

## Using Games in the Language Classroom

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**Annotation:** Game methods are one of the most effective methods of teaching a foreign language, since their psychological and pedagogical basis is play activity, which makes a great contribution to the mental development of an individual. The use of gaming techniques in foreign language lessons in high school meets the cognitive needs of adolescents. The game activates thought processes and increases the motivation to learn a foreign language. In this article, we will discuss about huge role of using games in language teaching.

**Keywords:** games, teaching a foreign language, motivation, mental development, cognitive skills, language skills.

### Introduction

While many teachers will wholeheartedly agree with the first sentence, there are those who consider the second to be something of an exercise in indulgence, both for the teacher and the language learner. With this in mind, some never consider actively employing games in their teaching. Indeed, the following statements will infringe on the teaching ethos of quite a few in our profession:

*“Games... help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information.*

### ***What is a language learning game?***

Language learning games provide a meaningful context for language use and build on skills necessary for responding appropriately in another language while being under pressure in various circumstances.

### **Materials and Methods**

Games offer a dynamic learning environment and help to refine nearly all aspects of our language skills—pronunciation, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, syntax, not to mention our listening and written comprehension which all help generate fluency.

In which stages of the lesson should we use games?

1. Warmer/Ice-breaker: “Language learning is hard work”. (Games for language learning) Our task as teachers is to make the effort of our learners easier to undertake.
2. Drilling: “Many games provide the key features of drill with the added opportunity to sense the working of language as living communication. Games involve the emotions, and the meaning

of the language is thus more vividly experienced. It is, for this reason, probably better absorbed than learning based on mechanical drills”. (Games for language learning)

3. Assessment: “Games also allow the formative assessment element. Students are in the position to monitor their own progress and understanding of the subject in a non-invasive manner. Games provide instant feedback for students and guidance in terms where to focus their learning effort and time. Teachers are able to see clearly where learning gaps exist and allow this to inform their next class or revision session”. (Games for language learning)
4. Review-Revision: “Practice makes it perfect”. Games are an extremely amusing way to help solidify the language learnt.

There is a myth that game-based learning works for young learners only. Why shouldn't adults be banned from playing games?

1. Games are a source of relaxation and stimulation and make the brain work less.
2. They include better mutual group dynamics and encourage whole class participation.
3. They encourage active speaking/listening.
4. They are a fun way of practice and recalling vocabulary and phrases.
5. They add variety and energise.
6. They are a method of self-assessment.

### **Which are the factors we should take into accounts when we decide which game to play?**

When it comes to choosing a game for a lesson there are three aspects the teacher always take into account:

- Age and level of the students
- Target language (grammar structure, vocabulary, functional language, etc.)
- Stage of learning (teaching, reviewing, assessment)

### **How we should introduce a game?**

1. Explain the rules by using simple sentences and numbering them.
2. Write on the board key language and/or important instructions.
3. Ask each learner to repeat one rule.
4. Ask for the translation of some rules to be sure that all the students have understood.
5. Try out the game with one or two learners.

### **Winners or Losers?**

1. Play more team games than individual ones.
2. Don't pair/group up learners randomly.
3. Promote fair play.
4. Reward your learners.

### **Modern methods of using games in teaching English**

In the process of teaching students of different ages, teachers often face the problem of awakening activity in a lesson in children. Often there are situations when traditional forms of work do not

contribute to the inclusion of students in the activities of the lesson and the emergence of their cognitive interest.

**The game** is a specially organized activity that requires tension of emotional and mental strength. The game always involves making a decision - what to do, what to say, how to win? The desire to solve these issues sharpens the mental activity of the players. Are there rich learning opportunities here? Children, however, do not think about it. For them, the game above all - an exciting experience. Therefore, in our opinion, the goal of the game form of education is not only the formation of pronunciation, lexical and grammatical skills, but also the development of interest in the language being studied.

### **The role of the game in the learning process**

There are six main goals of using games in foreign language lessons.

- the formation of certain skills;
- the development of certain speech skills;
- learning to communicate;
- development of the necessary abilities and mental functions;
- cognition (in the sphere of the formation of the language itself);
- Memorization of speech material.

