

THE ROLE OF GAMES IN THE LANGUAGE TEACHING LESSONS

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Annotation: *The article describes in detail methodological principles of games in teaching language and learning. It is discussed the importance of games and educational progress with the help of various activities in language teaching. It is widely explained about the benefits of using games in language-learning and summed up in nine points.*

Key words: *communicative competence, effectiveness, textbook, warm-up activities, variety of tasks*

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. 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.

Games are also motivating. Games introduce an element of competition into language-building activities. This provides valuable impetus to a purposeful use of language¹. In other words, these activities create a meaningful context for language use. The competitive ambiance also makes learners concentrate and think intensively during the learning process, which enhances unconscious acquisition of inputs. Most students who have experienced game-oriented activities hold positive

¹Abbott G., D. McKeating, J. Greenwood, and P. Wingard. 1981.

attitudes towards them.² An action research conducted by Huyen and Nga (2003)³, students said that they liked the relaxed atmosphere, the competitiveness, and the motivation that games brought to the classroom. On the effectiveness of games, teachers in Huyen & Nga's (2003)⁴ reported that action research reported that their students seem to learn more quickly and retain the learned materials better in a stress-free and comfortable environment.

The benefits of using games in language-learning can be summed up in nine points.

- 1.promote communicative competence.
- 2.create a meaningful context for language use.
- 3.increase learning motivation.
- 4.reduce learning anxiety.
- 5.integrate various linguistic skills.
- 6.encourage creative and spontaneous use of language.
- 7.construct a cooperative learning environment.
- 8.foster participatory attitudes of the students.
- 9.games: are learner centered.

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.⁵ 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,

² Hubbard P., Jones B, Thornton, and R.Wheeler. 1983. A training course for TEFL. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

³ Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen, Khuat Thi Thu Nga. Learning Vocabulary Through Games. Asian EFL Journal.2003

⁴ Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen, Khuat Thi Thu Nga. Learning Vocabulary Through Games. Asian EFL Journal. 2003

⁵ Lee W.R. 1979. Language teaching games and contests. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

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. 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.

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.

Although, it cannot be said that games are always better and easier to cope with for everyone, an overwhelming majority of pupils find games relaxing and motivating. Games should be an integral part of a lesson, providing the possibility of intensive practice while at the same time immensely enjoyable for both students and teachers.

Advantages for teachers: getting to know the student in various situations games make it possible to see character traits that are usually not visible. They allow to assess the students lacks and deficiencies in situations which are not connected with stress; presentation of issues related to various phenomena, technical processes included in the curriculum – games develop interest in the topic of class and positively influence the relation of the student to the subject, more effective educational impact of the teacher during the game. Games allow to shift the centre of gravity from the teacher and their teachings to the student and their independent action. It is also important to set the rules binding to all participants. It may be useful to hold an organizational meeting where the rules and conditions of participation in the game will be presented. Increase in the level of students involvement will depend on the level of variety of tasks. A well conducted

play will allow to use the benefits derived from didactic games, that is the development of entrepreneurial and social competences. From the moment of employment of didactic games in the teaching process, their popularity keeps increasing.

The game - one of the most important means of intellectual and moral education of children. Great importance to the game as an educational tool attached AS Makarenko, "What child is in the game, is that in many ways it will work when she grows up. Therefore, education of the future leader is, above all in the game.

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