L2 learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process; indeed, all the other factors involved in SLA presuppose motivation to some extent.” (p. 65). When it comes to motivation and school context it is important that we as teachers motivate our students to work, otherwise, even students with the highest abilities won't be successful in second language learning. It is crucial that we choose activities for our students that will motivate them. Sometimes the goal that we want to reach, like proficiency in the second language is a process, and it takes a lot of time and energy to stay motivated and not to give up at any point. The question is how to motivate students to stay motivated and on the right track. Ellis (1997) identifies various kinds of motivation:

- *Instrumental motivation* - learners make efforts to learn a second language for functional reasons, for example in order to pass some examination, to get a place at the university, etc. We have a lot of examples of instrumental motivation in our schools today, where students try to memorize a large amount of information by heart in order to pass the examination; unfortunately that “knowledge” easily fades away. As teachers, we should restrain from fostering students to learn by heart.
- *Integrative motivation* - learners may choose to learn a particular foreign language because they are interested in the people and culture represented by the target language group. Nowadays, we have a lot of immigrants from different countries, some of their children go to our schools and probably after several years they will master our language as well.
- *Resultative motivation* - learners feel motivated for further learning because they have experienced success in learning before. For example, when students get good grades they feel that they have a wind at their backs which makes them more motivated to keep studying even more. However, even the opposite situation is possible, if we experience a constant failure in language learning we may completely lose our motivation. (Ellis, 1997)

For our school context the most important types of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation:

“Intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. People seem to engage in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to extrinsic award... Extrinsically motivated behaviors, on the other hand, are carried out in anticipation of an award from outside and beyond the self.” (Brown, 2001, p. 76)

Although we should strive towards intrinsic motivation, unfortunately, our schools are full of extrinsic motivators such as tests, exams, good grades, etc. In many cases, students study just to please either teachers or parents, not really because of their thirst for knowledge and experience. However, even though the picture looks harsh, and we cannot change our educational system over night, we as individual teachers can bring a change. We can help our students to develop their own learning goals; also we can individualize each lesson and activities in order to make it interesting for each student. Lightbown & Spada (2006) point out several things that teachers can do to increase motivation in the classroom:

Motivating students into the lesson. Teachers should introduce each new activity, especially at the beginning of the class in order to arouse the interest of the students for the activity itself.

Varying the activities, tasks, and materials. Lessons following the same patterns and routines can easily become boring for students, so teachers should choose different activities, task and materials in order to avoid this.

Using co-operative rather than competitive goals. The goal of the teacher should be to promote co-operation in which students will learn from each other and on that way build their self-confidence because each student in a co-operative task has an important role to play. On the other hand, completion may produce the opposite effect on some students so definitely teachers should avoid it.

When it comes to younger learners, it is important to mention that long term goals usually won't motivate them, so we should focus on short term goals. We can easily achieve it by choosing the right games, which will intrinsically motivate them. Games themselves will be an award for them, also learning atmosphere and props used during the games will even further increase their motivation and eventually language learning.

3.3 Multiple intelligence

Another important factor, that should be taken into consideration when teaching young learners and choosing the right game for them, is intelligence. Howard Gardner, an American psychologist, in his publication *Frames of the Mind: Theory of Multiple Intelligence* (1983) suggested that intelligence manifest itself in many different ways in different children. He refers to these multiple intelligences as “frames of mind”. Teachers and parents often notice that different children enjoy different activities. It is of crucial importance for teachers to be aware of these differences, especially when it comes to choosing the right activity for their students. Gardner (1983) made a distinction between the following types of intelligence:

- *Linguistic* - students with developed linguistic intelligence are sensitive to the sound, rhythm, meaning of the words, they usually write well. Some of the activities appropriate for this type of intelligence are vocabulary games, writing stories, storytelling, debate, etc.
- *Logico-mathematical* - students possess sensitivity and capacity to detect logical and numerical patterns, also they have an ability to handle chains of logical reasoning. For this type of intelligence, teachers can choose games that involve solving mysteries using deductive reasoning, predicting outcomes based on circumstances, games with logic puzzles, etc.
- *Musical* - students are able to produce melody, rhythm, or pitch. They understand the forms of musical expressiveness and they enjoy activities that include sound, rhythm, and repetition of sound patterns.
- *Bodily-kinesthetic* - students have abilities to use the body skillfully for expressive as well as goal-oriented purposes. They can handle objects skillfully, and appropriate games for them would be those that include moving around and touching the things.
- *Spatial* - students can perceive a visual/spatial world accurately, to perform transformations on those perceptions, and to recreate aspects of visual experience in the absence of relevant stimuli. Since this type of students rely on much on visual

ability, activities including cards, pictures, drawing, and painting would be definitely motivating for their further learning.

- *Interpersonal* - students can detect and respond to the moods, temperaments, motivation, and intentions of others. Games are usually interactive, and this type of students like interaction in any form so games and activities that involve group work, role play or pair work would be perfect for them.
- *Intrapersonal*- students are well aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, desires, and intelligence. Unlike interpersonal learners, they prefer working on their own. Individual assignments such as: writing a journal, essay, autobiography and similar activities would be beneficial for them.
- *Naturalistic* - students are able to recognize and classify varieties of animals, plants, and minerals. All games and activities related to the natural world would be beneficial for these students. Teachers can include games such as: categorizing species in the natural world, going to nature walks, collecting items from nature, etc.

Bearing in mind all the types of intelligence that students can possess, teachers are having a difficult task in choosing the right activity for their students. Teachers should be aware of the fact that all children possess all intelligence; the only difference is that some children have a preference towards a certain type of intelligence and they enjoy doing activities related to it. Luckily, there are many language games that can fit into several types of intelligence, so probably they will be enjoyable and motivating for most of the students. Teachers can also modify certain games in order to meet the individual needs of their students.

3.4 Learning styles

Learning styles are closely connected with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Lighbown & Spada (2006) define learning style as: "individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information." (p. 59). Probably we all have our preferred style of learning, some people like to see things before remembering it, others need to hear it, etc. Children as well have their preferred style of learning, although they may not be aware of it because they are still in the process of development. Teachers are

those who can notice the preferred styles of their students. Games and play can be a really good way to appeal to all children's senses, no matter if we talk about visual-learning by seeing, aural- learning by hearing or kinesthetic learners-learning by doing.

The first most common learning style is visual. Visual learners, as its name says this type of learners learn things by seeing it; that is in a visual manner. They can benefit greatly from teaching that includes illustrations, charts, diagrams, videos, pictures, flashcards, etc. Luckily, nowadays technology is improving rapidly and there are many new things that we can include in our classrooms that would help visual learners to easily memorize new information. Games are an obviously great way to stimulate this type of learners because many games include pictures and flashcards, even if they do not include it teacher can modify each game in order to make it more accessible to his/her students. (Lighbown & Spada, 2006)

Aural is the next learning style. Unlike visual learners, they focus on hearing instead of seeing as the main source of collecting information. This type of learners, learn the best when they are exposed to new sounds, they can easily comprehend, process and retain information just by hearing it. Learners of this type can easily follow the lecture; they enjoy discussions, storytelling, simple dialogues, songs, and rhymes. Again, many games suitable for the classroom contain the above-mentioned elements, so it is easy to incorporate it into the classroom in order to stimulate aural learners. (Lighbown & Spada, 2006)

The third most common type of learners is kinesthetic type. We usually notice that young children are experiencing the world around themselves by actively exploring and touching everything. They are active learners. Since the age group of our students is the 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school we should include games of kinesthetic type into our classrooms. For this type of learners, games that involve any kind of movement or props would be highly beneficial. It is difficult to expect that a group of young children will sit in one place for the whole class, and they shouldn't. Children learn better through play, and we should enable them to do so. However, when it comes to games teachers should be aware of the limitations of the classroom, so some kinesthetic games would be difficult to incorporate into the classroom. But teachers can always modify games in order to make it suitable for the classroom, age group, and size of the class. (Lighbown & Spada, 2006)

There are also other styles which are more related to personally features. Pinter (2006) makes a distinction between analytic and global learners. Analytic learners pay attention to details while global learners, on the other hand, are those with a more holistic approach. Global learners will try to understand concepts first, and later on, they will focus on specific details. Activities that require memorizing a lot of facts can be boring and tiring for them, they prefer learning from personal experience, stories, etc. Also, they may better work in groups than alone and can perform multiple tasks at once. Analytic learners have completely opposite approach; they take in information sequentially, step by step. First, they learn a series of facts and after that; they try to understand larger concepts. They prefer working alone, one task at the time in quiet surroundings. Traditional classroom settings are a good environment for this type of learners, because in most of the cases in classrooms are quiet and students are required to work alone without interrupting each other. It is very important for teachers to understand that all children have stronger and weaker aspects of their multiple intelligence and preferred learning styles. These styles and preferences can change over time; however, there will always be a variety of students in the classroom. Pinter (2006) recommends that: “teachers need to incorporate a variety of activities into second and foreign language classrooms to ensure that everybody’s preferences are catered for least some of the time.”(p. 14) Of course, that is not an easy task for teachers; however, when it comes to games they can be modified in that way that it suits to different learners. For example, if a teacher is introducing a game that contains songs and rhyme, one should also provide the text of the song and illustrations. Also, some movements can be included. This kind of game will cater for visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners. Games are a really good way for fostering the learning of different types of students because they have a lot of space for modification, and if they are used in the right way even in the classes with varieties of students they can be a great success.

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY FOR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

We often associate play with children, and usually when we have in mind games and playing first things that occur to us are children. However, most of people see games as a fun way to spend free time and nothing else. They usually do not relate game and learning. Play and learning shouldn't be observed as two different concepts; they are closely connected and interrelated. For children play is a way to explore the world, and to make sense of their environment. Play plays a very important role in children's development and its role shouldn't be disregarded. Lev Vygotsky, Russian psychologist emphasized the role of play and its importance for children's development:

“In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form; in play it is as though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behavior.”(Bodrova & Leon, 2015, p. 371)

As could be seen in the citation above, children try to experiment with the things that surround them through play. We usually see children in play pretending to be someone else, trying to imitate persons around them. Also, we should bear in mind that children are active learners. One of the many definitions of active learning states that:

“Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities presented by spontaneous and planned, purposeful play; investigating and exploring; events and life experiences; focused learning and teaching.” (Scottish Executive, 2007, p.5).

Through play, children can express explicitly things that they are interested in, what they like to do and what they don't. Even at an early age we can notice that some children have preferences towards certain things, and through play, they test whether they like something or not. Also, play involves physical and mental interaction with either humans or the objects that

children play with. They are learning how to socialize and develop interpersonal skills while working and interacting with others, they learn how to cooperate with their classmates.

4.1 Play-based learning

Play based learning is a type of learning where the learner is at the center of the learning process, and the aim is that children experience the real world through play.

