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HOW TO MAKE VOCABULARY FUN WITH EFL ONLINE GAMES

ЯК ПЕРЕТВОРИТИ НАВЧАННЯ ЛЕКСИЦИ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В ЗАДОВОЛЕННЯ ЗА ДОПОМОГОЮ ОН-ЛАЙН ІГОР

КАК ПРЕВРАТИТЬ ОБУЧЕНИЕ ЛЕКСИКЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В УДОВОЛЬСТВИЕ С ПОМОЩЬЮ ОН-ЛАЙН ИГР

The article is devoted to one of the innovative, alternative tools of teaching vocabulary in EFL classroom and offers students the ways to enhance English vocabulary through browser games. Seven browser games have been presented in the paper. The author considers that games are a source of fresh ideas and relieve the monotony of education. Alongside traditional vocabulary presentations, games play a very important role in language teaching and learning. Moreover, games are a good way to raise students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language and to improve and extend learning skills, which is essential for language learning. The evidence shows that online games significantly diversify the entire educational process. Based on our teaching experience, we can state that introducing vocabulary through online games greatly facilitates students' understanding, raises their engagement into the lesson, makes them interested to advance in their learning, provides new ideas and brings variety into the classroom.

Keywords: alternative tools of teaching, vocabulary, browser games, educational process, online vocabulary games.

Стаття присвячена одному з альтернативних засобів навчання англійській мові як іноземній і пропонує студентам способи розширити словниковий запас англійської мови за допомогою браузерних ігор. У статті представлено вісім браузерних ігор. Автор статті висловлює думку, що ігри є джерелом нових ідей і привносять різноманітність в навчання. Поряд із традиційними способами презентації лексичного матеріалу, ігри відіграють важливу роль у викладанні та вивченні мови. Окрім того, он-лайн ігри – гарний спосіб підвищити мотивацію студентів до навчання, вдосконалити та розширити навчальні навички, що є необхідним при вивченні мови. Факти свідчать, що ігри значною мірою розмаїтять увесь освітній процес. Спираючись на наш професійний досвід, ми можемо стверджувати, що презентація лексики через ігри значно полегшує розуміння матеріалу, підвищує рівень активності студентів на занятті, заохочує їх до подальшого прогресу в навчанні, є джерелом нових ідей та привносять різноманітність у навчання.

Ключові слова: альтернативні засоби навчання, лексика, браузерні ігри, освітній процес, лексичні он-лайн ігри.

Статья посвящена одному из альтернативных средств обучения английскому языку как иностранному и предлагает студентам способы расширить словарный запас с помощью

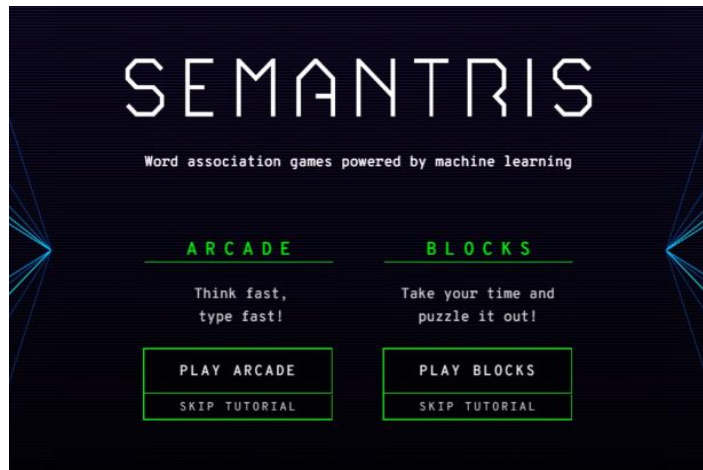
браузерных игр. В статье представлено восемь браузерных игр. Автор статьи выражает мнение, что игры являются источником новых идей и приносят разнообразие в обучение. Наряду с традиционными способами презентации лексического материала игры имеют важное значение в преподавании и изучении языка. Кроме того, он-лайн игры – хороший способ повысить мотивацию студентов к обучению, усовершенствовать и расширить учебные навыки, что необходимо при изучении языка. Факты свидетельствуют о том, что игры в значительной степени разнообразят весь учебный процесс. Опираясь на наш профессиональный опыт, мы можем утверждать, что презентация лексики через игры значительно облегчает понимание материала, повышает уровень активности студентов на занятии, поощряет их к дальнейшему прогрессу в обучении, является источником новых идей и приносит разнообразие в обучение.

