

Disfunctions in teaching the language and culture of ancestors with the use of educational games

Abstract

Multimodality appearing in design: About ourselves and the peculiarities of Siedlce and Edmonton. What connects and what distinguishes our countries? shows the diverse paths which education follows. The multidimensionality invites students to be active, to develop their language skills, to use new technologies helpful in building dialogue between Poles and Polish Canadians. Through cooperation in the project people discovered their small homelands. By interacting in the project, they became ambassadors of Polishness. The article uses the method of document analysis, observation and case study.

Keywords: dysfunctions, language, teaching the language of ancestors, interaction, international cooperation, games

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Introduction

A student starts school with an innate curiosity to learn about the world and people. Unfortunately, not all of them can succeed. This can be caused by developmental dysfunctions such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, disorders of vision, hearing, motor coordination, language functions, lateralisation. Their causes are not fully explained. They may be caused by disorders in the nervous, motor and cognitive systems.

One important tool in bridging the gap between children is the use of Multimodality, which involves the use of multimedia materials that combine aural, linguistic and visual layers. An example is the project About Ourselves and the Peculiarities of Siedlce and Edmonton. What unites and what differs our countries? Thanks to the involvement of Polish students, it was intended to arouse the curiosity of Canadian Polish children about Poland, the country of their ancestors. Through multidimensionality and the use of new technologies, they educated and developed their language skills. Even children with developmental dyslexia, on both the Polish and Canadian sides, had an equal opportunity to learn more fully, as teamwork using multimedia allowed them to discover their other strengths. The variety of authentic sources of texts created by the students: interviews, singing songs, telling fairy tales, reading pre-prepared excerpts from novels taught the participants self-confidence and motivated them to improve their skills.

Developmental dyslexia, as a specific difficulty in writing or reading, can already be observed at pre-school age through symptoms such as reduced dexterity of the hands, weaker spatial orientation, difficulties in remembering numbers, dates, names, poems or defects in pronunciation or letter confusion. This continues with difficulties in many subjects through delayed development of cognitive functions. Taking a conscious approach to the children's learning and development, teachers from both schools have incorporated the most effective, polysensory teaching methods. Multidimensionality, the involvement of multiple senses: hearing, vision and kinaesthesia invited participants to be active, to build a dialogue. Through international cooperation, the young people discovered their small homelands. Using their senses to the maximum, they were able to interact and become ambassadors for their country.

The aim of this study is to consider the influence of the linguistic sphere and the use of a variety of teaching techniques through cooperation between student teams living in remote parts of the world

on the development of pupils with developmental dysfunctions.

The article is based on material collected from educational games and promotional materials prepared by students of the Siedlce Technical School No. 2 in Siedlce and the Polish School in Edmonton. The paper uses the method of document analysis, observation and case study.

Students worked in workshop groups or individually. They were the creators of field games, virtual games, infographics about cities, advertising videos, posters in graphic programmes for presentation during the Saturday teleconferences. The joint acquisition of knowledge through remote communication, contributed to a better understanding of regions and cities. The Poles argued that the city of Siedlce was an interesting place to visit, while the Canadian Polish invited visitors to explore Edmonton in Polish. It was also helpful to meet distinguished guests, scholars of Polish literature and athletes to whom one could ask questions.¹

The individualisation of the learning process, different criteria of evaluation influence the formation of a linguistic world view², stimulates the participants to communicate, and multimodality in the games created,³ as part of the innovation, supports the cognitive process, playing and learning. Young people were able to influence the results of their work independently or with the help of the teacher by creating videos, infographics, games about the city, using media mechanisms to influence a positive image of the city.

Through a variety of language teaching techniques such as brainstorming or the discussion method, groups independently considered the validity of including an issue or adopting changes. Some created a simplified decision tree and shared tasks. Project participants from a Polish school abroad made models of two town halls: one in Siedlce and one in Edmonton. While working, they read interesting facts in Polish with a teacher and learned about architectural elements. Similarly, young people from ZSP No. 2 in Siedlce consulted each other on the design of games, infographics or scripts for several-minute commercials. The multimodality tools gave them options, provided space for action and stimulated interactivity.

Here are some examples of coupled real and virtual realities where motivation occurs through incentives or rewards:

- BRAVO! You managed to get all the numbers to open the chest.
- Remember, keep looking around. Task locations are marked on pavements and buildings.

- c) Explore Siedlce in an interesting way! Our smartphone-based outdoor game will certainly help you do that!
- d) See the painting “Ecstasy of St. Francis” painted by El Greco himself!

Through multimedia techniques, pupils influenced the perception of the perceptions, thinking and feeling of the audience to whom they were directing their message. Through the creation of games, pupils became guides of a created route of events. Through appropriately chosen language, they became creators of a puzzling aura, intriguing or provoking the players⁴ thought process.

