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A Review of Using Games in Teaching Languages

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Abstract

The word “game” is widely used in language teaching. Many educators commonly incorporate games at various levels of instruction. This document aims to present

strategies for effective team-building activities and outline various types of games commonly utilized.

Keywords: Games, Using Games in Teaching Foreign Language, Kinds of Games Used

1. Introduction

In many countries, teaching English has become mandatory. Educators need to instruct students on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and various other aspects. The ultimate goal is to enable students to communicate effectively in English. Given that acquiring a language is a challenging endeavor, educators now confront a significant challenge in discovering methods and approaches to engage students actively in learning English. One effective technique that can be implemented is incorporating games (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) [4].

2. Benefits of using games in teaching languages

Numerous seasoned writers of textbooks and methodology guides have contended that games are not merely activities to pass the time but possess significant educational worth. W. R. Lee argues that the majority of language games require learners to engage with the language rather than contemplate on learning the correct structures (1979:2). He further argues that games ought to be viewed as central rather than peripheral to the foreign language teaching curriculum. There are numerous advantages of utilizing games. "Games can reduce anxiety, thereby increasing the likelihood of input acquisition" (Richard-Amato 1988:147). They are very inspiring and engaging, and they provide timid students with greater chances to share their thoughts and emotions (Hansen 1994:118). They also allow learners to gain new experiences in a foreign language that are not always feasible in a regular class.

"Games help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners *want* to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information." (Andrew, 1984).

According to Aydan (2000) [2], learning a language is a challenging endeavor that can occasionally be exasperating. Persistent effort is needed to comprehend, create, and handle the target language. Carefully selected games are essential because they provide students with a break while enabling them to practice language skills. Games are very motivating because they are fun and also challenging. Additionally, they utilize relevant and practical language in actual situations. "They likewise promote and enhance collaboration. "Games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class" and "Games provide language practice in the various skills- speaking, writing, listening and reading." (Lee, 1995).

3. Strategies for team-building games (Pham, 2019) [3]

3.1 Before the game-based activity

Take the task difficulty into consideration

Team games are typically played by groups of three or more students. Consequently, if it is overly simple, it will lead to member domination where one or two individuals handle the entire task of the group. This will impact learners' motivation. Students with less experience may believe they can avoid responsibilities since the more skilled team members will handle the tasks for them "Thus, the right level of challenge is of paramount importance to deepening students' engagement in team

games” (Pham, 2019) [3].

Break-up a single game-based activity into different tasks

An educator can break an activity into several smaller tasks by creating question sets that allow students to select tasks according to their strengths or interests. This enhances the chances of their involvement in fulfilling the group's objective. This task will inspire their enthusiasm. In short, “the success of a team game depends on a clear division of the team burden” (Huynh, 2019).

Allocate one or two minutes for students to discuss their responsibilities

“Group discussion gives learners time to evaluate their strength, weakness and interests so that they perform tasks that match their abilities” (Pham, 2019) [3]. Additionally, when learners face time limitations, they must divide tasks to complete them punctually instead of allowing only advanced students to take charge of group activities. The time for discussion also increases the difficulty of the task. Students must put in their utmost effort to complete it as swiftly as they can.

Provide a table of student roles

Choose the leader for each group and have them to write down the specific roles for every member. “Individual members will see they are working together toward the team’s goal and contributing to team’s success” (Pham, 2019) [3].

3.2 During the game-based activity

Organize more than one round of the game.

It is evident that the majority of sports include breaks during their games. This is the moment for them to evaluate their performance and implement new strategies. Team activities in foreign language classes are alike. A pause of two or three minutes is needed for them to implement their next strategy. They require time to contemplate their own thoughts. It contributes to the growth of critical thinking.

Continually remind students of their roles

In a difficult task or puzzle, advanced learners might dominate every aspect of the assignment. Teachers need to circulate and remind each group’s student of their role to ensure they are completing their designated tasks. In case of any misunderstandings or issues, the teacher may request that each group member describe their role (Pham, 2019) [3].

Encourage students to exchange their roles

At the conclusion of the first round, instruct students to switch their roles. This stage can provide students a chance to experiment with areas where they have lower confidence. It also helps less advanced students feel like they are an important part of the group when they assume different roles as the game advances (Pham, 2019) [3].

3.3 After the game-based activity

Praising the winning team while encouraging the losing teams

When the game ends, winners are usually the center of attention with a lot exclamatory phrases such as “well done” “good job”. However, it is necessary for teachers to say something to encourage losers. Some comments like “all teams did a good job, I was delighted to see how well you

collaborated in your groups”. “After all, the points the class games is not to declare winners and losers; the purposes are to practice language skills, collaborate, think critically and creatively, and have fun” (Pham, 2019) [3].