Ключевые слова: альтернативные средства обучения, лексика, браузерные игры, учебный процесс, лексические он-лайн игры.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had detrimental effect on the lives of educators in 2020 – 2022. There were almost two years of unprecedented challenge for teachers working online. They were put on a razor`s edge by new and ever-increasing demands for tech solutions. In several important 2021 studies, researchers concluded that “teachers were being pushed to adopt new technology without the resources and equipment necessary for its correct didactic use” [1].

The main aim of the research is to offer a general outline of several browser vocabulary games teachers of English can use both in secondary schools and higher education institutions to develop digital literacy, one of the most important competences of the 21st century. Games are one of the alternative essential tools in the modern English language classroom. They allow students to think in an original and creative way, put what they have learnt to immediate use, create experiences with their classmates, and get away from the daily classroom routine.

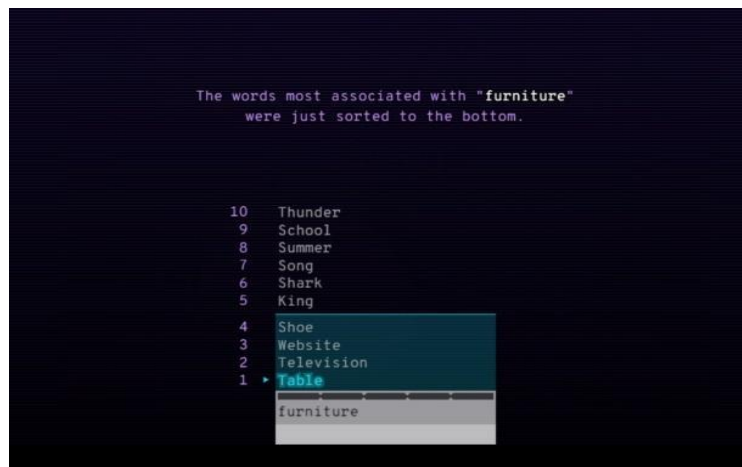
One of the browser games that can raise students` motivation for learning English as a foreign language and for improving and extending learning skills, vocabulary in particular, is called *Semantris* (<https://research.google.com/semantris/>) (pic. 1) [2].



Picture 1.

Semantris is a word association game based on AI technology. You can choose between *Arcade* and *Blocks*.

In *Semantris` Arcade* a student enters a word, and AI (Artificial Intelligence) examines all the words and selects those ones it considers to be most corresponding. As AI was trained on conversational model including a lot of different topics, it can make a great variety of types of associations.



Picture 2.

A student is offered to type the first word that comes to his (her) mind when he (she) thinks of “table” (pic. 2). When the AI sorts the list, the most related words are put to the bottom. In picture 2, you can see that AI considers the word “*Table*” is a better conversational response to “*Furniture*” than “*Thunder*”.

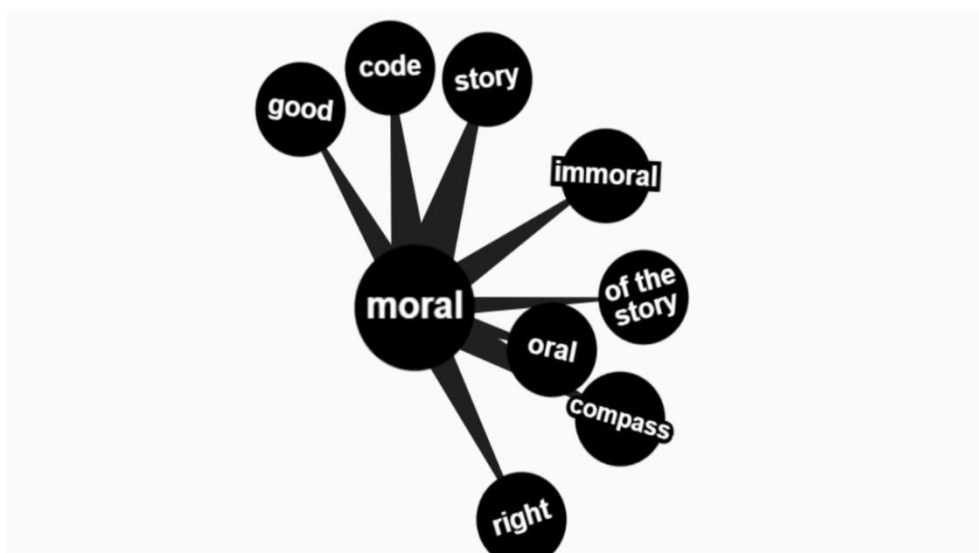


Picture 3.

