Playing in Online Classrooms: Possibility, Necessity, Or Both? The Importance of Play In Preschool Online Education

Danica Vlajic[1], Dr. Kristina Petrovic[2], Tamara Djukanov[3]

[1]Psychologist at "Sava" online school for Serbian language, culture and tradition, Serbia

[2]Teacher at "Sava" online school for Serbian language, culture and tradition, Serbia

[3]Coordinator and teacher at "Sava" online school for Serbian language, culture and tradition, Serbia

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to present the methodology used at "Sava" online school for Serbian language, culture, and tradition. Classes at the "Sava" school are held online because they are intended for children aged 3 to 17 from the Serbian diaspora living around the world. It includes classes in Serbian language, literature, history, and art, in correlation with other subjects. The school has different age groups, but it differs from other online language schools' online classes with preschool children (aged 3-6). Classes are conducted in groups of three to five children, with play as one of the most frequent tools and methods. Different types of play are used in "Sava" classrooms: small-motor play, rules-based play, language play, make-believe play, construction play, playing with arts, sensory play, and symbolic play. During all these kinds of play, a teacher has a role of an initiator of play but can be someone who guides the process and gives minimal structure to what actually is open and child-oriented play. Using play in language learning develops and builds social skills and interactions, which are later a cornerstone for language acquisition. During play, children can learn without the pressure of tests and grades. Also, they can have the possibility to explore and use imagination. However, just like any other learning environment, "Sava" has a few challenges at conducting classes – physical distance, setting rules and boundaries, and keeping children occupied for 45 minutes. "Sava" has its unique way of solving these obstacles, and most of them are related to developing and maintaining a close and warm relationship between a teacher and a student.

Key words: communication, online environment, play, social skills, teacher.

info@icnaeducation.org
www.icnaeducation.org