Give students one or two minutes to reflect on their overall team performance

Feelings of frustration or disappointment negatively impact students' motivation. This is a key reason why educators should avoid stressing winning and losing. Rather, it is essential to focus on the positive aspects of the activity. Teacher need to ask students some questions to have them reflect: “What do you like about this game” “what have you learned from the competition” “If you played the game again, what would you do differently”.

4. Games Used in teaching language

There were several games used by the English teachers and they should be adapted to be suitable for the level of the students as well as the purposes of the lessons.

4.1 Board Race

Skills practiced: Vocabulary, grammar

How to Play:

- Split the class into two teams and give each team a different-colored marker.
- Draw a line down the middle of the board and write a topic at the top (e.g., "animals," "food," "past tense verbs").
- Teams race to write as many related words as possible in relay format—one student writes, then passes the marker to the next.
- Award one point per correct, legible, correctly spelled word.

4.2 Two Truths and A Lie (Call my Bluff)

Skills practiced: Speaking, listening,

How to Play:

- Write three statements about yourself on the board: two true, one false.
- Let students ask you questions and try to guess which one is the lie.
- Extend the game by having students write their own three statements, then pair up and play with each other.
- Rotate partners every five minutes to maximize speaking practice, then bring the class back together to share one new thing they learned about a classmate.

4.3 Simon Says

Skills practiced: Listening comprehension, vocabulary

How to Play:

- Stand at the front of the class—you're Simon!
- Call out an action with "Simon says..." and do it yourself. Students must copy you.
- Occasionally give an action without saying "Simon says." Anyone who does it is out and sits down.
- The last student standing wins.
- Want to make it trickier? Speed up as the game progresses!

4.4 Word Jumble Race

Skills practiced: Grammar, word order, spelling, writing skills.

How to play:

- Before class, write 3–5 sentences on paper in different colors, one color per team.
- Cut each sentence into individual words.
- Place each scrambled sentence into a cup or envelope, one per team.
- Teams race to rearrange their words into the correct sentence.
- The first team with all sentences correctly ordered wins!

4.5 Hangman**Skills practiced:** Vocabulary**How to Play:**

- Think of a word and draw dashes on the board for each letter.
- Ask students to suggest letters one at a time.
- Correct letters go in the right spots; incorrect ones get added to the side, and you draw one body part of the hanging figure.
- Students win if they guess the word before the figure is complete.

4.6 Pictionary

- **Skills practiced:** Vocabulary

How to play:

- Before class, write target vocabulary words on slips of paper and put them in a bag.
- Divide the class into two teams.
- One student from each team draws a word from the bag and illustrates it on the board—no letters, no speaking.
- Their team shouts guesses. First to get it right earns a point.
- Rotate drawers so every student gets at least one turn.
- Repeat this until all the words are gone - make sure you have enough words that each student gets to draw at least once!

4.7 The Mime**Skills practiced:** Vocabulary, speaking**How to play:**

- Before class, write action phrases on slips of paper (e.g., "washing the dishes," "running in the rain") and place them in a bag.
- Split the class into two teams.
- One student from each team comes to the front, draws an action, and mimes it simultaneously.
- The first team to shout the correct answer scores a point.
- Rotate until every student has had a turn.

4.8 Hot Seat**Skills practiced:** Vocabulary, speaking, listening**How to play:**

- Split the class into 2 teams, or more if you have a large class.
- Elect one person from each team to sit in the Hot Seat, facing the classroom with the board behind them.
- Write a word on the board.
- Their teammates describe the word without saying it, spelling it, or drawing it—the student in the hot seat guesses.
- Set a time limit and rotate until everyone has had a turn in the "hot seat".

4.9 Where Shall I Go?**Skills practiced:** Prepositions, speaking, listening**How to Play:**

- Before the students arrive, turn your classroom into a maze by rearranging it. It's great if you can do this outside, but otherwise push tables and chairs together and move furniture to make your maze.
- When your students arrive, put them in pairs outside the classroom. Blindfold one student from each pair.
- Pairs enter the maze one at a time. The sighted partner guides their blindfolded partner through using directional language: "step over," "go under," "turn left."
- The pair that completes the maze most accurately wins.

4.10 Splat**Skills practiced:** Listening, speaking, vocabulary**How to play:**

- Tape flashcards with vocabulary images across the board.
- Divide the class into two teams.
- Have two students come up to the board at a time and stand side-by-side. Give each a fly swatter.
- Call out a vocabulary word. The first student to "splat" the correct flashcard scores a point for their team.
- Rotate pairs until all students have played.

5. Conclusion

In short, games are beneficial. So, it is suggested for teachers to adapt them and apply in teaching to change the atmosphere of learning and make the class funnier. In order to do that teacher can design game-based activity or may apply some games from the list to make the class more exciting and successful.

6. References

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