“Play-based language learning is a concept that was developed based on several principles whose emphasis is placed on capitalizing on the real-world experiences of young language learners.”(Cheep-Aranai & Wasanasomisithi, 2016, p. 136)

Silver (1999) emphasize the importance of play-based learning and mentions several criteria that he used in order to define play. In his work *Play: A Fundamental Equalizer for ESL Children* he mentioned the following criteria which he considers to be really important in the very definition of the play:

1. Intrinsic motivation;
2. Concern with process rather than product;
3. Control of the activity by the children themselves;
4. Freedom from externally imposed rules;
5. Active participation. (Silver, 1999,p. 64)

1. The first characteristic of the play is related to children’s belief that play is fun. If children feel that something is fun, the activity itself is a reward. They don’t need any external reward in the form either of praise or grades; simply the activity itself is enough for them. In the previous chapter intrinsic motivation was discussed in details and its importance, especially in second language acquisition it shouldn’t be disregarded. Day (1980) has also concluded that play is first and foremost an enjoyable activity that is motivated by internal drives and occurring for its own sake.

2. Play is concerned with process rather than a product. In most of the schools nowadays the focus is exactly on the product. Various forms of the examinations have been performed either in written or spoken form. Of course, it causes a lot of stress for students but for

teachers as well. We have a so-called summative assessment. Play, on the other hand, can be form of a formative assessment where a teacher is constantly following the progress of one's students. Also during the play students are not concerned with the finished product, which lowers the stress.

3. During the play child is in control, that is the reason why don't feel pressure but quite opposite they are at ease and relaxed. They don't have a feeling as if they are learning, which is again related to intrinsic motivation to do something. When it comes to school context and play, of course, teachers are those who are imposing rules of the games played during the class. However, after a teacher explains the rules, students don't have a feeling that a teacher has control over the class. The role of a teacher goes from the controller to even a participant. Usually during the regular classes teacher is having control over the whole process that is way students feel the pressure. Games can be a good way to avoid stress, to motivate students and to foster learning at the same time.

4. Although Silver mentions that play is free of externally imposed rules, in our context especially in the classroom, it can be quite problematic. Since we are talking about young learners they need rules to follow. "Researchers generally exclude games from a discussion of play because the former are associated with externally imposed rules."(Silver, 1999, p. 66). However, it is possible to include games as characteristic of play because children will adhere to the rules of the games as they see fit. As it was already stated above, students of this age wouldn't be able to perform the game without following some rules. In my opinion, a spontaneous game wouldn't be a good solution for the classroom because it would turn out into chaos, bearing in mind varieties of students that are in the class. A teacher can give instruction to students at the beginning of the class, and then let them play. On that way children will feel that they are almost free of externally imposed rules, and a teacher will maintain the order in the classroom.

5. Finally, one of the most important qualities of the play is that it involves the active engagement of the participants. Basically, when we think about play we usually have one goal in mind: to include all children and to foster their active learning. During the play children are engaged intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. If we manage to accomplish this in our classes, then we have done a great job. We know that children are active learners, not passive observers. They learn by doing, so games can be really beneficial

for them because they are actively engaged in the process of playing and learning at the same time. (Silver, 1999)

4.2 Games and their characteristics

Games are usually perceived as the work of children, something that shouldn't be taken seriously. And a lot of parents are wondering whether they should be included in the classroom, unaware of the fact how games can be beneficial to the process of learning. Also, it is important to mention that there is a common misconception that teachers are using games just to spend class time, avoiding hard work or traditional teaching. However, in order to modify a game, to use it on the right way during the class, and to adapt it for each class bearing in mind varieties of students in the class takes much more time than traditional class preparation. Although in teaching pedagogies the importance of the games has always been recognized, it was not always accepted and implemented into the classrooms Luckily, new generations of teachers are emerging, generations of the teachers who are well aware of the benefits of the games and its implementation into the classroom, generations of teachers who are ready to take one step further and change something in our educational system. Of course, we should be realistic; it will take some time before a general opinion about games changes. However, we shouldn't generalize there are many teachers who are implementing new teaching methods into their classrooms in combination with traditional ones successfully. We should bear in mind that we cannot classify any activity or exercise as a game. There are many definitions of the games; each of them focuses on a certain aspect of the games:

“Games are effective tools for learning because they offer students a hypothetical environment in which they can explore alternative decisions without the risk of failure. Thought and action are combined into purposeful behavior to accomplish a goal. Playing games teaches us how to strategize, to consider alternatives, and to think flexibly” (Martinson & Chu, 2008, p. 478).

As it was already stated above games can be really effective as teaching methods because during the game children cannot make a mistake that will have serious consequences for them. So basically through games, we are preparing them for real life situations. Role-play games can be a really good example of this. Usually during the role-plays children are given roles from real life, real life situations. It is very common to role-play situations at the bus

stations, at the airport, etc. These games serve as an exercise for real life situations, because probably our students will find themselves at the bus station somewhere abroad and they will have to use English because there is no other way to communicate. We can prepare them for such experience because through role play they will easily acquire necessary vocabulary without even noticing that they are learning. Also, games are a great way to “wake up” intrinsic motivation in our students, bearing in mind the example above they can see how language can be used in real life situations. They can immediately see the very purpose of learning a foreign language. Talak-Kiryk (2010) states that:

“Games allow for creativity, independence and higher order thinking. Usually, questions posed by the classroom teacher are fact based and have only one answer, not allowing for creativity, personal expression, or testing hypotheses. The answer is either right or wrong, but games can allow for multiple answers. They improve participation, self-esteem, and vocabulary usage and allow learners to see that there are many ways to solve the same problem.”(p. 5)

Traditional classes usually follow the same pattern, a teacher asks fact-based questions and students are giving right or wrong answers. However, sometimes students are afraid even to try because they are not sure whether their answer is right or wrong and how will a teacher react if they give the wrong answer. During the games, on the other hand, there are no wrong answers, students are trying to solve the problem by using different vocabulary, they have more self-esteem and are not afraid to try new things. It is of crucial importance that we provide our students with scenarios that are as realistic as possible. If games are well-thought out they can do the same things. For example, we can include games that require students to finish a sentence, answer open-ended questions on a board game, tell a story, etc. Games can be designed in that way to stimulate the different social contexts in the real world. They can provide an opportunity for real communication and bridge the gap between the real world and the classroom. They provide an opportunity for students to use the language that they have learned so far in meaningful situations. (Talak-Kiryk, 2010). Emmitt, Komesaroff and Pollock (2006) claim that in a different social context, children are able to learn a language as a set of social rules that people use when they see each other. The context in which children are learning a foreign language is very important; we can make sure that through games we provide a good learning environment that will stimulate our students for language learning.

4.3 Characteristics of good games

Teachers are usually aware that choosing the right game is an arduous task, and with so many games at disposal, it is difficult to choose the right one, appropriate for our classroom. Talak-Kiryk (2010) states seven characteristics of good games that would be appropriate for the classroom:

1. Games that are based on a learning objective. When we are choosing the right game for our classroom we should bear in mind what we want to accomplish with that game. Implementing a game into the classroom just for the sake of the game doesn't make any sense because students probably won't learn much and we won't accomplish our goal or objective. Teachers who are choosing games based on a learning objective have the focus point for the format, skills involved and material covered. Half work is already done. While playing a game, students should use previously learned knowledge as well as skills to acquire new knowledge and to enhance their abilities. For example, we can incorporate games that require a recall, because they improve students' memory as they test strategies for memorization.

2. Games that give the player control over his own destiny. Sometimes teachers have to step out and give students a chance to experiment. They will learn from their mistakes. This improves decision making skills by showing that there are consequences for each action. On this way, we are preparing our students for the real world, in which each action will affect their lives. However, we should bear in mind the age of our students, if we are talking about young learners we should definitely give them freedom when playing games but in a reasonable amount. They are still not mature enough to make serious decisions without the help of an adult.

3. Another characteristic of a good game is that it includes doable challenges. A game is not fun and entertaining for the students if it is not challenging, but on the other hand, if it is too challenging it may be too difficult for students to follow. A good game contains a part in which students succeed and struggle. On this way, students' determination and drive towards success and completion is increased. For example, we can challenge our students by giving new information or a new situation to which previously acquired knowledge could be applied.

4. Games have to be fun and interesting and thus motivating. We need to motivate our students to play again, not only in one class. When students are motivated they usually forget that they are at school and learning something. They get emotionally involved and thus absorbed in a game. A good game should provide them with an opportunity to do so.

5. Good games have to be based on reality. Students will be intrinsically motivated to continue with the game if the games are based on real situations. In games that are based on reality “the player is able to practice a useful skill without the stress that the real situation may incur. There are chances for multiple practice and redemption. There is support from peers as well as time to think and react.” (Talak-Kiryk, 2010, p. 13). For example, we can include games in which a teacher or a student describe someone’s outfit and others have to guess who it is; games in which one student gives directions while other is drawing a map; or describing room while others draw it. All these games prepare students for real life situations. Of course, we should bear in mind the age and proficiency level of our students and choose the right game and vocabulary accordingly.

6. Games that require interaction. One of our goals in the classroom is to motivate students to practice their speaking skills. Interaction in the classroom is more than welcome. In games that promote interaction students can learn from each other and experiment with their language level by making mistakes and correcting it.

7. Last but not least, games must include everyone. This is a really important characteristic of a good game. If a game doesn’t require everyone to participate then it should be completely left out, because the same students will always participate while those who are shy will probably remain silent during the whole class. We should motivate everyone to participate and learn something. “Each student should be able to participate as a player in order to effectively develop and promote social interaction, good communication and a sense of community. “ (Talak-Kiryk, 2010, p .14) Our goal is not just to foster language learning but also to promote a sense of belonging and developing good communication between students. When all students are playing a game we have a chance to observe their behavior and their interaction with each other and notice what aspect of their language they should improve.

4.4 Benefits of games in education

Traditional teaching methods emphasize calm classroom in which each student respects the teacher, knows his/her task and works on it quietly. It is a common misconception that games are completely opposite, that there is a lot of noise in the classroom during the games and that teachers are using them only when there is a lot of time left, so without any other purpose. Of course, that is not the case. Games have to be planned really carefully and each segment of the game has to be modified and has to have its purpose. Teachers who are using games in the classroom know how challenging it can be to incorporate games into traditional curriculums. Fortunately, many teachers have recognized benefits of games in teaching a foreign language. And a lot of research has been dealing with this particular topic.

