



ROLES OF GAMES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Summary. This article shares experiences of using games in teaching and learning language. It is said that people learn while playing. In other words, games play important roles in education. Playing games gives people not only excitement and enjoyment, but also it makes them be interested, motivated and encouraged. Additionally, to win games, people's brain works with higher productivity using their knowledge, problem solving and team work skills, etc. Considering all these advantages of games, teachers use games in their teaching process. To give effective and successful lessons teachers sometimes lack students' motivation, interest, encouragement and participation which can be given by games.

Keywords: interested; participation; solving problems; feeling free.

Introduction

Why do teachers let their students play? Games played in classrooms are not because of their time-filling character, but because of their educational values. Teachers see them as a teaching tool that helps their lessons more different and more engaged. Playing games people feel happy, interested, and motivated and try to use all their mental and physical resources to win the game. Games educate children in that way to become helpful, determined, resourceful, etc. Moreover they get the skills including team working, communication and problem solving. Considering all these advantages of games, teachers use a game as a bridge to bring their student from a lower cognitive level to a higher one, in other words to learning more complicated materials. Besides, playing can act as an exercise in a classroom going around the class. When students face difficulties and don't understand materials, they get tired and bored. Letting students play games in lessons, teachers help them to get rid of tiredness and boredom for a while.

Teaching a foreign language is a complex of tasks whose results cannot be seen significantly. It requires teachers to be hardworking, creative, and rethink or update their teaching methods. Today's teachers are offered or suggested a number of useful games to strengthen students'

language skills – grammar, vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading and listening. The only thing for teachers is to be responsible for choosing the right, more effective ones that can meet their lesson goal. After determining the goal of the lesson teachers choose the game that match the goal of the lesson. Speaking in a target language is the biggest problem for students. They feel shy worrying about mistakes in grammar, in pronunciation, and expressing their ideas, etc. People never feel shy and anxious when they play. Thus games play important role in teaching a foreign language to help students to clear them off that are the biggest problem, especially in speaking. The authors have noticed that a single effective game in a lesson is better than many boring difficult exercises.

Games to Promote Students' Speaking and Critical Thinking Skills

As means of communication, speaking is realized through communication. As it is mentioned above, learning a foreign language is stressful involving many areas or skills such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, and writing. Task-orientated activities useful to use the target language and to practice new vocabulary, grammar and strategy for conversation in a creative – non-stressful way. Games



which are task-based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech, serve as excellent communicative activities (Saricoban&Metin 2000). Playing together – interacting with each others, students will be able to develop their social skills and good communication skills.

The authors sometimes let their students think of or create new games on their own and use the games in the classroom. During each game there can be developed both productive and receptive skills of learners at the same time.

Job compatibility

This game was the idea of the authors' students. A group of students (3 members) were given a task to give an oral presentation on job compatibility with personality to classmates. Their presentation was well prepared and interesting including people's zodiacs. After presenting, they (the presenters) conducted a game among classmates. Game organizers divided the class into four or five groups and invited one student from each group to the blackboard. The game organizers posted a name of a profession like 'architect' on the back of the student invited to the blackboard. The group members of the student described the profession with its suitable personality and zodiac to its member standing at the blackboard. (receptive skill) Then the student would be able to guess what the profession was. (productive skill)

Word description & Guessing a word

Listening to a teacher's description, students guess what the word is. For example:

1. If we change one letter in this big brown animal's name, it will become something to drink. What is the animal's name? (bear – beer).

2. The first syllabus of this word is an adult male. The second syllabus is an action of moving. Joining these two syllabuses together, we can form the name of an oval yellow tropical fruit. (man-go = mango).

Mind map

To play this game, teacher should divide students into some groups and each group can have 3 or 4 members. Teacher explains how to draw a mind map and says central topic such as SHOPPING, ACTIVITIES ON VACATION or HUMAN BODY PARTS etc., Students start in the middle of a blank page, writing idea they intend to develop. The students develop the related subtopics around this central topic, connecting each of them to the center with a line. They repeat the same process for the subtopics, generating lower-level subtopics as they see fit, connecting each of those to the corresponding subtopic. The authors think they already gave away the benefits of mind mapping and why mind maps work. Basically, mind mapping avoids dull, linear thinking, and stimulate your creativity and making note taking fun again.

Observations

When the authors conducted these games in the classroom, students got interested and their participation in the lesson increased. Students were motivated and attentive to instructions to win the game and there were built a good relationship among the students. These kinds of games gave students the opportunity to practice their vocabularies and the target language in the world of the games.

As everything has good and bad points, the authors have noticed some problems in using games in their teaching. Playing games is usually time-consuming. Game instructions take a lot of time. Sometimes there may be left a little time to learn new materials. After games some students feel overexcited and as a result they cannot concentrate on the next stage of the lesson. For this reason, teachers ought to choose the right time to let their students play. The stage of practice or communication of a lesson is best for a game.

Conclusion

Having a number of advantages games serve as learning and teaching tools. Us-



ing games teachers ease their teaching process and decide problem they may face in their work. Lessons can become student centered maximizing students' participation. Our experience tells that playing games in the English classroom creates a competition among our students and stimulate their communicative and critical thinking skills. In addition to this, games give chances teachers to test, observe, and know their students personality during playing and after winning and losing the game. This gives teachers an idea how to treat their students. There is

nothing bad with using games in teaching summing up all the benefits from them. Teachers must decide when, where and how use games responsibly being careful with time and class management.

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