

Advantages of using Games for Teaching English at Schools

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This paper aims to demonstrate merit sides of using games for teaching English at schools

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The idea of using games in teaching does not seem to be widely accepted and implemented although its profitability has been proposed and justified as early in the seventieth century. There has been a misconception that all learning should be serious in nature. In fact, using games is an important tool that allows language teachers to add colours to their classrooms by providing challenge and entertainment. They are particularly valuable for beginners as a source of cognition that helps them adopt sounds and rhythms and comprehend the foreign language. El Shamy defines a game as a “competitive activity played according to rules within a given context, where players meet a challenge to achieve an objective and win”.

Language games comprise many factors such as rules, competition, relaxation and learning in particular. Rules have to be clear, few and well-explained so as no difficulty is faced. They are designed in different levels as well as topics that suit different students’ levels what make them enjoy all together and gain the best results.

Using games in the process of language teaching-learning is not restricted for any language level; it helps all students to feel comfortable and more confident in acquiring a new language. However, this technique is much more applicable and beneficent with beginners of interest in the present research.

According to “in addition to the personal challenge, younger students also enjoy competing with their peers, and introducing a game element is a way of livening up any material”. It is often difficult to maintain their attention far too long as they cannot remember new words and expressions of a language they deal with for the first time and which is not their mother tongue. It is true that children like things to be repeated but they do not need only to keep repeating the desired part of the target language. Instead, a short and a simple game can be repeated more than once. Incorporating games, then, in the language teaching-learning process helps building a good relationship with the new language. They do not just relax from serious learning but they reinforce the new vocabulary as well. Although a game in a class of beginners could be a disaster but it succeeds in making a good classroom atmosphere. By time, they realize that language is more than just long lists of words and sets of rules. Prabhu offers two main reasons why teachers should use games in teaching second language. The first reason is based on spontaneous interaction that games can generate amongst the children, ‘creating opportunities for the

deployment of their emerging internal systems'. A second major reason for using games is the supportive environment that is created. Interaction between learners is less threatening than interaction with the teacher. Game-like activities provide choices for the classroom. 'They allow teachers to add variety and flexibility to the teaching menus', Sometimes educators feel weighed down by assigned curricula and need to come up with new ideas and interesting activities. Another advantage, in language classes, learners feel stressful because they think that they have to master the target language that is unknown to them. Besides, learners become too anxious about being criticized and punished by their teachers when they make a mistake. Games are advantages at this point because they reduce anxiety, increase positive feelings and improve self-confidence because learners are not afraid of punishment or criticism while practicing the target language freely.

The problem of the present study stems from students' low output in English language tests, lack of motivation and weak participation in class. This problem was documented through the researcher's long experience in teaching English as a foreign language and exam results, data analysis and consultation of other English teachers as well. Hence, it is so important to carry out such a study in English in order to improve students' achievement through using suggested language games. The significance of this study will be of great value to English language teachers to give games more attention, much and considerable time for exercises. It also considered of great important to curricula to choose best ways to improve using games through enhances curricula with game activities.

The findings related to teachers' point view on advantages of using language games in teaching English as a foreign Language in basic schools. The questionnaire includes statements. The items required respondents to answer the statements with the degree varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire it was shown to a jury of two university professors and tow EFL teachers. They all agreed on the content and the structure. The final form of the questionnaire was drawn out after taking their comments, opinions and advices into consideration.

Regarding the first research question, " Do using language games is useful in teaching English as a foreign language," the results showed that the teachers strongly agreed that language games are useful in several aspects:

- It is considered as an anti-stress and anxiety factor in the classroom, helping learners remember things faster and better. It is also fun and entertaining, so getting inputs is more likely and is a welcome break out of the usual routine of language.
- Enhancing skills, allowing learners to practice language in various skills at the same time (speaking, writing, listening and reading). And make them focus on the use of language, not on language forms, so that they apply unconsciously to the rules and vocabulary. In addition, it enhances linguistic knowledge of the linguistic user of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge on how and when to use speech appropriately.
- Building collaborative learning through the use of small groups to promote student learning and interdependence, so that they work together to accomplish tasks
- Language games bring foreign language to life by creating meaningful, real-life context to use foreign language
- As a psycho-social factor as language games encourage shy students to participate in the class room.

The study sample strongly agreed that language games are useful as an anti-stress and anxiety, funny and entertaining, help to gain more input, enhance the skills of students, enhance language knowledge, build collaborative learning and psychologically and socially help students participate in the class room. So it is important for teachers because the ultimate goal is to teach students in a good and effective way. Furthermore, it is improving students' relationships with teachers to provide essential supports for learning, whereas positive relationships can also help a student develop socially. So, because of all that

we mentioned, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that (It is important for teachers to use language games in the classroom)

From the obtained results it is clear that teachers involved in this study *strongly agreed* that teaching language games are useful to EFL Learners because of their positive impact on students' output in English language and they can also help in building a good relationship with the new language. Based on the above, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

Curricula designers, educators, and experts should include sufficient language games in the syllabus in order to encourage and motivate the students in learning the foreign language. Teachers should change their role from instructors who dominate the class into educators whose role is to help, guide and support the students to acquire the foreign language.

The factor of age plays an important role in the decisions about what and how to teach in the class and therefore also the choice of teaching methods, procedures, and techniques. A teacher must know about the specification of the target group of learners and take that into consideration. This age group of learners has a great disposition for learning. Apart from a superior ability to learn pronunciation they are much better at understanding and absorbing the language than young learners mainly because of their increased cognitive skills and abstract thinking.

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