THE CASE FOR PEDAGOGICAL PLAY IN ADULT EDUCATION

DR. HILDA FREIMUTH

Phd. Thmoson Rivers University
E-mail: hfreimuth@tru.ca

This research examines the use of pedagogical play to introduce background knowledge in an academic English as an additional language (EAL) reading class. Students at a university in Canada experienced six weeks of instructional pedagogical play at the start of lessons. A survey was used to examine learner reaction to the use of this pedagogy in a serious academic learning environment. Findings revealed that of the thirteen students in class, all thirteen agreed or strongly agreed the use of this type of pedagogy was enjoyable, citing the use of humour by the teacher as the most welcome of all strategies. Gamification was the second highest enjoyable form of pedagogical play. The use of thought-provoking facts, pictures, and videos came in third with the use of personal stories from the teacher a close fourth. In fifth place was the use of the 'whimsical' or 'unusual' in class, not being identified as a 'favourite' but still highly enjoyable. This research contradicts the research in the field claiming pedagogical play is best used in primary school and not in adult education. Student comments ranged from the use of pedagogical play as making students happier and therefore faster learners, keeping students interested, making class less stressful, giving students motivation to come to school, and making things easier to learn. This new research informs university practice in all subjects, not just language learning, and hopes to inspire instructors worldwide to include pedagogical play in their lessons.

Keywords - Playful Pedagogy, Academic English, Reading, Adult Education