The game is important for personal development also because during the course of its development a lesson situation is created in which the student involved in the competition really wants to help his team, tries to find the right answer, is active. As experience shows, such situations allow one to express oneself not only to strong but also weak students. Very often, students who are not distinguished by good performance can show themselves here from a completely different perspective and become active participants in the game, contribute to the victory of their team. Using games from this point of view can be an important success factor for weak children, arouse their interest in the subject, and become the basis for their subsequent success in studying it.

Learning a foreign language vocabulary is a process that covers several stages. At the first stage, a new word is introduced. At the next stage, students are trained in creating lexical speech connections in the same type of speech situations. The result of training is the ability of students to create dynamic lexical speech communication, that is, to freely use new words in communication.

Game forms and techniques are very diverse and can be used at every stage of working with vocabulary. At the first stages, it is appropriate to use typical game exercises that will make the process of memorizing words an interesting exercise. Game methods allow you to create very real situations of communication between participants in the game. Therefore, games are particularly relevant in the final stages of working with new vocabulary, in which words are used in speech in specific game situations.

Games can be presented in the form of game elements, situations, exercises, and be directed to other goals. Game methods vary depending on the number of participants, time, and so on. Game methods are often very simple in their organization and do not require special equipment. Game methods can be used in each lesson of a foreign language, as long as they correspond to the goals and objectives of the training. This work presents game exercises that actualize knowledge of the vocabulary on the topic and game situations with which the situations of communication were created in the lesson. These gaming techniques were successfully carried out in practice.

## Results and Discussions

Questionnaires allow us to conclude that there is a comfortable situation in the lessons where game methods were used. The chosen method of conducting classes contributes to the improvement of the quality of knowledge, worldview, and most importantly, the students are interested in cognitive activity.

Thus, we can conclude that the hypothesis proposed in the paper that the use of the game in the educational process allows an increase in the activity of students' cognitive activity.

“Why should a teacher use games?” Well, the answer is quite simple. The main reason would be because these activities have a great educational value and they can be used in the classroom to make learners develop their speaking abilities, use the language instead of just thinking about learning the correct forms and, last but not least make lessons very entertaining because they offer students a fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere.

Secondly, it is generally agreed that games, encourage learners to interact, cooperate, to be creative and spontaneous in using the language in a meaningful way. Learners want to take part in activities, to play games and are generally quite competitive. In order for them to take part they must be able to understand and communicate in the target language. Moreover, games also encourage learners to keep interested in the work and a teacher can use them to create contexts in which the language is useful.

Additionally, it is known that students learn through experimenting, discovering and interacting with their environment so they continuously need variation to increase their motivation. So, why not use games in teaching English? Since by using games students already have a context in which the use of the target language is immediately useful. This learning situation is similar to how mother tongue speakers would learn without being aware they are studying.

Some advantages of using games in the classroom are also worth mentioning: they are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class, they are learner centered, they reduce learning anxiety, they are motivating and challenging they can offer foster participatory attitudes of the students, they integrate various linguistic skills, they provide language practice in the various skills- speaking, writing, listening and reading, encourage creative and spontaneous use of language.

Another aspect that must be taken into consideration is “When to use games?”. Games could be used anytime because they must be more than just fun, games should involve “friendly” competition, games keep all of the students involved and interested, games should encourage students to focus on the use of language rather than on the language itself, games should give students a chance to learn, practice, or review specific language material.

On the other hand, there are important aspects to consider when games are used in the classroom. For instance, teachers should know that they must choose suitable activities (depending on the number of students, proficiency level, cultural context, timing, learning topic, and the classroom settings). Moreover, the way students perceive drama depends on the actual design and implementation of the activity, therefore teachers must give clear instructions, give clear rules and give clear time limits, they must rather demonstrate than explain, they must make sure that there must be a clear purpose and achievable goals.

The evaluation of results/ events in the game, is crucial to the game’s success therefore it must still be fun, but still help the students to learn.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we firmly believe that games are an effective way of helping students to learn languages including English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as they use active teaching and learning styles likely to motivate and sustain the attention of a wide cross section of pupils. Activities can include role-play, drama games, improvisation, group discussion and individual or pair work.

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