Sigurðardóttir (2010) lists a number of reasons why games deserve a place in the language classroom. The first and most important thing is that they are fun and entertaining. It is quite easy to activate shy students or students who have been inactive before due to various reasons during the games. Being active during the class is extremely important because teachers cannot teach children anything if they are not participating. It is necessary that we give children a chance to actively participate because:

“Learning through performance requires active discovery, analysis, interpretation, problem-solving, memory, and physical activity and extensive cognitive processing.” (Talk-Kiryk ,2010 as cited in Foreman 2003, p .16)

As it was stated above children are active learners, and games are one of the best ways to keep children motivated and active. Also, games have a social aspect. We know how important it is to have good relationships in the classroom. If there is some problem and students have broken relationships it can definitely affect the whole teaching process because nobody likes to work in a stressful environment. Games can play an important role in helping students build good relationships. There are many types of games that can be used in the classroom that promote good teacher-students rapport as well as good relationships among students. It is really important that we as teachers foster games that promote interactivity, because in such games:

“The students are actively processing and working with the material as well as with classmates...The interactivity amongst the students also promotes a community of learners. The students will begin to see each other as individuals and will learn more about each other instead of seeing what they are on the surface.”(Talk-Kiryk, 2010, p. 23)

If games are well thought out all students will feel equal in the classroom. Also playing games in the classroom can help create a friendly and positive working atmosphere in which students will feel less anxiety and stress. During the games seat arrangement usually differ from the norm which can be really helpful in keeping an exciting learning environment. Students will be able to learn in a new way that is not boring and monotonous. Students usually spend a lot of time together so it is really important that they learn things about each other, that prevents stereotyping and jealousy among students. A lot of games that deal with the topic of stereotyping can be incorporated into foreign language classes as well. Another benefit of the games is the context. Students are usually highly motivated when they first start learning a language; however, after some time they can easily lose motivation because the goals that they have set so far are really distant. Only by reminding them how useful it can be to learn a language, and by giving them a chance to practice language will keep students motivated. People are usually learning a language in order to be able to use it in real life situations, for example when traveling. Of course, we cannot provide them with real situations in the classroom but we can simulate it through games. Celce-Murcia (1979) argues that “in games, language use takes precedence over language practice, and in this sense games help bring the classroom to the real world, no matter how contrived they may be.”(p. 54).

Also during this kind of games teacher is giving his/her students more freedom and independence which can really boost students’ confidence level. However, we should be careful with younger students; we cannot give them too much freedom because they are too young to play without supervision. Luckily, each game can be modified and even the youngest students can enjoy games that deal with real life situations. We know that children are really sensitive and emotionally involved in the very process of learning. So, the affective side of games is also really important. If students feel emotions such as excitement, amusement, and happiness during the activity they will feel positive about their learning which can have a positive effect on language learning. Also, we must bear in mind that there are different types of students; some of them will be more open and ready to participate while others may be students who are introverted with low confidence. We should carefully think

about appropriate games for these types of students, in order not to ruin their confidence and self-esteem even further. For example, if they don't feel confident enough to talk in front of the whole class or in bigger groups, we can make smaller groups in which it will be easier for them to talk. Simpson (2015) claims "that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. Also games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching programme." (p. 6)

Games can be a good way to motivate shy students to speak because the atmosphere is not serious and more emphasis is put on fluency rather than grammatical correctness. We can say that games promote communicative competence, lower the affective filter, as well as encouraging creative and spontaneous use of language.

Another very important reason to include games into the classroom is that many children do not get enough opportunity to play during their free time. Cities are getting bigger and bigger and more parents are hesitant to let their children play outside. Children usually spend their free time doing so-called "passive" activities such as watching TV or playing video games instead of being physically active. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see a lot of children playing outside in the street which was very common 10-15 years ago. A lot of problems occur because our children are not active enough. It can affect their physical as well as mental development. We can activate our children in the classroom, where in a safe environment children can develop their language skills as well as other skills. Our goal is to foster the holistic development of children not only one aspect of children's development. Of course, if there is a chance outdoor activities can be included as well, especially if a school has a schoolyard. A lot of games can be modified and especially young learners would enjoy doing them.

Apart from the above-mentioned benefits of games in a classroom. Yolageldili & Arikan (2011) mention other advantages of the games. They hold that learners are motivated to learn a foreign language when they are in a game. Games stimulate motivation and students get easily absorbed in the games. If students are motivated for games they will be motivated for learning while playing games as well. In traditional classrooms, students usually feel stress and anxiety because they have to master a language that is unknown to them. They feel pressure either from parents or teachers; in many cases, they are extrinsically motivated. Also they are not ready to speak freely because they are afraid that they might make a mistake, say

something wrong and that they might be criticized by the teacher. However, as games are employed student's anxiety towards language learning decreases.

Yolageldili & Arikan (2011) state that "games are advantageous at this point because they reduce anxiety, increase positive feelings and improve self confidence because learners do not afraid of punishment or criticism while practicing the target language freely."(p. 220)

Another reason for including games into the classroom is that they are student-focusing activities which mean that they require the active involvement of students. Usually, in traditional classrooms teachers are those who lead the class, and in most of the cases they speak throughout the whole class. During the games, students have more chance to speak and to practice their language. Also, students have a chance to direct their own learning. Teachers and students change their roles in games, and while students become more active, teachers become more passive. Apart from the above-mentioned advantages of the games, there are many more. Yolageldili & Arikan (2011) list the following advantages of the games in the classroom:

- Games focus student's attention on specific structures, grammatical patterns, and vocabulary items;
- can function as reinforcement, review and enrichment;
- involve equal participation from both slow and fast learners;
- can be adjusted to suit the individual age and language levels of the students;
- contribute to an atmosphere of healthy competition, providing an outlet for the creative use of natural language in a non-stressful situation;
- can be used in any language teaching situations and with all skill areas (reading, writing, speaking or listening). (p. 220-221)

To sum up, we can say that games can be very beneficial for acquiring a foreign language and that they definitely should be part of English language classes, especially in elementary school. Young learners usually like to play and they start doing it from an early age, so if we enable them to continue playing in school while learning we will make school and the whole process of acquiring language easier. Apart from the above-mentioned advantages of games in education that are focusing on children, we should bear in mind that implementing games into the classroom can be beneficial for the teacher as well. Games will definitely make a teacher's

job easier and less stressful, unlike monotonous traditional methods where a teacher is required to repeat the same things over and over again.

4.5 Challenges of using games in education

Although there are numerous advantages of games in education, we must bear in mind that implementing games sometimes may have a quite opposite effect than we expected. Sometimes, some games may look perfect for a teacher in theory but simply they turn out to be a disaster when turning into practice. There are many things that a teacher should think of before implementing a game into the classroom, and that is the reason why many teachers decide to stick to traditional teaching methods.

The first problem that teachers might face when implementing a game is competition among students. Teachers should be really careful when it comes to this aspect of the games. There are many games that contain competition. Competition is simply a natural part of our world; we compete every day for something that we want. However, teachers must make sure that competition among students is a healthy one. Talak-Kiryk (2010) states that “some kids rise to the challenge because they love to compete even if they do not love to do homework, study or participate in class. Competition in classrooms can be achieved without being detrimental to the learning process or to the fun intended to take place. “(p. 7-8). It is essential that we avoid any type of ranking or emphasizing differences. The aim of the games is not that some children feel left out or less worthy than others. We need to explain to our students that being part of the game is an award itself and that sometimes we win and sometimes we lose. They need to understand that they are all winners because they learn new vocabulary, grammar, forms, etc. Also, we should bear in mind that there are many games which integral part is cooperation, so if we want to avoid competition completely we can include games that require cooperation. Students of 3rd and 4th grade will probably enjoy in such activities.

Another problem that may not be as serious as competition in the classroom but might be even more difficult for a teacher to control is noise in the classroom. Games require the active involvement of students; imagine a situation where twenty students talk at the same time. It may be problematic for teachers in the classrooms nearby because it may disturb their working atmosphere. Since we are talking about the 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school it is natural for them to speak loudly while playing and having fun. Although a teacher should

give more opportunity to students and step out from the position of a controller during the game, he/she should never lose control of the class. If we notice that children are making too much noise we should calm them down.

The teacher might have difficulties with including all children into the games. There are students who are outgoing and more confident, however, there are students who will never raise their hand and voluntarily participate in the class. The challenge that each teacher face when implementing games into the classroom is how to find the right game for different types of students. For example, passive students will always give a chance to someone else in the group to answer instead of them, while more active students will be impatient, loud and in constant motion during the games. It is crucial that teachers establish clear rules at the very beginning of that class, and state what is allowed and what is not allowed. We must make sure that all students participate equally, we should give everyone a chance to answer, not only those students who are constantly raising hands.

Cheating is also a constant worry of teachers. It is common that students copy homework from each other, share answers, etc. Some children feel that it is wrong, while others might have a slightly different opinion about it. We should never generalize because there are many factors that can influence whether children will cheat or not. However, it is really possible that children cheat during the game. For example, they might try to find the right answer by peeking in the book or whisper to each other. During the games that involve physical activity, they might push each other. The facilitator of the game or teacher, in this case, must have clear rules when it comes to cheating and clearly explain the consequences for breaking those rules. If the rules are violated the teacher should enforce some kind of penalties. For example, those who are cheating will miss the next round, or they will lose some points, etc. Clearly established rules should minimize the cheating. (Talak-Kiryk, 2010)

There is an element of chance in every game. The task of each teacher is to minimize this element and to emphasize the learning side of the games. Of course, it is challenging.

“For a game to be involving and motivating, there must be some challenge to it. It cannot be won too easily. Skill, chance and endurance are elements that provide challenge. Most [training] games have at least some element of chance involved,

for instance, the roll of the dice, the hand you are dealt, and the obstacles you encounter.” (El-Shamy 2001, p. 12)

However, if we notice that the same group of students or the same individuals is winning all over again, then there is something wrong and we should change the dynamic of the game. We can change group members, or give the winning group more challenging material if we notice that the task is too easy for them. One thing we should always bear in mind, if the game is not challenging enough students will probably lose motivation, on the other hand, if it is too challenging they might completely lose interest. It is crucial to find a game that will be somewhere in the middle, appropriate for the given age, challenging yet not too difficult.

There are also many other things that can influence the flow of the game apart from the above-mentioned ones. Another problem that teachers might face is that it is usually difficult to calm down children after the game, they will probably be absorbed in the activity and they might forget that they are in the classroom. Teachers should nicely and smoothly take control of the class and calm down students. Besides that, a teacher should make sure that all students understand the rules of games if they don't it may cause confusion among students which may eventually lead to a noisy class. Teachers should be really careful when it comes to games that involve physical activity; since we are talking about young learners it is possible that they hurt each other unintentionally. Talak-Kriyk (2010) states that “if the game involves physical activity it is imperative to examine safety precautions and student (dis)abilities.”(p. 14). It can be difficult to choose the right game for the classroom; we should bear in mind many factors such as the size of the class, size of the classroom, age of the students, etc. Although each game allows modification, some games are simply not suited for the classroom. Teachers should weight pros and cons of each game before implementing it into the classroom, if they are including game into the classroom just for the sake of the game, without any other goal or objective then it would be better to completely omit that game.