Another format of *Semantris* is *Blocks* (pic.3). It explores what types of word associations the AI understands best. When a student enters a clue, the AI will analyse all the blocks and remove the one it considers to be most related. If it touches blocks that share a colour, they are also removed. A student is able to earn more powerful blocks by destroying larger groups.

In both formats a student is offered to use slang, lists of examples, pop culture references, and even full sentences.

One more online game based on associations is “*Human Brain Cloud*” (pic. 4) (<https://www.humanbraincloud.com/>) [3].

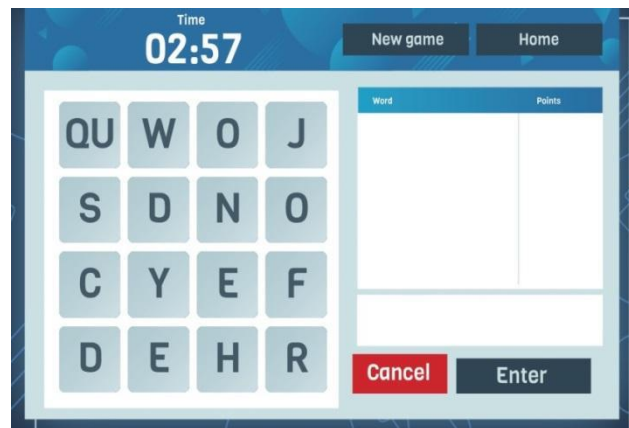


Picture 4.

Human Brain Cloud is a very simple word association game and at the same time it is a kind of social experiment. A student types the first word that comes to

mind. For example, given the word “moral”, a common word players submit might be the word “code”, and this would result in a very strong association between “moral’ and “code”. This game will be of help for acquiring new vocabulary owing to the connection cloud.

Another story that can add some fun to the vocabulary class is “*Wordshake*” (pic 5) (<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/general-english/games/wordshake>) [4].



Picture 5.

A student has three minutes to make as many words as he (she) can from 16 letters. The words are required to be between three and seven letters long. The longer the word the more points a student gets. Students should spell the words correctly and use each letter only once. Besides improving students` spelling skills, the game develops creativity and quick reaction. The only inconvenience students can have is that the game only works by clicking on the letters on the screen. It doesn`t allow keyboard input. Owing to the fact that the game is not complicated, it can be used on different levels of learning.

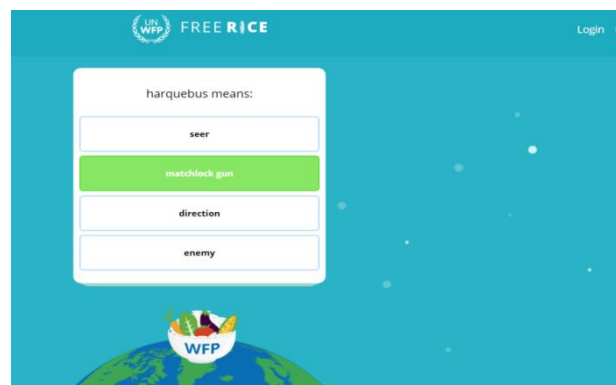
Another activity which can help students enhance their vocabulary and practice listening and spelling is “*Spelling Bee*” (pic. 6) (<https://www.visualthesaurus.com/bee/play>) [5].



Picture 6.

