
The Importance of Using Games in Teaching English to Primary Classes

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Abstract: This article supplies the English language teachers with the understanding of choosing and using educational games which focus on encouraging pupils to practice target language. The article also suggests some ways to exploit language games successfully during all stages in teaching. Moreover, it describes the role of games in improving all skills and discloses views of different linguists on the problem of using games.

Keywords: educational games, motivation, dictation games, communicative language teaching approach, learning styles.

It is known that, educational games make learning fun and fruitful. Moreover, among numerous sources of children's interest in the language learning process, games seem to be very important. Obviously, there are a lot of other sources, such as pictures and stories. Pictures serve as a visual stimulus, while games use both visual and aural channels and activate language production and, sometimes, physical movement. Thus, making learning fun motivates students and helps them pay attention and stay focused on the subject. There are a great number of language games. So teachers have a variety of choices.

However, in deciding which game to use in a particular class and which games will be most appropriate and most successful with their students, teachers must take many factors into account.

Teachers should first consider the level of the game to fit their students' language level. They should choose the game that fits the purposes of that class or the content [7,121-130]. Moreover, teachers should consider students' characteristics: whether they are old or young, serious-minded or light-hearted, and highly motivated to learn

or not. They should also consider when the game should be used. Games are effective because they provide motivation, lower students' stress, and give them the opportunity for real communication.

Naturally when playing games, students are trying to win or to beat other teams for themselves or on the behalf of their team. They are so competitive while playing because they want to have a turn to play, to score points and to win. In the class, students will definitely participate in the activities. Therefore, it is possible for a teacher to introduce students to new ideas, grammar, and knowledge and so on [5, 213]. As in the dictation game, students are so competitive that they want to finish first and win. It can be clearly seen that games can capture students' attention and participation.

In our great eagerness to teach our children we studiously look for "educational" toys, games with built-in lessons, books with a "message." Often these "tools" are less interesting and stimulating than the child's natural curiosity and playfulness. Play is by its very nature educational. And it should be pleasurable. When the fun goes out of

play, most often so does the learning” [4, 15].

Moreover, it is believed that the communicative language teaching approach (abbreviated as CLTA) is one of the most effective methods to keep away from the weaknesses of the traditional English teaching method in developing students’ communicative ability. Using games, which is communicative in essence, are often considered effective in developing students’ communicative ability. In order to help English teachers put the communicative language teaching approach into practice, this paper, on the basis of pointing out the weaknesses of the traditional English teaching method, discusses what the communicative language teaching approach is, states the value and importance of using games in English-teaching class. There are many good ideas about English teaching. Among these, using games in the English class is the one which is most easily accepted by students and which is also a very useful and helpful aspect of communicative method. As is known to everyone, game is an activity providing entertainment or amusement; it’s a competitive activity or sport in which players contend with each other according to a set of rules. “A game is an activity carried out by co-operating or competing decision-makers, seeking to achieve, within a set of rules, their objectives”[1, 87-90].

One reason to promote educational games is to encourage students to learn outside of class. Young adults will go out of their way to play games, even a single game, for hours on end. There is also evidence that games allow students to focus well enough to learn better and significantly improves the learning performance of children. It is argued that young learners love to play and they take part in a game with more enthusiasm and willingness than in any other classroom activities. Games are sometimes considered as entertaining activities, playing which children are not

really learning. There are teachers failing to realize the importance of games, considering them not a wealth of various techniques and an opportunity for real communication but an uncontrolled and noisy waste of time. However, in general children learn better when they are active. Thus, when learning is planned into an enjoyable game, they are very often willing to invest considerable time and effort in playing it. Moreover, in view of different learning styles and preferences the students display benefits from games seem to cater for everyone as children find playing activities much richer language studying work than doing other kinds of practice. If games are properly designed, they may become an excellent and essential part of a children’s learning programmed. For instance, *Call My Bluff* is a fun game which is perfect at the start of term as a ‘getting to know you’ kind of game. It is also a brilliant ice breaker between students if you teach classes who do not know one another - and especially essential if you are teaching a small class size. The game is excellent for practicing speaking skills; though make sure you save a time for after the game to comment on any mistakes students may have made during the game. (I generally like to reserve this for after the game, so you don't disrupt their fluency by correcting them as they speak). With older groups you can have some real fun and you might be surprised what you’ll learn about some of your students when playing this particular educational game. This game helps to improve ice-breaker and speaking skills. Moreover, it is appropriate for all levels and ages but best with older groups.

As with other learning activities, teachers need to pay careful attention to the difficulty level of games. Part of the appeal of games lies in the challenge, but if the challenge is too great, some students may become discouraged. The challenge can be of two kinds: understanding how to play the game and understanding the language content.

Some suggestions for both types of understanding are:

- Demonstrations of how the game is played. The teacher can demonstrate with a group of students or a group can demonstrate for the class.
- A kind of script of what people said as they played or a list of useful phrases. Similarly, key vocabulary and concepts may need to be explained.
- Clear directions. Demonstrations can accompany directions, and directions can be given when needed, rather than explaining all the steps and rules in one go. Some initiated- students' modification can be accepted.
- A game should encourage students to focus on the use of language rather than on the language itself.
- A game should give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material.
- Students may wish to play games purely for fun. Teachers, however, need more convincing reasons.
- Teachers need to consider which games to use, when to use them, how to link them up with the syllabus, text book or programmed, and how, more specifically, different games will benefit students in different ways. The key to a successful language game is that the rules are clear, the ultimate goal is well defined and the game must be fun.

Since children's concentration and attention spans are short, variety is a must. This means variety of activity, variety of pace, variety of organization. As already mentioned, children have an amazing ability to absorb language through play and other activities which they find enjoyable. That is why games seem to be a challenging and exciting tool to make the young learners motivated and satisfied with making progress in acquiring a language. There are many reasons why creating activities for young children's language

learning is very important. First of all, it is extremely valuable because it allows for meeting pupils' individual needs. Complete dependence on the textbook is not suitable for all students as they are of different levels and have different interests and diverse learning styles. Furthermore, the textbook being designed for a general audience may not fully match the students' specific requirements. However, creating materials for learning can be very time consuming and often needs resources, like photocopying facilities. Moreover, the most common barriers can also be the cost involved in realizing some conceptions, lack of handbooks from which to get ideas, lack of skills to design some activities. A good solution to overcome some of the difficulties mentioned above seems to be to involve pupils in preparing activities. They are full of ideas and enthusiasm. They can do some illustrations, they can prepare short stories and dialogues or riddles, and they can also make rhymes, chants, or short poems. It gives them a real reason for using language; and gradually, they can create activities for each other.

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