4.6 Role of the teacher in implementing and facilitating games

We can agree that the role of the teacher is not an easy role, especially because it doesn't imply just one role. Teachers have to play many roles in the classroom which sometimes intertwine with each other. They are required to adjust their behavior according to an activity

or game that they are implementing. Although we are not actors we have to be prepared for each activity or game that we choose for our class. Sometimes simply we will be required to “leave the stage” and just observe our students while they are playing, and in some other cases, we might be required to participate in the game. Our goal is to make students enjoy the game, and if it means that we should change our roles during the class we should do so. Harmer (2011) mentions eight different roles that a teacher can play in the classroom:

- **Controller.** As it is clear from the name itself, in this role the teacher is in the control of the whole situation, so basically we are talking about the teacher-centered classroom. Usually, we will find teachers playing this role in traditional classrooms. When it comes to games, this role can be useful at the beginning of the game when the teacher needs to give explanations or basic rules of the game. It is important that the teacher is at the center so all students can hear him/her and clearly understand the rules of the game.
- **Organizer.** This role is also very important in game implementation because teachers are those who are organizing the flow of the game. This role of the teacher involves giving information to students about the game, putting students into pairs or groups, and telling when it is time to stop the game.
- **Assessor.** Students naturally expect feedback, correction, and grading from their teachers. And it is a common role that teachers play. However, this doesn't necessarily have to be part of the game; games can be played just to teach children new vocabulary, grammar, etc., not really to grade them. Teachers can, of course, give feedback to their students after the game, or correct them subtly during the game. It is important that we don't ruin the flow of the game, and maybe destroy student's motivation for the game.
- **Prompter.** Sometimes we can notice that our students are missing a word and that they don't know how to continue. This can happen during the games as well. Here the teacher plays the role of the prompter. However, we should just prompt a student to continue, by giving him/her hints, but we shouldn't give them the whole solution. We should always give our students tasks that are challenging yet not too difficult. If we give them a solution immediately they won't feel it is challenging for them and

probably they will lose motivation. Teachers should help students on a subtle way however, the teacher is not taking part in the game, on that way a game flow won't be ruined and students will get necessary encouragement to continue.

- **Participant.** Unlike the previous role, here is the teacher actively involved in the game. It can be enjoyable for both teacher and students. However, we should be careful when it comes to this role because students might feel stress because the teacher is part of the game and they might not be able to relax completely. We should assure students that the learning part of the game is the most important one and that they won't be graded or reprimanded if they make any mistake. Teachers should pay attention to their behavior because if the students feel at unease when teachers participate then it is not a stress-free environment and implementing games is pointless.
- **Resource.** In some cases active participation in the game or activity may be unwelcome; however, students still need their teacher as a resource. This role is also really important because teachers are those with more advanced knowledge; they can always give information or missing word etc. However, we shouldn't spoon-feed our students too much because they will probably become too dependent on us, we want to motivate them to research not only rely on us as a resource. Also, we should bear in mind that although we have more knowledge than students it can happen that they ask us questions that we simply don't know. In that case, we can tell students that we will check and give them information the next class; it is a better solution than giving them false information or refusing to answer.
- **Tutor.** This role combines two already mentioned roles of prompter and resource. Teachers in this role help individuals or small groups during the game or any other activity. Of course, this role can be really challenging to play in large classes; it is difficult to approach each student individually during the game. However, if they are working in small groups than it is possible and welcome. Again we should know how much to help, too much help will impede learner's autonomy and too little will not be helpful.

- **Observer.** Teachers are always observing their students, sometimes to give them feedback on their performance or to check if the activity goes well, whether they should change something in the game or activity, etc. Although it may look like a passive role, it is not because the teacher is always following the class. However, we shouldn't be too intrusive by correcting each word of our students during the game, or by writing notes all the time. It can destroy a good working atmosphere. (p. 57-62)

Teachers play an important role in the implementation and facilitating games in the classroom. Of course, the quality of the game can largely depend on the teacher's willingness to adjust to each particular role as well as a classroom setting, the age of the students, etc.

4.7 Guidelines on how to use games in the classroom

From the point of view of those who are not from a teaching profession, including games into the classroom seems like an easy process; you just need to choose the game and explain to your students and that is pretty much it. However, every teacher knows that it is much complicated process and that you cannot include any game. There are many factors that we should bear in mind when choosing the right game. Talak-Kiyrk (2010) states several guidelines for using games effectively in the classroom:

First, and maybe the most important guideline is that a game must have a clear learning objective and purpose. It should be perfectly clear what students are practicing and learning during the game. We must know what we want to accomplish with that game, and what our long term and short terms goals are. If we notice a game that we are considering for the class doesn't have a clear purpose and objective then definitely that game shouldn't be part of our classroom.

Grouping also may cause a lot of difficulties. The teacher should assign students to teams or groups based on students' abilities and personality. We must make sure that we create equally strong groups, and on that way enable each group fair chance of winning. When students are divided into equal groups it may foster their learning, those who are struggling with some aspects of the language may learn from those who better at it. It may boost their confidence

and motivation. Random grouping is not recommended because students will always choose to work with their friends and miss the chance to meet better other classmates.

The teacher should explain all necessary rules and procedures of the game clearly and slowly and make sure that students understand what they need to do. In some cases, it would be even good to ask one student to restate the rules again in order to make sure that everyone understands it. If the game was played before then we can ask students to repeat the rules and procedures prior to beginning game play. Although it may sound trivial this step is really important if we want to avoid confusion as well as noise in the classroom.(Talak-Kiryk,2010).

Another thing which Talak-Kiryk (2010) considers really important is consistency. The teacher must be consistent and apply the same rules to everyone. Students should not feel unequal at any point during the game. Everyone should have the same amount of time to answer. Another round shouldn't be started if all teams will not have a chance to go before a class ends. Also, answers that will be accepted as correct should be decided before the game, a teacher shouldn't be absorbed by the atmosphere and accept answers that otherwise wouldn't be accepted. Apart from than rules have to be the same for everyone, for example, if the teacher says at the beginning of the class that only first answer will be accepted then he/she should be consistent and accept the only first answer from all groups. All students deserve equal treatment, regardless of their grades or success in the class.

Teachers must be well prepared for the game. They should always make sure that they provide enough materials, time, questions, etc. That is one of the reasons why including games into the classroom can be an arduous task; you have bear in mind even the tiniest details. Teachers must be always prepared for the unexpected: absent students, extra or not enough time. It would be good to always have a backup plan, extra activity or even another game. It is not uncommon that students simply don't like the game; it would be good to be well prepared.

Since the teacher is the only adult in the room he/she is responsible for the safety of all students. The non-threatening environment must be maintained. No matter how fun game it is, classroom procedures and rules should be observed. No student should feel unsafe and uncomfortable. When playing game students become emotionally charged and may react negatively, especially if they don't expect a negative outcome. In that case, they might belittle

other team members or even their teammates. If we think that our students might act that way, then we should discuss with them how to treat others and how to talk to others. Also, we should remind them that it is just a game, sometimes we win sometimes we lose, friendship is far more important than any game.(Talak-Kiryk, 2010).

There are many things that we should observe before implementing games in the classroom. However, that is not something that should dissuade us from doing so. Every beginning is difficult. Of course, implementation of the games in the classroom is not an easy task, and it may be challenging for the teachers who at the beginning of their careers. Nevertheless, practice makes perfect.

“The more you use games, the easier facilitating becomes. Furthermore as you progress, making groups, sharing and implementing rules and procedures, being consistent, dealing with competition and collaboration as well as evaluating the benefits of educational games becomes second nature.”

(Talak-Kiryk, 2010. p. 11).

Including a game into the classroom just for the sake of the game doesn't have any particular purpose and students won't have much benefit out of it. Games must have a clear goal and purpose, and if teachers know why they are implementing a game into the classroom it will be a way easier for them to follow the rules of the games as well as to motivate students to participate in a game.

4.8 How to choose the right game for the class?

As it was already stated above games can be really good teaching methods. However, we cannot include any game into the classroom; there are many factors that can influence our choice of the game. There are games which are appropriate for bigger classes in which everyone can participate, and games that are better for classes with a smaller number of students. Age of our students and proficiency level are also important factors that should be considered before choosing the right game.

Age of the students is one of the most important factors that has to be taken into consideration when choosing the right game. We cannot choose a game that will be too difficult for our students. Characteristics of young learners and their abilities have been discussed in previous chapters. We are talking about students of 3rd and 4th grade in two elementary schools in Breza, for them, these are the first and second years of learning a foreign language. Students are still learning how to write, read and understand some concepts in their native language. This also has to be observed before choosing a game. Simple games with simple language should be chosen. The best games for this age would be games that include a lot of repetitiveness, rhymes, and songs (e.g. Simon says). Also, games that require TPR (Total Physical Response) in which students can learn body parts by showing and touching their own body, games in which they should guess the names of animals, etc.

Proficiency level of our students is also a very important factor that we need to observe. As it was already stated above, children in Zenica-Doboj Canton start learning English as a foreign language in third grade. In other cantons in BIH situation may be different, some children start learning English in the first grade. It is very difficult to define the proficiency level of our students at the very beginning because some of them have been learning English in a kindergarten while others may encounter the English language for the first time in school. There is a huge gap between these two types of students. However, teachers can choose games suitable for beginner level, and modify them if they are too easy or too difficult for some students. As it was already discussed in previous chapters, in the classroom we will find students with a variety of personalities, preferences as well as proficiency levels.

Last but not least, the size of our class plays an important role in choosing the right activity or game. In our country, one class usually consists of around 20-25 students. Luckily, games can be modified to fit different numbers of students. Group or pair games can be suitable for young learners because they like to experiment with sitting arrangement. Also, group or pair work can be a good chance for students to learn from each other and to learn things about each other. If we are working in larger classes it is of course difficult to activate all students during the class, however, in a group, all students have a chance to participate. Individual games would be more suitable for smaller classes in which there is enough time for each student to participate and for classes that don't have problems with discipline or noise. Another challenge for teachers who are working with larger classes is noise. It is really

difficult to keep quiet 25 students at the same time, so it would be better to choose different types of games for them.

Age of the students, proficiency level and size of the class are important factors that teachers have to bear in mind when choosing the appropriate game for their classes. A situation may vary from class to class; sometimes simply we will work in bigger or smaller classes, with younger or older students of different proficiency levels. Our task is to adapt and to make activities interesting and motivating enough for different types of students.

4.9 Types of games

There are many types of games that teachers have at their disposal. Also, there are varieties of sources from which games can be taken and modified starting from schoolbooks, other teaching books or the internet. However, as it was discussed in previous chapters games introduced in the classroom must have a learning goal. They must have already established objectives. In this paper, games will be divided according to the skill that they focus on. Games that will be mentioned in this paper are games that focus on:

- Reading and listening (receptive skills)
- Speaking and writing (productive skills)
- Grammar and vocabulary

It is also important to mention that if we choose a game that focuses for example on vocabulary, it doesn't mean that students will only practice vocabulary; they will also improve their listening and speaking skills. If the main focus of one game is a certain aspect of the language it doesn't mean that other aspects of the language will be disregarded. Students will subconsciously practice other aspects of the language through games.

4.9.1 Receptive skills

Receptive and productive skills are inseparable parts of the language, and it is impossible to learn one disregarding the other. For language learners, it is important to focus on both.