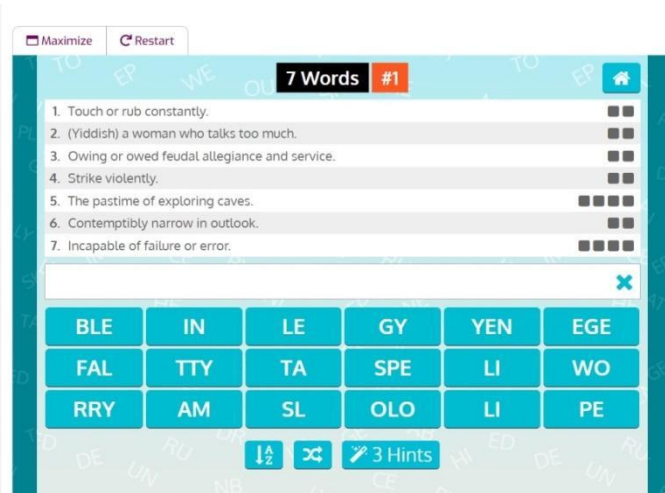
Students` task is to listen to the word pronounced, spell it and get a great variety of associations and synonyms. Another option for advanced students is to guess the word having got the definition.

“*Freerice*” (pic. 7) (<https://freerice.com/>) [6] is a quiz, which will help students increase their knowledge of vocabulary step by step. A player is given a word and four variants of synonyms. Only one variant is correct. There are five levels in the game: from easiest to hardest, which allows using it both by secondary schools and adult learners, students of philological departments.



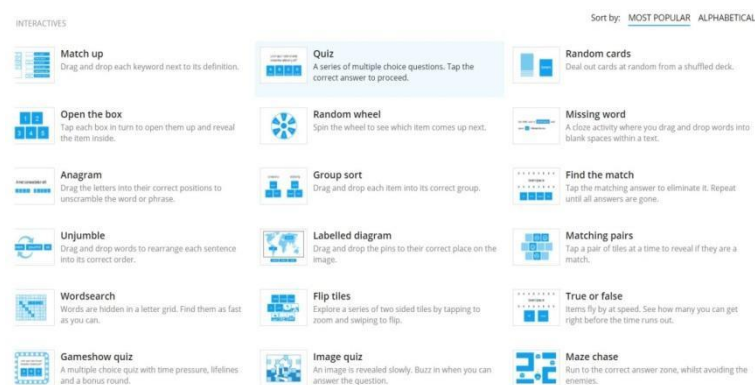
Picture 7.

One more browser game for advanced level is “7 Words” (pic. 8) (<https://www.mindgames.com/game/7+Words+-+777+word+puzzles>) [7].



Picture 8.

The player is given seven definitions and eighteen pieces with letters, which should be organized in a definite order to get the words defined. There are 777 puzzles in the game, which is a great opportunity to learn a great variety of new words.



Picture 9.

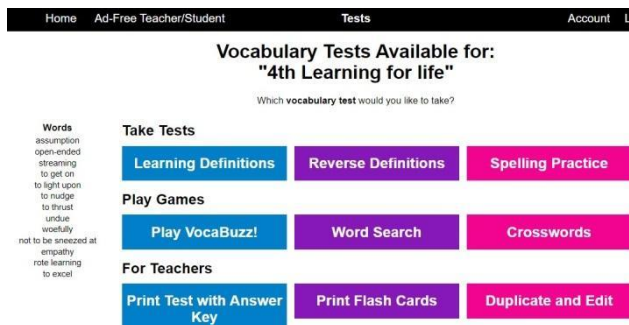
There is a great variety of challenging games on the platform **Wordwall** (worldwall.net) [8]. It requires at-cost subscription and offers two levels of user license: regular and premium. Even with regular one a teacher can have a lot of opportunities to incorporate game process into teaching (pic. 9). One of the greatest advantages of **Wordwall** is that a teacher can create his (her) own activity in the frame of the template. We would like to demonstrate a screenshot of the game, called **Maze Chase**, which was done by the author of the article for the students to revise phrasal verbs with *up* and *down* (pic. 10).



Picture 10.

The aim is run to the correct answer box, whilst avoiding the “enemies”. Besides knowledge of phrasal verbs, the game requires quick reaction, self-control and the feeling of competitiveness.

One more interesting application is *Vocabtest* (<https://www.vocabtest.com/>). Here a teacher can both find and create quizzes to introduce, revise and hone vocabulary on the topic (pic. 11). While playing, students can practice spelling, giving definitions and doing crosswords. All the results are shown on the leaderboard. *Play VocaBuzz* is a competitive activity, where the faster a student answers, the more points he (she) gets.



Picture 11.

Thus, the use of online games as vocabulary activity in Teaching English as a Foreign Language can be used as an innovative technique in language teaching. Using browser vocabulary games to teach English results in real communication involving ideas, emotions, quick reactions and adaptability.

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