

USING GAMES IN GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION

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Games provide a break from the usual routine of language class. Games are motivating and challenging at the same time. Educational games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning, providing language practice in various skills. They also encourage students to interact and communicate, and help teachers to create a meaningful context for language use.

Key words: games, ESL, interactive methods, CLT, revising, grammar activities

The collection of word games is a valuable resource for teachers of English as a second or foreign language, from young children to adults. They reinforce classroom lessons and provide additional spelling, conversation, listening, and speaking practice by focusing primarily on language development through the use of high frequency vocabulary and structures. Language learning games that emphasize specific structures are the most instructive. They not only practice the basic pattern, but they do so in a pleasant, easy manner that allows students to forget they are drilling grammar and focus on having fun. The following games are concerned with yes/no questions, wh-questions, tag questions, comparative and superlatives, adverbs, modals, demonstratives, etc. Grammar is possibly so important and central to learning another language that all avenues should be explored in order to focus student energy on mastering and internalizing it. The release provided by games is one way to focus this energy. Teenagers are delighted to be asked to do something that feels like an out-of-class activity and in which they have control over what happens in the classroom—they become the subjects, whereas they are the objects of teaching for a large portion of the 15,000 hours they spend in school. The point is that having fun generates energy for achieving a serious goal. Grammar games can be used in three ways:

- diagnostically before presenting a given structural area to find out how much knowledge of the area is already disjointedly present in the group;
- after a grammar presentation to see how much the group has grasped;
- as a revision of a grammar area.

Grammar games should not be used as a "reward" activity on Friday afternoons. It would be preferable to incorporate them into the students' learning process. As a result, each game is recommended for a specific level ranging from beginner to advanced. This simply refers to the grammar content of that specific game. However, as previously stated, many activities can be adapted to different classes with different

grammar components. A teacher can use the game frame offered at a higher or lower level by changing the grammar content. In general, any frame can be filled with whatever structures you want your students to work on. Students must accept personal responsibility for what they believe the grammar is about. The teacher is free to discover what the students know without being the center of their attention. Serious work is being done within the framework of a game. The dice throwing and arguing brighten and enliven the classroom atmosphere in ways that most people do not associate with grammar classes. The grammar train is being pulled along by the "game" locomotive. Everybody is working at once; the 15–30 minutes the average game lasts is a period of intense involvement. Other reasons for including games in a language class are:

1. They direct students' attention to specific grammatical structures and patterns.
2. They can be used for reinforcement, review, or enrichment.
3. They entail the participation of both slow and fast learners.
4. They can be tailored to the students' specific ages and language levels.
5. They contribute to a healthy competitive environment by providing an outlet for the creative use of natural language in a non-stressful setting.
6. They can be used in any language-learning situation and for any skill level, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
7. They provide the teacher with immediate feedback.
8. They maximize student participation while requiring minimal teacher preparation.

A game should be planned into the day's lesson right along with exercises, dialogues, and reading practice. It should not be an afterthought. Games are a lively way of maintaining students' interest in the language; they are fun but also part of the learning process, and students should be encouraged to take them seriously. They should also know how much time they have to play a game. It's not useful to start a game five minutes before the end of the lesson. Students are usually given a "five [1] minute warning" before the time is up so they can work toward the end. The older the students are, the more selective a teacher should be in choosing a game activity. Little kids love movements, while older ones get excited with puddles, crosswords, word wheels, and poster competitions whatever. Modern language teaching requires a lot of work to make a lesson interesting for modern students who are familiar with computers, the Internet, and electronic entertainment of any kind. Sympathetic relations must exist not only among students but between students and a teacher. It's of special importance for junior students because very often they consider their teachers to be the subject itself, i.e. interesting and attractive or terrible and disgusting, necessary to know or

useless and thus better to avoid. So children learn with their whole beings. Whole-child involvement means that one should arrange for the child's participation in the lesson with as many senses as possible. Seeing pictures of children performing actions and repeating, "The boy is running, "The girl is hopping," is not at all as effective as when students do the actions themselves in response to commands and demonstrations from the teacher. All of the above is fairly true for adult learners, not only children, because of our common human nature to acquire habits through experience. We all learned to understand and speak our first language by hearing and using it in natural situations with people who cared for and about us. This is the most effective and interesting way to learn a second language as well.

References:

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