However, we need to start somewhere. Usually, it is easier for students to hear and understand foreign language than express themselves in a foreign language. Golkova & Hubackova (2014) claim that:

“Passive knowledge-such as listening and reading - symbolises a springboard to active implementation of grammar structures, passive vocabulary lists, heard and repeated sounds of a foreign language. When learning a foreign language, receptive skills usually come first and should be followed by practical application of productive ones. If a learning process lacks one of them, the final outcome will not be complete. “(p. 478)

It is really important to expose our students to a sound of a foreign language from the very beginning whether by speaking to them in English, by playing a tape where they can hear the native speaker of the English language or just by reading a tale from the schoolbook. Our students need to get accustomed to the sound of the English language, and the meaning of those words. With the students of 3rd and 4th grade, we should go with a really slow pace, by repeating often and translating explanations of games into B/C/S if necessary. When it comes to reading in English we should bear in mind that some students still have troubles in reading in their mother tongue, so we shouldn't force them to read in English. It is a slow process that requires time and patience. As it was already stated above listening and reading are passive skills and our students are active learners with a limited attention span so it can be really challenging to motivate them to work. However, games can be a great way to practice these skills because students like games in most of the cases and they will learn subconsciously.

4.9.2 Reading and listening games

1. Simon says

One of the most frequently used games in the classroom is Simon says. One player takes the role of “Simon” and gives instructions to the other players. Instructions should be only followed if preceded by “Simon says”. If the players follow the instructions not preceded by “Simon says” or do not act immediately they will be eliminated from the game. Through this game, students can practice their listening and speaking skills. Everyone can participate, and

it is a TPR game so teachers should be careful, since this is an active game some students might hurt themselves while playing.

2. Scrambled sentences

Write or print a sentence on a paper and then cut it into strips with one word per strip. Divide students into two or more groups and give each group one mixed up sentence. Their task is to assemble the words into a coherent sentence and then read it. Make sure that all students understand the rules of the games, and that sentences are appropriate for students' proficiency level. Through this game, students can practice their reading and speaking skills, as well as comprehension skills. Some students may not be able to put words into the correct order, or they may not understand the meaning of some words so the teacher should help if necessary.

4.9.3 Productive skills

Speaking and writing are really important parts of language learning. Basically, one of the main goals for language learners is to be able to produce a language that they are learning. Golkova & Hubackova (2014) state that "productive skills - also called active skills - mean the transmission of information that a language user produces in either spoken or written form. Productive skills would not exist without the support of receptive ones." (p. 478). In order to be able to produce language we need to have a good background or support of receptive skills. They are intertwined and we cannot separate them when learning a language. For example, when we play games that focus on speaking skills we practice listening skills as well, etc. Sometimes, production of a language can be a real challenge even for more experienced learners and let alone young learners. In many cases, students are able to understand a language but they are unable to express themselves in a given language. Since we are talking about young learners they may be afraid to make a mistake in front of the teacher or their peers, they may simply be shy to speak in front of other people, etc. However, games that aim at teaching writing and speaking skills can be a great way to motivate even the shiest students to participate in the class. Young learners should feel comfortable in the class, they shouldn't be afraid of making mistakes and while playing games they will learn subconsciously not even aware that they are learning and practicing their speaking or writing skills.

4.9.4 Speaking and writing games

1. Stop the Bus

The teacher writes a letter on the board and shouts “start the bus”. Then students need to write down as many words as they can beginning with this letter. When one student shouts out “stop the bus” all other students have to stop writing. Each student gets one point for each correct word. The student who has the most words wins an extra 2 points. When it comes to material for this game, only board, chalk, paper and pens are necessary. Through this game, students can practice writing and speaking skills as well as vocabulary. However, noise can be problematic in this game so the teacher needs to make sure that students work in a peaceful atmosphere.

2. Dice game

The teacher brings a large soft dice to the classroom. Students can sit in a circle and take turns rolling the dice. Each time, a student throws the dice. The student who rolls the dice uses the number that shows up on the dice to say some things about himself /herself. For example, if a student gets number 3 he/ she has to say three things about himself/herself. Through this game, students can practice their speaking, grammar and vocabulary skills, but they can also learn a lot about each other. The good thing is that except for dice no other materials are required.

4.9.5 Grammar and vocabulary

Grammar is considered to be the most difficult part of language learning, especially when it comes to young learners. They still haven’t reached that level to be able to understand grammatical rules and explanations so it would be useless to bother them with it. Luckily, there is another way to teach grammar except explaining grammatical rules. Young students learn a lot through repetition and imitation, so if we implement games that require a lot of usage of correct grammatical forms students will easily memorize it. We need to provide our students with a meaningful context that will enable our students to learn in an enjoyable atmosphere. As far as vocabulary is concerned our goal is that our students memorize as

many words as possible, however, we shouldn't expect them to learn lists of words by heart because it is a tedious process that would only make students hate the English language. There are other more entertaining and enjoyable games and activities that would foster vocabulary memorization.

4.9.6 Grammar and vocabulary games

1. Pictionary

Divide students into two teams. Students will take turns being the artist. It is not allowed to repeat the artist until all students had their turn. The teacher will give a word or phrase to the student who is the artists. The student is not allowed to use letters or numbers in his/her picture, symbols are allowed. Other students should guess the word from the drawing. If their guess is correct, they score a point. This game can be good for vocabulary recall and identification. The teacher should make sure that all students respect the rules of the game and that they do not make too much noise.

2. Charades

This game can be used for vocabulary practice as well as grammar. Divide the students into groups. One student acts out a verb and the rest of the students guess the action by forming a sentence. It would be best that the teacher gives a verb to the student who is acting in order to make sure that he/she is using a verb that other students can guess. If their guess is correct then they score a point. Then move to the next time. Since this is a group game, again noise can be challenging so the teacher should pay attention to this.

Of course, there are many other games that can be used as didactic games such as computer games. The list of other games that can be used in English classes can be found in Appendix 3.

5. THE STUDY ON THE ROLE OF PLAY IN EARLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN PRIMARY GRADES 3 AND 4

This chapter deals with the research that was conducted in two elementary schools in Breza: “Enver Čolaković” and “Safvet-beg Bašagić”. The study was conducted in three stages: students’ poll in which students were given a poll related to educational games, teachers’ questionnaire where English teachers were asked to answer in written form on questions related to educational games and schoolbook analysis-the analysis of schoolbooks that are being used in the two elementary schools. Qualitative and quantitative methods of research have been used. All three stages confirmed hypotheses. Educational games are present in English classes, English teachers are ready to implement games into their classrooms and they do it in order to meet learning goals and objectives. Schoolbooks offer enough opportunity for teachers to implement educational games in English classes.

5.1 Methodology

Goals of the study “The role of play in early English language learning in primary grades 3 and 4” were the following:

- To determine to what extent are didactic games present in teaching English in 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school.
- To determine the willingness of English teachers to implement didactic games in English classes, as well as to determine whether games are being used to meet learning goals and objectives.
- To determine to what extent schoolbooks for 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school motivate teachers to implement didactic games into English classes.
- To determine the challenges that English teachers are facing when implementing didactic games in English classes.

Hypotheses:

- Didactic games are present in English classes in 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school.
- English teachers are ready to implement didactic games into their classrooms to meet learning goals and objectives.
- Schoolbooks for 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school motivate English teachers to implement didactic games into English classes.

5.2 Participants

The study was conducted in elementary school “Enver Čolaković” and in elementary school “Safvet-beg Bašagić” in Breza. The participants of the study were two English teachers teaching classes 3 and 4 in the above-mentioned schools. When it comes to students, 10 classes from both schools (194 students classes 3rd and 4th) took part in the study. The age of the students is approximately 9-10 years.

5.3 Instruments

When it comes to instruments used in the study. Two instruments were designed: a students’ poll and a teachers’ questionnaire. When it comes to teacher’s questionnaire it was based on two international studies.¹ The researches had similar goals as goals of this study so that is the reason why some of the questions were adapted and modified for the purposes of this study. As far as students’ poll is concerned it was also based on international studies.² The studies deal with a similar topic as this study and that is the reason why some of the questions were adapted and modified for the purposes of this study. It is important to mention that questions

¹ Hang, S. (2017), *Using Games to Teach Young Children English language*. Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

Wang, Y.H. (2010), *Using Communicative Language Games in Teaching and Learning English in Taiwanese Primary Schools*. Kainan University. Journal of Engineering Technology and Education

² Darfilal, I. (2015), *The Effectiveness of Using Language Games in Teaching Vocabulary the Case of Third Year Middle School Learners*. University of Tlemcen.

Rama, J., Ying, C.C., Lee, K.L., Luei., A.Y.L. (2010), *Using games in language learning*. Jurong Primary School.

Besma, B. (2015), *Investigating the Impact of Using Games on English Language Learners Classroom Interaction*. University of Biskra

taken from international studies were a starting point and that questions were adapted to fit the goals of this study. The reason why these particular studies were chosen is because they deal with the same topic of using games in the classroom, so it was interesting to observe how they approached this particular topic. However, not all questions from these studies match the goals of this particular study, so just several questions were taken and modified for the purposes of this study. Both teacher's questionnaire and students' poll can be found in the appendix.

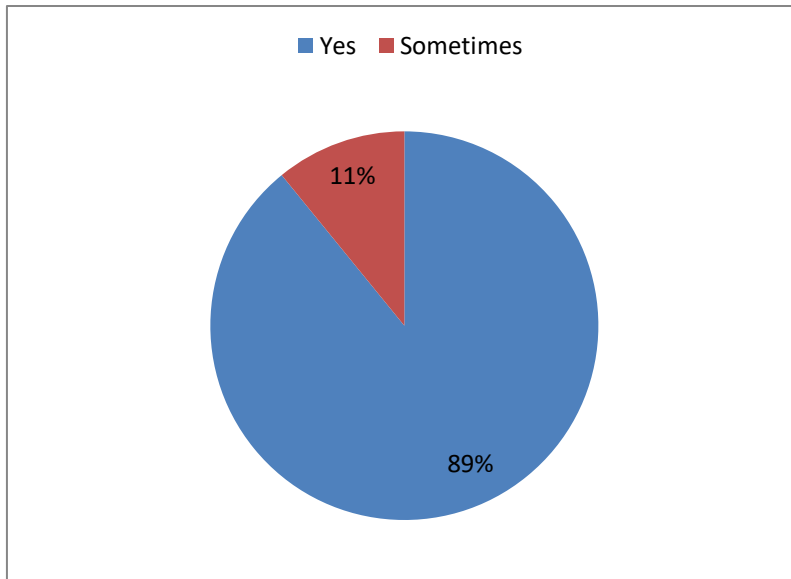
5.4 Results and discussion

In the following chapter, the results of the study, as well as the discussion, will be presented. The study was conducted in three phases: students' poll, teachers' questionnaire, and school book analysis, and the results will be presented in that order.

