

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to introduce the advantages of using games in teaching English. This article deals with the role of new pedagogical technologies and methods which are effective in the process of teaching English. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful.

Key words: Games, learners' attention, textbook, foreign language, speech fluency, interactive method, modes of games, vocabulary.

Games offer students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere. After learning and practicing new vocabulary, students have the opportunity to use language in a non-stressful way. A great vocabulary is just one essential tool in a writer's toolbox, along with punctuation, grammar, and many others. Vocabulary can make your writing more powerful and more effective and help you say exactly what you mean. This indispensable tool will help you choose the best word for every job and avoid vague words that do not give your readers a good sense of your meaning.

Building your vocabulary is one of the easiest ways to improve the power of your writing and make any writing task that much easier, as you will have several synonyms in your repertoire to pull from every time. Developing your vocabulary need not be difficult or painful.

Use a word immediately after you learn it. Try to make a game out of using a new word as soon as you learn it. Every day, try to slip in a new word into the conversation, a journal entry, an assignment or an email to a friend. Do this as often as possible, and repeat the word to yourself.

While playing games, the learners' attention is on the message, not on the language. Rather than pay attention to the correctness of linguistic forms, most participants will do all they can to win. This eases the fear of negative evaluation, the concern of being negatively judged in public, and which is one of the main



factors inhibiting language learners from using the target language in front of other people. In a game-oriented context, anxiety is reduced and speech fluency is generated--thus communicative competence is achieved.

Many experienced textbook and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. W. R. Lee holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. He also says that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching programme. A similar opinion is expressed by Richard-Amato, who believes games to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching. There are many advantages of using games. "Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely" (Richard-Amato). They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings (Hansen). They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson. Furthermore, to quote Richard-Amato, they, "add diversion to the regular classroom activities," break the ice, "[but also] they are used to introduce new ideas". In the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better.

Games encourage, entertain, teach, and promote fluency. If not for any of these reasons, they should be used just because they help students see beauty in a foreign language and not just problems.

There are many factors to consider while discussing games, one of which is appropriacy. Teachers should be very careful about choosing games if they want to make them profitable for the learning process. If games are to bring desired results, they must correspond to either the student's level, or age, or to the material that is to be introduced or practiced. Not all games are appropriate for all students irrespective of their age. Different age groups require various topics, materials, and modes of games. For example, children benefit most from games which require moving around, imitating a model, competing between groups and the like. Furthermore, structural games that practice or reinforce a certain grammatical aspect of language have to relate to students' abilities and prior knowledge. Games become difficult when the task or the topic is unsuitable or outside the student's experience.



Another factor influencing the choice of a game is its length and the time necessary for its completion. Many games have a time limit, but the teacher can either allocate more or less time depending on the students' level, the number of people in a group, or the knowledge of the rules of a game etc.

There are several approaches and methods that could be used to teach English vocabulary to young learners. Using real objects that children could visualize later is a good way to learn vocabularies of the language [3]. They need to listen to their teaching using the word and repeat it as well. Another method is the direct method where there is no translation and using the mother tongue is prohibited. The complete sentences in the target language are the only thing used in the classroom. Another method is the Total Physical Response (TPR) which is used a lot by teachers because children are hyper, physically active and could not concentrate for a long time. However, using this method that includes games and a variety of activities will allow young learners to learn vocabularies of the language very fast.

There are two steps that must be kept in mind when implementing games to teach vocabulary to young learner by their teacher, grouping the students and giving explanation and instruction about the game. This section will briefly mention those steps.

Importance of making young learners sit together in a group because they like to have other peers around them. Sitting the students together encourage cooperation, but this does not mean that they have to be in groups all the time while they are working. Next, young learners could be asked to choose a name for their group to be written on the white board to record their scores. If there is an uneven number of student e.g. five students, one group could have three students and the other two. Grouping techniques of this kind will help in create a cooperative and competitive atmosphere among the members of the groups.

Children love to have fun and play, so teachers should choose suitable teaching methods that cater to children's nature. Games are one of the methods that could be used in order to avoid boredom in the classroom [2]. They have a special role in any foreign language teaching. Both students and teachers will benefit from including games during class time. Furthermore, teachers may achieve all the educational outcomes through applying the use of games especially when teaching vocabulary. Although language structure is considered "the skeleton of the language," it agreed



that vocabulary is “the vital organs and flesh”. Vocabulary is the basic part and a key element to learn any language. Teaching vocabulary through the use of games has become crucially important for English language learners because they sustain enjoyment and interest in learning and encourage using the language in a fearless and creative manner.

Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson. Yet, as Lee observes, a game "should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do". Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. Rixon suggests that games be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they are suitable and carefully chosen. At different stages of the lesson, the teacher's aims connected with a game may vary:

Games also lend themselves well to revision exercises helping learners recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way. All authors referred to in this article agree that even if games resulted only in noise and entertained students, they are still worth paying attention to and implementing in the classroom since they motivate learners, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency.

There are tons of non-board games that will help you improve your writing vocabulary while you have fun. Try downloading fun word games onto your phone or computer so you can get some practice while you unwind after a busy day. Some games are designed to build vocabulary skills, but there are plenty of others that will help you practice spelling, phonics, and even typing skills. There are even some designed for college students to prepare for testing and vocabulary-rich exams.

There are plenty of word games on the market designed to improve vocabulary and language skills without being a bore. Some of these games you may have played as a child, so it's time to break them out again and get to “work.” If you have a friend who could also use some help — or someone with a great vocabulary you think will challenge you — invite them over for a game night.

It takes between 10 and 20 repetitions to make a new word a part of your vocabulary. To help the word settle into your mind and memory, write it down (both the definition and a sentence you make up using the word), use it in conversation, include it in an email or any other way you can think of.



Start by saying the new word aloud, then relate it to a word you already know. A good example of this is gargantuan, which means “very large” or “gigantic.” Say a sequence aloud: small, medium, large, very large, gargantuan. Then list things you think are gargantuan.

When teaching young learners vocabulary using games, teachers must be patient in finding new and interesting ways so that students enjoy learning. Games can help young learners to learn their vocabulary effectively. As explained above, there are five games amongst many to be used to teach vocabulary e.g. Hot Potatoes, Memory Challenge, Last One Standing, Pictionary, and Bingo. Teacher should consider time and materials when designing or choosing the game. Although games have advantages and disadvantages when used to teach vocabularies, using them will enable young learners to acquire the lesson with fun where they can remember all the vocabulary easily.

To sum up, games also 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. So, using games is an interactive method in education system.

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