IMPLEMENTATION OF LAGUAGE GAMES IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASSROOMS IN A2 LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The theme "Implementation of laguage games in english speaking classrooms in a2 level" investigates the design and application of language games as an effective method to teach speaking skills in foreign language learning. The focus is on how well-constructed, interactive games can stimulate students' interest, increase their participation, and provide a playful yet purposeful environment for practicing spoken language. Language games encourage learners to use the language creatively and spontaneously, thereby improving fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence in real-life communication. This theme emphasizes the importance of aligning the games with specific learning objectives, student needs, and contextual factors, and explores various types of games such as role-plays, debates, and storytelling activities. The goal is to provide students with opportunities to practice language in a non-threatening, supportive atmosphere.

For many years, games have been regarded as something useless. Nowadays, many research studies are being conducted to investigate the use of games as a technique in the teaching and learning process. Many people believe that learning by playing is considered effective to answer the pupils ' boredom over serious, strict, and monotonous study in the classroom. By using games, the pupils are expected to enjoy their learning process without forgetting the main goal of their study. Games are an amicable way for an educator to present material and assess material learned, in a way that appeals to all her pupils . Games also help you to maximize each pupils ' learning potential.

The Nature of Games

One can find numerous definitions of 'games' from dictionaries, and other reference books, in which the concept is basically the same. Hadfield defined 'games' as activities with rules, a goal, and an element of fun. He added that there are basically two kinds of games; competitive and cooperative. Competitive games are those in which the players or teams race to be the first to reach the goal. Meanwhile, in cooperative games, there are players or teams who work together towards a common goal. Yet, in this research, the writer defines the term

"English games" as fun and enjoyable activities which use English as the instructional language and are conducted with some rules to reach a goal. These activities help teachers to create a better teaching-learning process. They could be presented in different ways to the class at the appropriate moment to create a positive atmosphere for learning without thinking about learning. Play is a purposeful activity and games are a part of playing. As such, games are a very appropriate teaching technique in the young-learner class-room. Based on the activities used, Collard groups games into several types. They are as follows:

1.   Ice-Breakers

They are group games and activities which invite to interact in a very fun, non-threatening, and get-to-know-you manner. These activities, including many innovative name games, are guaranteed to 'break the ice' and generate lots of laughter.

2.   Energizers, Warm-Ups

They include simple, fun activities which will 'energize' the group in no time. Includes time-fillers, co-operative and non-traditional warm-ups and stretches which develop balance, confidence, and co-ordination skills.

3.   Physical Education Games

These activities are useful as warm-up exercises as much as they generate lots of running around and physical exertion. Emphasis on healthy competition, but include some fantastic elimination games too

4.   Team-Building

It is an activity which invites the group to 'stretch' outside their comfort zones a little, with a view to developing critical interpersonal skills such as trust and healthy interaction, ideally sequenced alongside team-building activities to strengthen relationships.

5.   Problem Solving

It involves whole group participation, focusing on developing practical group problem-solving, leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. It is ideal for groups of young people and adults, new and existing teams.

6.   Puzzles   These games are specifically designed to invite people to think creatively and work together to solve a problem. Generally passive in nature, these fun activities offer many teachable moments.

7.   Debriefing

It involves practical strategies, ideas, and activities which will assist to process group's experience to facilitate their learning, growth, and development. It emphasizes on communication, new and innovative ideas which inspire lots of teachable moments.

As can be seen, classification of games constitutes a relatively flexible area of study which makes it necessary to focus on some specific criteria in order to pinpoint and discuss the detailed features and functions they serve. The typologies discussed in the subsections below are based on the function and structure of games, language skills that learners develop and proficiency level of pupils.

1. Types distinguished on basis of function and structure

Focusing on classification of games provided by Lee it is possible to list a wider range of games with their focus being at the same time their main function. The classification includes structure games (focused on syntax and technical aspects of language, vocabulary games (focused on developing learners' L2 lexicon), spelling, pronunciation or number games, listen-

and-go games, games and writing, miming and role-play, as well as discussion games.

Shifting the focus on the structure of games it is possible to distinguish various types depending on the tools and various physical materials used in order to play it. Such a classification is put forward by Lewis and Bedson, who distinguished the following:

- board games - all kinds of games which require moving pawns or markers along a board. Games of this kind can be highly beneficial in terms of language learning because they can involve a range of tasks for learners to do e.g. ask everybody two questions, count to twenty etc.

- card games - games based on assembling cards, disclosing, exchanging, sorting, and counting them. The cards can have a gist or usefulness in a game, or clearly serve as symbols for actions or objects. As a result, learners can develop associations between the names of the activities in English, the pictures and the subsequent movement - dice games. Games of this sort are very flexible. It is important to note that the dice need not only to have numbers on the faces. Dice games can have colours, numbers or letters of the alphabet. It is very easy to attract the attention of young learners with dice games because they contain the element of unpredictability and luck.