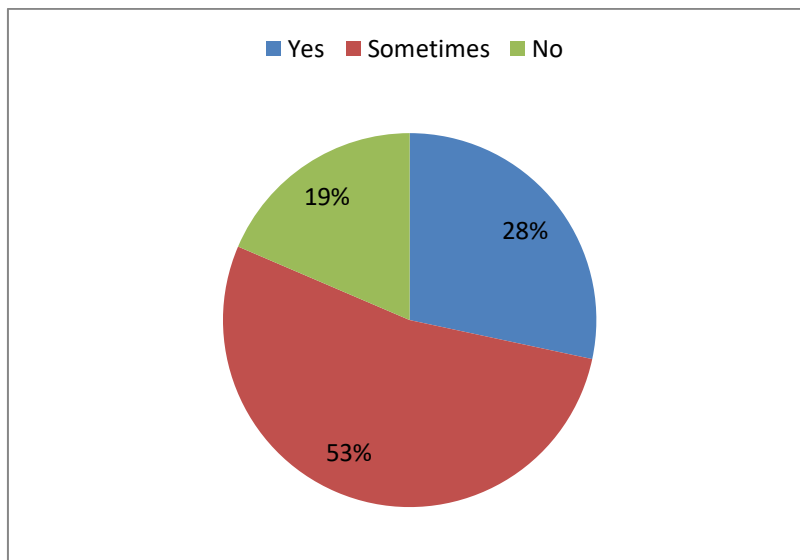
5.4.1 Students' poll

The student's poll was comprised of eight statements and one fill out question. (Appendix 1) After eight statements students could choose a three-scale answer (yes, sometimes and no). In question 9 students had to write an answer what their favorite game is. The aim of the poll was to find out what type of games are being used in primary schools "Enver Čolaković" and "Safvet-beg Bašagić" in Breza, what are the attitudes of students towards the games and what types of games students prefer to play in English classes. Responses on each statement in the poll were converted into percentages and presented in the graphs for the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the results. After analyzing the students' poll the following conclusions were drawn:

The first statement was: I like to play. As it can be seen on the graph 1, 89 % of students said that they like to play games. Only 11 % said that they like to play sometimes. There were no students who answered negatively on this question. The results are expected bearing in mind the age of our students. At this level of their development, they can learn a lot through play. As it was already discussed in previous chapters games have many benefits on students' physical and mental development, so the fact that they like to play is not surprising

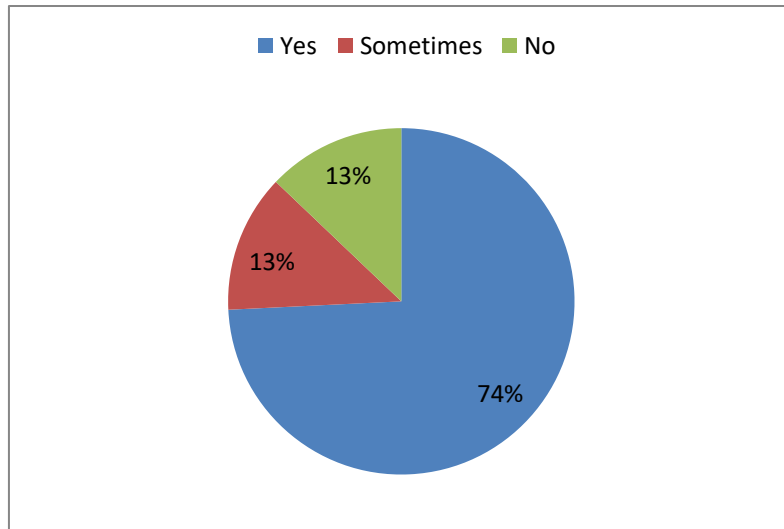


Graph 1. Statement 1: *I like to play*



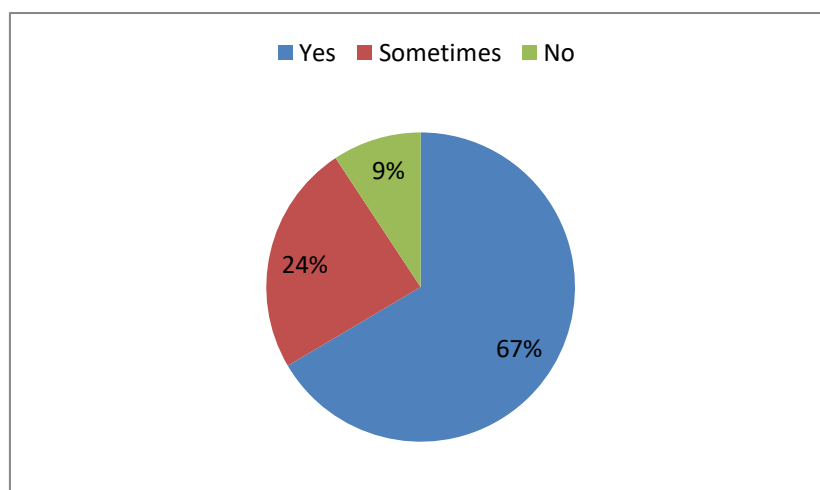
Graph 2. Statement 2: *We often play games in English classes*

The second statement was: We often play games in English classes. More than half of students (53%) said that they often play games in English classes, 28% of them said sometimes while 19% said no. We can conclude that games are definitely present in English classes, however not that often. There are many factors that can influence the presence of the games in English classes such as school curriculum, insufficient time or space for games, or simply teacher is not motivated enough to incorporate games into the classroom.



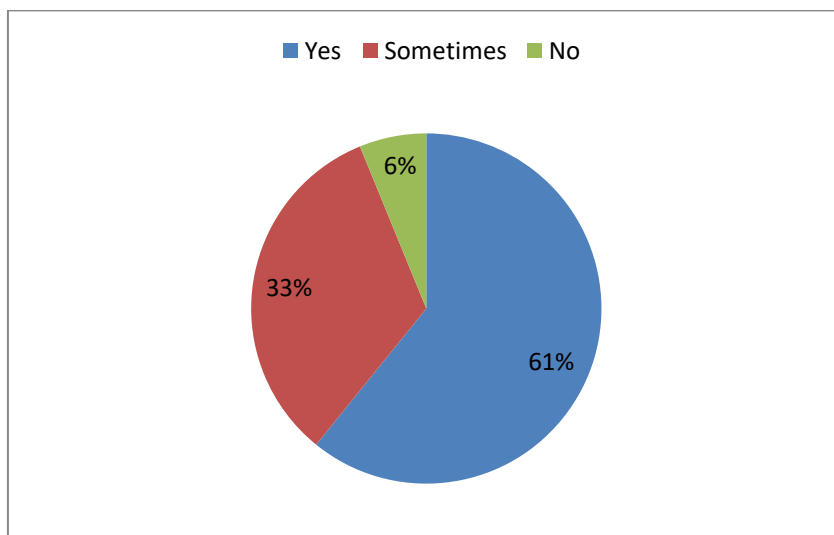
Graph 3. Statement 3: *I feel good when we play in English classes*

The third statement was: I feel good when we play in English classes. Majority of students (74%) said yes. While 13% of them said sometimes and 13% said that they don't feel nice when playing games in English classes. Students like to play, at home or in school and that is why the majority of them feel good when playing games. However, some of them don't feel that way probably because they still have a feeling that they are in class, that teacher is watching them so they cannot completely relax. Also, some students got used to traditional teaching methods and they don't feel that they are learning while playing games. Students should be informed more about the benefits of play in English classes and that they can learn even more while playing than in traditional methods of teaching.



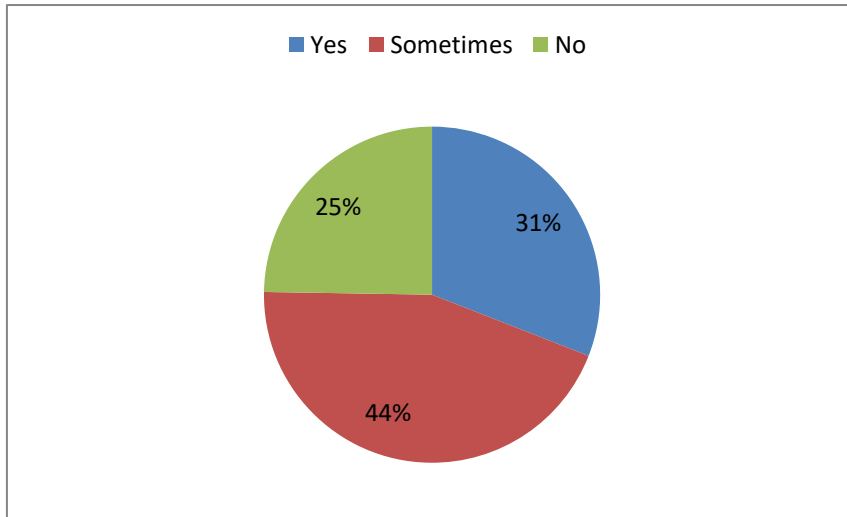
Graph 4. Statement 4: *I participate in games in English classes*

The fourth statement was: I participate in games in English classes. We can draw a conclusion from the graph above that a large number of students (67%) take part in games in English classes, which is a really positive thing because active learning is really important in learning a language. However, 24 % of students participate in games sometimes and 9% don't participate at all. It is important to activate all students to participate in the class. Of course, there are different types of students and some of them are more introvert than others, yet a teacher should choose games in which all students will take part not only extrovert students. If we notice that some of our students don't like the game that is being played in the class we should change it, or give them another activity that will be more suitable for their needs. Anyway, no student should feel bored or excluded from the class.



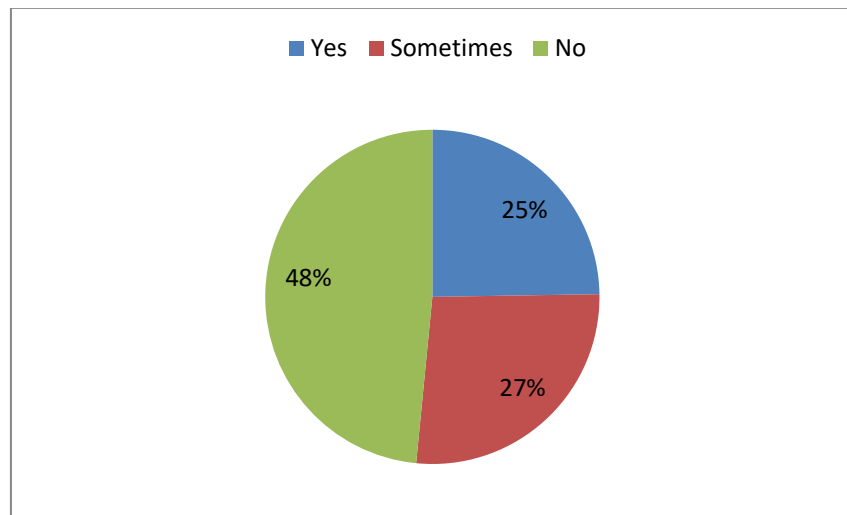
Graph 5. Statement 5: *We listen to songs and sing in English classes.*

The fifth statement was: We listen to songs and sing in English. We can see from the graph above that songs and singing are really often present in English classes. 61% of students said that they listen to songs and sing in English classes, 33% of them said sometimes, while only 6% percent said that they don't listen to songs and sing. Bearing in mind age of our students and proficiency level, we can draw a conclusion that it is a positive thing that songs and singing are present often in English classes. Through songs and singing, students can practice their listening, speaking and vocabulary skills.



