The Ways of Using Games in Teaching English Grammar to Young Learners

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Abstract: This article deals with deep understanding of the ways of using games in teaching English grammar to young learners.

Keywords: activities, important, grammar, method, techniques, strategies, playing a game.

Teaching is an art, there a relation between teacher and learners or students in the class. In the teaching and learning process, teacher and students act as an actor or actress. Here, teacher and learners do some activities, such as creating a rapport, discussing the material, and other activities that can support the teaching and learning process. Teaching does not just involve teacher and learners, but the performance of the member of the class is more important. Teaching can be said success when there is a good relation between teacher and learners, and learners get the material and can apply it. Teaching can be separated with the learners, because learners are the object to be taught. How appropriated teach the learners based on what levels they are. Actually method and techniques are the most important element of teaching. Choosing method also cannot be separated with the concept of teaching- teacher- lesson and learners-centered lesson-, the concept is the effect of teaching and learning process. Each element in teaching cannot be separated, because it has relation and being a complement one another. From the concept, teacher can determine what method which is suitable. Teaching language is not easy; because language is so wide and need has many function and meaning. Language teacher needs good strategies, a suitable method and technique in the class room. Because of those reason, teacher must have wide knowledge, keeps up to date, and open-minded.

Teaching grammar for young learners is not easy, because grammar is one of language system that must be taught for the language learner. Sometimes, in speaking people do not need grammar more, but it is needed to tell, to describe the right procedures. For the young learners, teaching grammar must be taught in a different ways. English for young learners is thematic, so when teacher teach grammar, teacher must prepare the media, and picture. Young learners more like to see than read. Sometimes, reading is boring for some people, especially young learners or other learners that do not like reading. Teaching English grammar can be hard going - for the teacher and the students. It doesn't have to be difficult or painful, however teach English grammar using fun learning games are one of attractive learning. As we all know, children love games. Games have a special role in any foreign language teaching programmed because they facilitate foreign language learning especially for young learners. With the introduction of communicative language teaching, English language teaching and learning has become much more demanding for teachers and learners just like any other innovation poses challenges for its users.

Games have become crucially important for English language learners and teachers not only because they provide enjoyment and relaxation, but also as they encourage students to use their

language in a creative and communicative manner. Similarly, because the definition of the term "young learners" encapsulates those children between the ages of about 5 years old to 12 years old. It can be suggested that games are a natural part of young learners' lives. Games also provide wonderful atmosphere in the children's language class. It is widely documented that English language games improve learning, and be one of the most effective classroom tool. The first reason why games are so useful since games make learning fun, children are willing participants and are not just present in class because they have to be. Students pay more attention because when they enjoy themselves, they do better, feel better about them, and do even better – it is a learning cycle working in their favor. Playing a game has a purpose and an outcome. Hadfield stated that games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun [Hadfield, 1990: 1]." In order to play, students have to say things. Therefore, they have a reason to communicate and this makes them want to know and learn more. In addition to this, games stimulate and motivate children to a new level. They know that if they do not pay attention, they will not be able to play the game well and they will let their team down so they make more effort to join in and learn as much as possible. Wright et al stated that games encourage learners to direct their energy towards language learning by providing them with meaningful contexts [Wright. At.al, 1984:254]. Therefore, it is important that teachers should not see games as time fillers or tools designed for fun only, but integrate them into their foreign language teaching program. Moreover, games are one of the best ways to direct young learners' energy not only to learning grammar, but also too many skills and areas of the language.

As Millar says, a game has definitely a long history. Platoon reminded the need of a game in his work "The Laws". He pointed out the use of apples; even we do not consider this as a game, whilst children are counting is very helpful. Moreover, Aristotle was persuaded that children should be encouraged to play games. A German pedagogue Frobel emphasized the importance of a game in the process of learning. The first theory of a game originated in the second half of the 19th century. But could actually each game be taken as a "game"? How could be a game defined? The answer is definitely very easy. Klauer says that a game must be governed by some rules. If it is not, it is not a game. Playing of a child with a doll could not be taken as a game, it is only playing. However, when this child is playing with a doll and has specific aim – e.g. to dress the doll up according to exact rules, it is a game.