Here are examples

- a) We invite you on an expedition full of adventures. Many curiosities and lots of fun await you.
- b) Join us! What is Jacek doing on top of the town hall? Let's find out together.
- c) What is the secret behind Oginski' Palace?

The interaction between the sender and receiver of the message took place not only through letters and numbers in a notebook, but also through posters, infographics, games, which are excellent tools for teaching the history, culture of a place. This ensures active participation in the education process, by taking part in quizzes, choosing a route or a monument worth seeing.

The use of the internet, smartphone or computer applications, gave participants the opportunity to enter virtual buildings, museums, and google maps, allowing pupils to take a tour of Siedlce or Edmonton together, to speak the language of their ancestors.

Another proposal to promote language learning and regional cognition is the game “Historical Adventure in Siedlce”. It proposes turning participants into heroes of the game, searching for a mysterious underground passage which existed centuries ago from Oginskis' Palace to St Stanislaus' Church. It also encourages visitors to meet the legendary Jack from the town hall, see the eagle statue of Józef Piłsudski, the cemetery Lapidarium or the neo-Gothic cathedral. It has the form of a persuasive message, advertising the city of Siedlce.⁵ Alongside historical and cultural information, the participants created plots, chose linguistic means which value and at the same time enhance the qualities of a given place. Through interactivity, interpersonality, both the creator of the game and the recipient-player are involved, reading out an appropriately chosen play on words.⁶ Language games as a joke, a game, have the power of intellectual and emotional intensification.⁷

The language learning of the participants therefore takes place through the use of multimodal, interconnected, diverse methods, in the context of a linguistic world picture (JOS). The way in which the topography of a place is perceived, the norms, the rules influencing the reading of the meaning of the language of dialogue are then made visible. It is crucial in discovering the correct linguistic meaning of given word compounds.

The numerous curiosities collected encourage both students without dyslexia and students with developmental problems. They also encourage visitors to explore Edmonton:

- 1. Founded in 1795, as a settlement associated with the fur trade.
- 2. The town was a supply site during the Klondike gold rush.
- 3. The main owner was the Hudsonian Trading Company.

- 4. Edmonton has been called the Gateway to the North because of its important communication and trade links.

A unique attraction is the Edmonton Muttart orangery with exotic plants, which is shaped like a pyramid of glass, lying within the river valley. Pupils shared historical facts, information about monuments during teleconferences, emails. They gave color by using adjectives, epithets: original form, unusual places, neo-Gothic building, delicious meals.

Other examples can be found on leaflets and in educational games:

- a) It is one of the tallest buildings in Poland (about the cathedral)
- b) One of the most valuable architectural objects of public interest; one of the most interesting town hall buildings in Poland.

Numerals, often used in the collected material, also have a valuing function

- 1. A showpiece of Siedlce are towers as high as 75m!
- 2. Siedlce's lagoon has 40 hectares, 600,000 cubic liters of water, and its tributary, the Muchawka River, is a 32.11-kilometre stretch.
- 3. There are more than 50 places to visit and 8 virtual characters to find.
- 4. There were 10 islets in the park, 4.5km of water channels.
- 5. Edmonton's population is more than 730 000, speaking English (70%) and French (20%)
- 6. Edmonton University of Alberta, founded in 1908, educates more than 30,000 students and employs more than four thousand faculty members.

West Edmonton Mall, is the largest shopping mall in North America with around eight hundred shops and restaurants.

A number of verbs in the imperative mode were used, which added to the dynamic nature of the statements: join, see, explore, enter. Also noticeable is the contrasting use of words: old-new, former-today: Old photographs, new buildings.⁸

Polish students creating games, quizzes about the twin cities, suggested using web tools to design visual, interactive content, such as Genially, Canva. Quite often they used a timer, designed tasks so that participants had an influence on the decision-making part, the order in which tasks were selected. Crosswords, quizzes, games were created: interactive image, where at the press of a button a trivia, a riddle appears. Some prepared Prezzi presentations or Escape Room-type field games using binary codes, Morse code, scout codes or location maps.⁹

So, do children with developmental dysfunctions have a chance for proper physical and emotional development in public schools? Is it possible to minimize dissonance between peers? Is it possible to rehabilitate, as it were, less developed hearing and speech skills through the process of learning the ancestral language? Absolutely yes, because thanks to the multimodality used in educational games, awareness of multifaceted cultural and linguistic values is increased, knowledge of history, monuments is broadened. In addition, one learns to think, to anticipate, to plan activities using new technologies. The multidimensionality of the games, infographics, online meetings, including a variety of texts with different forms of communication, consisted of an interweaving of information and advertising, entertainment and learning, real and virtual worlds. Learning through

dialogue between two communities creates links in the current of interactive communication of the 21st century.¹⁰

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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