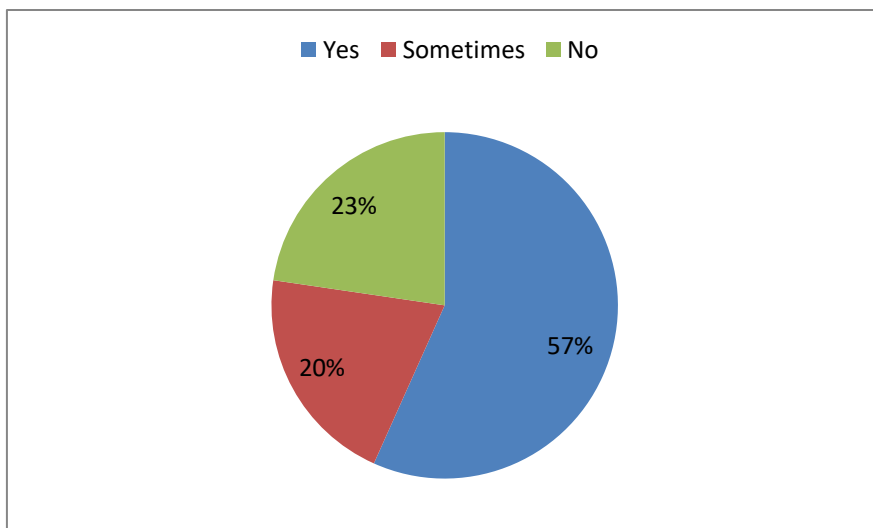
Graph 6: Statement 6: *We play in pairs and groups in English classes.*

The sixth statement was: We play in pairs and groups in English classes. Majority of students (44%) said that they play in pairs/groups sometimes, 31% said yes and 25% said no. Games in pairs and groups are not that much present in English classes. Probably individual one-to-one games are more common in English classes.



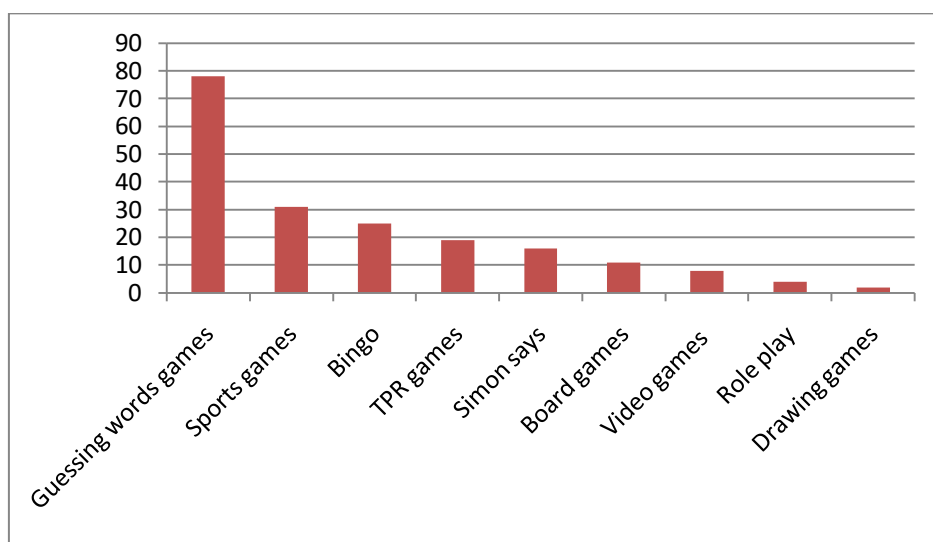
Graph 7. Statement 7: *We play games with posters and pictures in English classes.*

The seventh statement was: We play games with posters and pictures in English classes. Here the majority of the students (48%) said that they don't play games with posters and pictures. 27% percents said sometimes and 25% said yes. Games which require pictures and posters are not a common part of English classes in two schools in which the research was conducted.



Graph 8. Statement 8: *I think that we should play more in English classes.*

The eight statement was: I think that we should play more in English classes. Most of the students (57%) said that they should play more in English classes, 20% said sometimes and 23% said no. Although games are present in English classes, the majority of students think that more games should be implemented which is understandable bearing in mind their age and how important games are for their development.



Graph 9. Question 9: *My favorite game is...?*

In the last question, students were supposed to write their favorite game. As it can be seen on the graph 9 the majority of students like to play guessing games. In English classes, they are usually playing games in which they have to guess the object that another student is drawing and similar guessing games. Sports games such as football, volleyball, basketball are in the second place. Another game that is common in English classes and really popular among students is bingo. Also, students like to play board games such as monopoly as well as games that require a total physical response (TPR). One of the most popular games among students is so-called “day and night” game in which students have to listen to instructions of the teacher and act a certain way depending on if it is day or night. Another popular TPR game is hide and seek. Simon says is a game that was common in students’ answers. The least popular games were video games, role-play games and drawing games. Some of these games were present in English classes while students play other games at home. Bearing in mind results above, we can conclude that students’ definitely like to play various kinds of games depending on their personality and preferences. They also like to learn through play and find games such as Simon says, bingo, guessing words games quite interesting part of English classes. The above-mentioned games, as well as other types of games, should be implemented more in English classes because it proved out that students like to play games in English classes and learn through play. Again it is of crucial importance that teachers choose games suitable for particular classes, based on students’ preferences, age, level of proficiency and size of the class.

5.4.2 Teachers’ questionnaire

Teachers’ questionnaire was comprised of eight questions. (Appendix 2) The aim was to see the teacher’s perspective on the role of play in English classes. Also, the questionnaire had the following goals: to see what types of games they use most frequently and what are the sources from which they choose games for the class, also what challenges teachers are facing when implementing games in English classes. Two teachers teaching 3rd and 4th grades in elementary schools: “Enver Čolaković” and “Safvet-beg Bašagić” Breza were given a questionnaire.

The teachers’ answers were analyzed and the following conclusions were drawn:

Q1. In your own words, how do you define “educational games“?

In the first questions teacher were asked to define educational games. Teachers think that educational games can improve the learning of the English language; they also consider it to be a good educational tool to make learning more fun and to enhance motivation.

Q2. Do you use educational games in English classes when teaching 3rd and 4th grade? If yes how often? If no why not?

The second question was related to the frequency of games being used in English classes. Both teachers said that they use games as much as they can not only in 3rd and 4th grades but also with older students as well.

Q3. What kinds of educational games do you most frequently use in English lessons? Do they focus on speaking, listening, writing or reading skills?

When it comes to games that are being the most frequently used in English lesson teachers mentioned the following games: board games, plays, project works, bingo, Polly says and guessing games. In the student’s poll, we could see that some of the above-mentioned games are students’ favorite games. Also, teachers said that the games most frequently focus on speaking, listening, and writing skills.

Q4. If you do use educational games during the class, do you use games from schoolbooks, internet or maybe come up with your own games? What criteria do you use when choosing the right game for the class?

The main sources for games are schoolbooks, the internet, and sometimes teachers come up with their own ideas. When it comes to criteria that teachers use they usually choose games that are long enough to motivate or relax students. Also, they choose games that enable vocabulary revision. Another criterion that is really important for teachers is that games are suitable for students’ proficiency level and that students can easily understand the language being used in the game. Games shouldn’t last for too long, otherwise, students might lose interest.

Q5. How useful are educational games as learning activities in English lessons?

What are the attitudes of students towards the use of educational games in English lessons?

When it comes to the usefulness of games in teaching English teachers think that games can be really useful and that they enhance language learning. They also said that students like educational games very much, that they keep student's attention so students are more focused in the classes, also that students find games really interesting and enjoy participating in them.

Q6. In your opinion what are the benefits of using educational games in the classroom? Do you think that they foster language learning?

As far as the benefits of the games in the English classes are concerned teachers mentioned the following benefits: they enhance language learning and make classes more interesting for students and teachers as well, through games students easily acquire new knowledge, students are more focused on the class itself during the games, and English classes are more fun for students when accompanied with games.

Q7. What are the difficulties a teacher may encounter in using educational language games in English lessons? Does the school curriculum give you enough space to incorporate educational games in the class?

Apart from many benefits that teachers mentioned when implementing games in the class, there are several challenges that they are facing when trying to do so. Teachers said that they need more resources for the games; usually, school is not providing additional material or resources for games so teachers have to find their own resources. Another challenge is to choose the right game for student's level; sometimes some students cannot understand the rules of the games and language being used during the game. Teachers were also asked whether a school curriculum gives them enough space to incorporate educational games into the classroom. One teacher said that there is enough space for games implementation because 3rd grade students have 2 classes in a week, and students of 4th grade have 3 classes in a week. Other teacher did not express her opinion when it comes to this matter.

Q8. Do you think that educational language games should be used more in the classroom? Do you think that schoolbook is motivating teachers enough for using games in the classroom?

In the last question, teachers were asked if educational games should be used more frequently and whether school book is motivating them to use educational games. It is interesting that teachers had opposite answers, one teacher said that games should be used more frequently while other teacher said that games educational language games are being used enough and

that school book is motivating teachers enough to implement educational games into English classes. The similar question was given to students in student's poll and the majority of them said that they should play more in English classes.

To sum up, we can say that both teachers are using educational games that focus on four macro skills in the classroom as much as they can. They usually use schoolbook or internet as main sources or as inspiration for games. When it comes to criteria for choosing the right game, it is crucial for both teachers that games fit students' proficiency level and that they don't last too long, because students at this age still have limited attention span. Both teachers agree that games can be really useful tools in teaching the English language and that there are many benefits of implementing games into the classroom. However, there are some challenges that teachers face when implementing games into the classroom such as not enough resources, or it is difficult to choose an appropriate game for students. Teachers had divided opinion when it comes to including more games into the classroom. From the results above we can see that even two teachers working in the same town, teaching students of a similar age have a different opinion about certain aspects of teaching. It would be interesting to further research this topic, and to extend the scope of the research in order to see the opinion of other teachers when it comes to this matter.

5.4.3 Schoolbook analysis

The schoolbooks analyzed in the study were: DIP IN 3 and DIP IN 4. DIP IN 3 is published in 2011 by Sarajevo Publishing, authors are Mirela Vasić and Biserka Džeba and this book is used for 3rd grade of elementary school. The book that is being used for 4th grade of elementary school is DIP IN 4 published in 2008 by Sarajevo Publishing and the authors are Mirela Vasić, Zarifa Kazazović, Biserka Džeba and Maja Mardešić.