- drawing games- these games show a relatively specific feature since they traverse a gap between the fundamental functions of the brain. On the one hand, drawing stirs inventiveness and susceptibility towards the world but on the other hand, children need to be able to understand directives and describe their art. Games based on drawing might be useful when working with sheepish children who are reluctant to talk. Despite the fact that children may not be ready to describe their picture thoroughly by themselves they will definitely reply to questions with yes or no answers. Furthermore, drawing games can also be used to include a degree of competitiveness as well as enable children to memorize new vocabulary items better.

- guessing games - such games may be used to practice the use of particular linguistic forms such as: 'do you, are you, is it, etc. Moreover, they also display the element of competitiveness which motivates learners creating in this way good learning and teaching atmosphere.

- role-play games - they trigger a child's imagination and constitute tests of real communication and simulation. Many young learners benefit greatly from role-play games in terms of their linguistic competence as well as their personality development. Therefore, with the use of these games learners are able to get to know some everyday issues and mechanisms as well as the imagined ones. This, again, reflects positively on learners' motivation (Ellington p:5).

- movement games - during these games pupils are physically active which enables them to learn through the application of their natural predispositions and inclinations. Movement games make children very excited and interested. Moreover, because of the dynamic character these games show, learners need to be constantly monitored when playing such games.

Byrne highlights the usefulness of board games focusing especially on their high motivational drive. They can be characterized as real-life activities that have been brought into the classroom. Three basic types can be distinguished.

Taking a closer look at above classification of games it can be noticed that they can be

mixed in one particular game. For example, learners can use dice or cards during a role-play game. Moreover, such a game can also involve movement. The more elaborated game the greater range of tools and objects it can implement.

2.   Types distinguished on the basis of language skills

The division of games focused on a particular language skill is, naturally, based on the actual activities implemented. However, it is also natural that such games can also be categorized in some other way since they are based on some particular tools and rules for learners to follow. This typology makes it possible to divide games into listening and speaking games. In receptive games, learners are exposed to auditory input so their task might be to order the likes of a song, provide missing words to a song lyrics or provide entire lines (or even blocks of text) to stories. Productive, or speaking games, in turn, can be used as a way of reinforcing vocabulary covered previously. Such games are focused on oral production so learners can be engaged in games such as taboo or 'find someone who'. etc.). The specific type of game and the level to which learners come up with oral input depend on learners' age, proficiency level and speaking skills they have.

3.   Types distinguished on the basis of learners' skills and second language proficiency

The typology based on pupils ' proficiency level is related directly with the structure of games as well as the amount and difficulty of the language used. Moreover, it can also involve the roles that pupils play during a game so beginners might be rather passive (reacting to input, identifying words in listening or reading, matching etc.) while more advanced learners can be engaged in oral interaction. The game might have an open-ended character which means that there would not be one single solution or outcome for learners to reach. It is important for teachers to explore games focusing on various levels of proficiency since, for example, games for beginners might help them get used to processing L2, handle anxiety in speaking or be helpful for the teacher in developing good rapport with pupils. Games used at a later stages can remind learners that learning L2 can also be fun. In addition, games at this level are helpful in generating the context for interaction and competition so learners have the opportunity to put their skills and knowledge to the test. The more advanced learners become the less often games are employed (as higher proficiency level also goes along with learners' age) but it is important for teachers to keep in mind their educational value and the positive influence on the atmosphere of the lessons.

Games can be beneficial for the pupils especially when the class becomes boring and the pupils have been tired of serious discussions. Carrier (in Sanchez, 2017, p.4) points out that games are very useful in a class because they —provide an opportunity for pupils to use their language in a less formal situation", without the pressure of speaking in perfect form, but with the enthusiasm for winning the game, as well as practicing the language. Furthermore, in relation to games advantages, he mentions that games

1) give a variety of tools to facilitate the teaching-learning process,

2) are flexible,

3) make the lesson less monotonous,

4) raise the pupils ' motivation,

5) make pupils produce language subconsciously,

6) stimulate pupils ' participation and give them confidence,

7) transform the teacher's role from that of formal instructor to that of an organizer or/and moderator of the class, and

8) can also serve as a testing mechanism.

We see that games involve many factors: rules, competition, relaxation, and learning in particular. The main focus of using games in class is to help pupils learn and have fun. However, to use games in classrooms, it is equally important that before playing, the rules of the games are clearly explained and well understood by the pupils . There should be only a few, well-explained rules. Demonstrations can also be very helpful since it can help pupils understand the game and help them follow the rules. Otherwise, they will misunderstand the purpose of the game and they may not get the benefits they should from the game. For the pure sake of survival, it is crucial that you have well-planned lesson in order to maintain a certain level of control in your classroom. Well-planned lessons contain activities where children are interested and stay on task.

