SOME SUGGESTED ESL GAMES FOR BIG CLASSES

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INTRODUCTION

Some recent changes in language teaching have shown that organizing activities or creating English environment in classroom have helped learners to have intrinsic motivation. Moreover, boredom and tiredness have been driven away by the fun during the lessons. Among new methods of teaching and learning English, language games can bring us satisfactory results. Language games are really funny and potential tools for teachers to help their students enrich their knowledge the best.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Language games

1.1 Definitions of language games

Definition of Terms According to The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1995), games are defined as "an organized activity that usually has the following properties: a particular task or objective, a set of rules, competition between players, and communication between players by spoken or written language" (p. 89). Language games are not aimed to kill time or break the ice between teachers and students. Hadfield (1984) said games are "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun" (p. 23).

1.2. The role of language games

1. Games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class.

2. They are motivating and challenging.

3. Learning a language requires a great deal of effort. Games help students to make and sustain the effort of learning.

4. Games provide language practice in the various skills- speaking, writing, listening and reading.

5. They encourage students to interact and communicate.

6. They create a meaningful context for language use.

1.3 When to use games in language teaching

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.'

'Games also lend themselves well to revision exercises helping learners recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way. All authors referred to in this article agree that even if games resulted only in noise and entertained students, they are still worth paying attention to and implementing in the classroom since they motivate learners, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency.'

What kinds of games work best?

Lin Hong, author of "Using Games in Teaching English to Young Learners", explains that not all games are going to work to teach the students language skills. To find out if the game is educationally sound, think about these questions posed by Hong:

- Which skills do the games practice?

- What type of game is it and what is its purpose?

- Does the difficulty level of the game mesh with the students' ability level?

- Does the game require maximum involvement by the students?

- Do the students like it? Do you like it?

To add to these questions also ask yourself:

- What specific vocabulary or grammar are you introducing or practising with this game?

- Can you keep control of your class and play this game?

- What materials do you need for the game and can you obtain these easily?

- What controls, if any are needed, will you have in place to ensure the children are on track?

• Can you play a game for the sake of the game and not in order to define winners and losers?

• Are the rules easy and clear?

1.5. Types of language games

Hadfield (1984) classified games into linguistic and communicative games such as sorting, ordering or arranging, information gap, guessing, searching, matching, labeling, exchanging, board, role playing games.

2. Difficulties in using ESL games for big classes.

- Due to the big number of students in ESL classes, it is difficult for teachers to control their students' attention and participation into games.

- Some students at lower language competence are often passive and shy in taking part in games so they are not really interested in playing games.

- The space of classes is limited by the big number of students and facilities, this makes the games related to movements and actions impossible to be carried out.

SOME SUGGESTED ESL GAMES FOR BIG CLASSES

The following games are intended to revise some aspects of target language such as grammar structures, vocabulary and certain skills. In order to involve all the students into the games, these activities require both group/pair work and individual work.

1. Find the attacker

- Objective: Practise Speaking and listening skills

- Target language: Past Tenses

- Procedure:

- Teachers write on board: *Yesterday, a female student was attacked and hit seriously by someone in this university. You have to find who attacked her and why*.

- Students will be divided in three groups: one police group, one suspect group and one alibi group.

- The police groups will create some questions using past tenses to ask both suspects and alibis. Members of suspect and alibi groups will work in pairs of one suspect and one alibi. Each pair tries to guess the questions that the police may ask them and give exactly similar answers for each question.

- Each member of police groups will investigate some pairs. The police will question the suspect and alibi separately to see if they have similar answers to the same questions or not. Finally, the police can find the attacker by finding which pair has the smallest number of similar answers.

2. Broken Telephone:

- Objective: Speaking and listening practice.

- Target language: Sentence structures, tense revision, speaking topics, vocabulary, etc.

- Procedure:

Students stay in their seats as the game is played in rows. If students are learning how to talk about hobbies, for example, the first student must think of a sentence like, "I play tennis" or "I like playing tennis" and whisper it in the ear of the next student. The next student will then whisper it in the ear of the following student and so on until the sentence reaches the last student in the row who will shout out the sentence to the first student. If the sentence was repeated successfully, all the way to the end, then the row scores a point.

3. Two halves of a sentence:

- Objective: Writing and speaking activity.

- Target language: Complex sentences with subordinating conjunctions such as if, when, before, etc.

- Procedure:

Students will play in two groups with the equal number of students. Each member of each group writes a clause of a complex sentence, for example, one group will write "if" clauses and the other group will create main clauses. The first person of each group will be numbered 1 until the last member of the group. Students with

the same numbers will speak out their clauses in turn to make a full complex sentence. The pair with the most interesting, funny and grammatically correct sentence will be the winner.

4. Around the world in 10 minutes:

- Objective: Speaking activity.

- Target language: Present perfect tense, vocabulary revision

- Procedure:

Students will play in groups of 4 or 5. Each group will be given a map of the world on which there are the famous images representing different places in the world such as the Great Wall in China, sushi in Japan, etc. Students have to demonstrate that they have visited certain places by saying exactly what they have done related to the images of each place on the map. After ten minutes, the group who has visited the most places will win the game.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, games have the advantage of allowing the students to "practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar and structures extensively." They can do this through repeated exposure to the target grammar and because students are often more motivated to play games than they are to do deskwork. Plus, during the game, the students are focused on the activity and end up absorbing the grammar subconsciously.

While games are motivating for the students, probably the best reason, using games both increases the cooperation and competition in the classroom. Indeed games can be used to add excitement through competition or to create bonding between the students, and between the students and teacher.

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