As far as DIP IN 3 is concerned the schoolbook is comprised of 124 pages, and divided into 5 units preceded by introductory unit and followed by unit dedicated to holidays. In the last part of the book word list and stickers could be found. The number of lessons in each unit may vary from four to seven lessons per unit. Each unit including introductory unit as well is followed by sum up lesson. The primary concern of this paper was to see if there are games or elements of games present in the book. After the analysis of the book it can be concluded that

many games and elements of the games are present in the book. Games such as Polly says, games with boys and girls, game with numbers, yes no game, point or touch game, guessing game, color game, red or green game could be found in the schoolbook. Also, a lot of elements of games could be found such as songs which require students to listen and mime the song, a lot of dialogues that students can act out, as well as a lot of stickers and posters. Finally, the above mentioned games fit the age and level of proficiency of students, since the games require a lot of repetition, use of sounds and rhythm as well as TPR which is preferable when teaching students of 3rd grade. For example, the game Polly says requires students to listen to instructions and follow the commands. This particular game is useful for students because they can practice their listening skills while playing, so in this way, teachers can make sure that students practice language and enjoy the activity.

When it comes to DIP IN 4, 134 pages book is comprised of five units preceded by starting up unit and followed by unit dedicated to holidays. Word list could be found at the end of the book. The number of lessons in each unit can vary from three to seven. Just like in DIP IN 3, each unit is followed by sum up lesson. When it comes to games and elements of games there are many games that can be successfully implemented in the class such as bingo, stand up sit down game, yes no chairs game, Simon says, who is who?, touch your..., guessing game, Chinese whispers, snakes and ladders. Many elements of the games such as; songs in which students are required to sing and mime actions, as well as act out mini dialogues are present in the schoolbook. When we compare games for 3rd and 4th grade we can notice that they have a lot of similar elements, games still require a lot of repetition as well as TPR. However, we can notice that there are games which require more speaking skills such as Chinese whispers. In this particular game, students form a line and the first student in a line comes up with the message and whispers it to the ear of the second person in line. The second student in line repeats the message to the third player and so on. This game is useful because students can practice their speaking and listening skills, and it can be really useful for their age and proficiency level.

Bearing in mind written above we can say that both books provide enough games and elements of the games for successful game implementation in the English classes. Our hypothesis that schoolbooks for 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school motivate English teachers to implement didactic games into English classes has been confirmed. If we further analyze the obtained results, having in mind theories and principles mentioned in previous

chapters we came to the conclusion that most of the theories and principles are being successfully implemented into the classroom. For instance, the age of the students, proficiency level, as well as an emotional, cognitive, social level of development are taken into consideration. Both teachers pay attention to these aspects and the school books analyzed provide enough material for successful language learning. However, it is important to mention limitations of the study. Although the scope of the study included a large number of students (194 students), only two teachers took part in the study. So beyond any doubt in order to obtain more precise results more teachers should take part in the study and more schoolbooks should be analyzed. In that case, more accurate results would be obtained.

6. CONCLUSION

As it has been noted the role of play in grades 3 and 4 of elementary school is really important, and it shouldn't be disregarded. In the past, this role has not been recognized because more traditional methods of teaching were emphasized in contrast to games and play. Luckily, after so many years of research, it has been proven that games can be really beneficial for language learning, especially when it comes to young learners. Children are active learners, in that way, they learn new things and experiment with the world around them. The period when they start going to school can be stressful for them because they have other rules that they need to respect, they need to get up earlier in the morning, etc. However, if we bring a piece of their world into the classroom we will make this transition way easier. Bringing games into the classroom is a great way to make children love not only English language but learning in general.

There are many things that we need to take into consideration before implementing games in English classes. First of all, we must familiarize ourselves with theories of first and second language acquisition in order to be able to understand how to approach children and language learning. Many theories mentioned in this paper agree that children are natural learners; they learn new things without paying special attention. Games can a really good way for children to learn subconsciously. However, we cannot include any game into the classroom. Every educational game that we want to implement into English classes must have a clear goal and objective. Implementing game just for the sake of the game is meaningless. For our students, games are far more than just games; through games they learn not only language but they also develop different skills. For example, through role play games they can learn a lot about real life situations, how to act in certain situations, etc. Also, we must take into consideration the age of our students, level of proficiency, size of the class, and types of students in one class and choose the right game accordingly.

When it comes to implementation of educational games into the classroom it is really beneficial that we can choose a game that will focus on a particular skill that we want to practice with our students; whether we are talking about productive, receptive, grammar or vocabulary skill. Also, it is important to mention that although the focus of one game can be

to practice for example grammar skills, our students will also practice other skills while playing. Games have multiple layers and that is another benefit of game implementation into the classroom.

The study conducted and presented in this paper proved that educational games have many benefits and that they should definitely be part of the English classes. Teachers who participated in the study recognized the importance of educational games in English classes and showed a willingness to use it whenever it is possible. Students as well had a really positive attitude towards educational games in English classes. Last but not least, after the analysis of schoolbooks that are being used in two schools that took part in the study, we can draw a conclusion that those schoolbooks promote learning through play. There are many games and elements of the games that English language teachers can successfully implement into their classes. Having in mind all stated above we can conclude that learning through play can really foster language learning, and that games deserve a place in language classrooms.

For me personally, this study has been really useful because it has given me a new perspective on the teaching profession. As a novice teacher, I had a chance to learn a lot of new things that will enrich my career as well as help me in my future development. Some of the things that I have learned while doing research and conducting the study for this paper will definitely become an integral part of my teaching in the future. On the other hand, while doing this research I have realized how much I still have to learn, there is a long path in front of me and this is just the beginning. This research motivated me to research even more and to invest in my professional development. However, there are many questions that still remained unanswered, such as how to choose the right game that would fit all students in the class bearing in mind their differences and preferences? Or how to motivate all students to equally participate in the class? Etc. In the future, I will try to find an answer to these questions. I would recommend all future teachers to investigate this topic of implanting games into the classroom because games can be really useful tools in teaching and their importance has yet to be recognized.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Students' poll

Svrha ovog istraživanja je da se utvrdi u kojoj mjeri su igre prisutne u 3 i 4 razredu u nastavi engleskog jezika. Prikupljeni podaci će se koristiti u magistarskom radu „Uloga igre u ranom učenju engleskog jezika u trećem i četvrtom razredu osnovne škole“. Anketa je anonimna i povjerljiva.

Koji ste razred? _____

Molimo vas da zaokružite jedan od ponuđenih odgovora

1. Volim se igrati.

DA PONEKAD NE

2. U školi se često igramo na časovima engleskog jezika.

DA PONEKAD NE

3. Osjećam se lijepo kada se igramo na časovima engleskog jezika

DA PONEKAD NE

4. Učestvujem u igrama na časovima engleskog jezika

DA PONEKAD NE

5. Na časovima engleskog jezika slušamo pjesmice i pjevamo.

DA PONEKAD NE

6. Na časovima engleskog jezika se igramo igara u parovima ili grupama.

DA PONEKAD NE

7. Na časovima engleskog jezika se igramo igara s posterima i slikama.

DA PONEKAD NE

8. Mislim da bismo se trebali više igrati na časovima engleskog jezika

DA PONEKAD NE

9. Moja omiljena igra je:

Appendix 2

Teachers' questionnaire

Study on the Role of Play in Early English Language Learning in Primary Grades 3 and 4.

The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent play is implemented in teaching English as a foreign language in 3rd and 4th grade of elementary school. Also how teachers perceive using games in the classroom and whether they believe play can enhance learning in primary school. The gathered data is going to be used for master thesis "The Role of Play in Early English Language Learning in Primary Grades 3 and 4. The questionnaire is anonymous and confidential.

1. In your own words, how do you define "educational games"?

2. Do you use educational games in English classes when teaching 3rd and 4th grade? If yes how often? If no why not?

3. What kinds of educational games do you most frequently use in English lessons? Do they focus on speaking, listening, writing or reading skills?

4. If you do use educational games during the class, do you use games from schoolbooks, internet or maybe come up with your own games? What criteria do you use when choosing the right game for the class?

5. How useful are educational games as learning activities in English lessons? What are the attitudes of students towards the use of educational games in English lessons?

6. In your opinion what are the benefits of using educational games in the classroom? Do you think that they foster language learning?

7. What are the difficulties a teacher may encounter in using educational language games in English lessons? Does the school curriculum give you enough space to incorporate educational games in the class?

8. Do you think that educational language games should be used more in the classroom? Do you think that schoolbook is motivating teachers enough for using games in the classroom?

Thank you for your participation

Appendix 3

The list of the games:

1. Board Race

The teacher should split the class into two teams and give each team a marker. The teacher should draw a line down the middle of the board and write a topic at the top. Students are required to write as many words as possible related to the topic. Each team wins one point for each correct word, unreadable or misspelled words are not counted. This game can be appropriate for all age levels, and it can be a useful tool in revising vocabulary and grammar.

2. Word Jumble Race

The teacher should write out a number of sentences, using different colors for each sentence, and then cut up the sentences into words. The teacher then can put sentences into hats, cups or any other object. Students should work in teams. There is no limitation in a number of teams; just the teacher must make sure that there are enough sentences for each team. The task of each team is to put their sentences in the correct order. The winning team is the first team to have all sentences correctly ordered. This game is also suitable for all age levels, and it can be really useful in teaching grammar, word order and spelling.

3. The mime

The teacher should write out some actions, like washing the dishes, on the pieces of paper, and then put them into a bag. The teacher should split the class into two teams and ask one student from each team to come to the front of the class and choose an action from the bag. The task of both students is to mime the action to their team. The first team to shout the correct answer wins a point. The game continues until all students mime at least one action. This game can be useful for vocabulary revision as well as practicing speaking skills.

4. 20 objects

The teacher can take any 20 objects from the classroom and arrange them on the task. For example, the teacher can bring a basket of different fruits and vegetables if students are learning the names of fruits and vegetables. The teacher should give students enough time to look at the objects, then cover everything with a sheet or something similar. Students are required to write out as many items as they can remember on a piece of paper. When all students are done, the teacher can write a list of the items on the blackboard and give students a chance to self-correct. This game can be good for vocabulary revision as well as practice writing skills. Also, the game can be appropriate for all age groups because the teacher can choose how difficult the words will be depending on the level of proficiency of his/her students.

5. Categories

Students should draw six columns on their papers and write a category at the top of each column. The teacher should do the same on the blackboard. The category should fit the proficiency level of the students; if we are working with younger students categories should be simple such as fruits and vegetables etc. The teacher can choose the random letter and write it on the board and then give students enough time to write down a word for each category that starts with that letter. Then the teacher will check the answers of his/her students and write the answers on the board so all students can check their answers and write down a word if they haven't managed to fill out it before. This game can be good for improving vocabulary as well as writing, speaking, and listening skills.

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