Implementing games during the lesson

In fact, the issues to consider once a game is used during the lesson are closely interrelated with the factors affecting the choice of a game. One of the basic issues to remember is that once the game is chosen the role and active engagement of the teacher does not end but rather changes. This means that the teacher needs to monitor how learners process and use FL and how they interact during a given game. The information collected during the lesson and particular activities can be highly useful when designing, selecting and implementing games on another occasion. Following Dobson, the issues to consider and follow when implementing games during foreign language lessons include many factors.

Firstly, the teacher should know the rules of the game, gather materials, and plan how to direct conversation during or following the game. Additionally she/he should make sure that activity introduced would be entertaining. When it does not happen so, it is better to change a game, or abandon it for some time.

Secondly, teacher should choose a game that allows as many learners as possible to get involved in it. It is vital to care if all children are engaged sufficiently as active participant instead of idling their time as observers only. It needs to be noticed that game is within reach of children capacities. Otherwise learners can be easily discouraged and the opposite outcome can be achieved.

Thirdly, somewhere between the middle or the end of the lesson is a more appropriate moment for changing a pace of the lesson and play a game. It is advisable to play some 'trials' to make sure if rules of a game are intelligible and to stand in front of the class to act as the leader or referee. If all pupils cling to the rules, there is little space for cheating, tricking, and breaking rules.

Fourthly, for prevent disintegration during the game is needed a pleasant but firm tone and necessary minimum of discipline in the classroom. The role of teacher is to use proper encouragements and no discouragements. The teacher should 'see' which pupils get disheartened or even abashed and ought to take steps to stop his withdrawal into him-/herself.

During team group teacher should assure an equal number of proficient and less proficient learners. Thanks to such a power balance the play or game is fair and every team feels appreciated. As Dobson emphasizes "some methodologists recommend that

you set up permanent teams". Fifthly, if a game activity does not seem to be going well, the teacher should try a different game. The teacher should have a wide variety of games at his/her disposal. Dobson's recommendation is neither to play a game so long that it begins to bore participants, nor to play the same game too frequently.

Even if the teacher does consider a wide range of factors determining the choice of a game there is still no surety that, once the game is employed, no problems can emerge on the way. As a result, the final issue to consider concerns a number of negative outcomes or problems related with the use of games during foreign language lessons.

Possible negative outcomes of using games in foreign language classroom

When discussing games in foreign language instruction the attention is paid mainly to the advantages they bring and the benefits for pupils which they entail. However, it could also be useful to shed some light on possible disadvantages or negative outcomes might encompass the following:

∇ External disturbances or noises which might be highly distracting for learners. In such a situation the teacher can modify the game, select another one (which matches the context) or reach for a completely different activity. Internal disturbances – there may be a learner who is not interested in playing a game or who generally shows discipline problems, which also distracts other pupils .

∇ A class is out of control because of being overactive during a particular part of the lesson. Then, the calming activity may be of use e.g. reading loud.

∇ A problem might also arise when the game takes more time than originally planned. The teacher might, then, assign it for homework, continue the game at the cost of other tasks or leave it for another occasion.

∇ If pupils gradually drop out of game (or if some learners completed the task earlier) it is important not to leave them idle without any supervision. The teacher should, therefore, prepare some additional activities for such occasions or be able to come up with them spontaneously.

∇ It may also happen that learners are not willing to play the game as they are not in a right frame of mind on a given day. In such situations the teacher may try to choose another game or reach for something completely different.

∇ At some point, it may turn out that learners cannot handle the game adequately either because they do not comprehend the FL content or because of the technical difficulties. Quick reaction of the teacher such as skipping the difficult part (if possible) is, again, the best solution.

The problems listed above can occur when resorting to games but, in fact, they can also emerge during a number of other task types. As Siek-Piskozub asserts, the problems with the use of games can be induced by inappropriate organization, pupils ' attitude or inappropriate choice of a game which does not account for the personality features of all learners as well as their proficiency level. As far as learners' behavior is concerned, it seems that they may often be interested in the game and willing to take an active part in the game but, for some reasons, there are specific problems reflected in learners' behavior which can emerge. The first one concerns psycho-somatic conditions. It means that learners can become too excited about playing a game which makes them hyperactive. Another problem emerges when games contain an element of competition. This is mainly a problem

for teenagers who could resort to forbidden means in order to achieve their objective of winning. In this way, the teacher needs to be very careful when making use of games involving competition and rivalry. Finally, it needs to be stated that learners could also have problems with understanding the rules of the game. In such a situation learners can lose interest in the game becoming passive. Moreover, high ability learners might become frustrated as well as the low ability ones lagging behind might slow down the entire group. This generates a negative atmosphere in the classroom.

To sum up, games are perceived as one of the most advantageous ways of teaching English vocabulary to young learners. Many factors influence the choice of games and implementation of games during lessons. However, games possible disadvantages are worth to be taken into consideration before designing games-based activities lessons.

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