Talking about language games, it is similar. Language game is a game with rules that have linguistic aims and they are agreed with the participants. The aim of the game is winning, to be the first who achieves the finish. Every game is strictly limited by start and finish. All participants of the game must know the rules and aims of the game. Rules should be clear and easy for understanding. They need not to be long. Some language games need a supervisor. This person is mostly a teacher. The teacher follows the time if there is any time limit, checks the rules or notes the score.

1) Types of Language Games. It is difficult to classify games into categories because such categories often overlap. Hadfield explained two ways of classifying language games [Hadfield, 1984: 223]: First, the author divides language games into two types: linguistic games and communicative games. Linguistic games focus on accuracy; on the other hand, communicative games focus on the exchange of information. Jacobs further classified games into more detailed forms which are composed of both the elements defining linguistic and communicative games. a) Sorting, ordering or arranging games. For example, students have a set of cards with months, and they have to arrange those cards in order. b) Information gap games. In such games, one or more people have information that other people do not, and they have to exchange their information to complete a task. c) Guessing games. These are a variation on information gap games. For instance,

one student who has a flash card cannot show it to others but must instead mime it to others, and then other students have to guess the word from his or her performance. d) Searching games. These games are another version of two-way information games, with everyone seeking and giving information. For example, everyone is given a clue to find out who the criminal is. They have to ask and then reply to their partners to solve the problem. e) Matching games. As the name implies, participants need to find a match for a word, picture, or card. f) Labeling games. These are a form of matching game. The only difference is that the participants match labels and pictures. g) Exchanging games. Many card games fall into this category. In these games, students barter cards, objectives, or ideas. h) Board games. "Scrabble" is one of the most popular games in this category. i) Role playing games. Such games involve students in playing roles that they might not play in real life. They might also be employed to get students to practice set dialogues. In this study we contend primarily, with three varieties of gaming types: arranging games, guessing games, and matching games. They are adopted to facilitate students" motivation, confidence, and vocabulary acquisition. More recent studies related to the positive and negative effects of playing games and the subsequent performance of students in measures of English proficiency are discussed in the following section.

2) Teaching grammar through games. Games are definitely the most natural way of learning something. Playing is the most effective method for children. Through playing they joined with their environment, understand many principles of how things work and it is easy for them to remember something which is connected with pleasure, fun or amusement. Vernon says, the theory of intrinsic motivation may also give some insight as to why teaching grammar through games actually works. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal factors that encourage us to do something. Most young learners will not internally decide that they want to learn grammar. They don´t yet understand the concepts of why it´s important to know proper grammar, so these external factors won´t affect them much either. Instead, intrinsic motivation can encourage them to play games. If these games are good then they will be learning while they are playing [Vernon, 2006].

3) Which Game to Use. Teachers should be careful about choosing games if they want to make them advantageous. First of all, the teacher should decide on the purpose of a game. A game may seem appropriate and useful. However, when its value is considered from the view point of foreign language teaching, it may have little or no purpose. Nedomová underlines the fact that we "should consider whether the game-like activity is for children only to make the lesson more attractive and protect them from being bored or whether we tend to revise and practice some particular part of grammar, vocabulary, etc [Nedomová, 2007: 19]." When they choose a game considering the level of the game is equally important. Teachers must decide whether the level of the game fits students' language level because a game may become difficult when it is beyond the learners' level or it may become boring when learners find it too easy to carry on. When a game's value in grammar teaching is considered, teachers tend to use them for practice or to reinforce a specific grammatical aspect of language. If a game is suitable for learners' level so that the grammatical knowledge can be used easily as they are playing the game. The fact that games enable social interaction and participation is also important. Learners, especially the young ones, learn better when they interact with their peers. Some games may include both cooperation and competition together. While students cooperate within a team and sametimes, compete against another team [Rixon, at.al. 1991: 5]. Hence, what teachers should consider while choosing a game is the fact that children learn best with games which require physical action, interaction, competition and participation. In conclusion, teachers should take all these factors into account while choosing a game because it seems to be most appropriate may turn into a complete failure in the end.

Teaching grammar to young learners is a really hard job. However, to show students that even learning grammar could be funny and interesting, it be one way teach grammar using various methods or less worthy and useful with young learners. On the other hand, as it has been stated using games while teaching and explaining grammar rules or structures, is definitely very effective and brings them amusement. We tried to point out that whilst playing a game, students feel released and relaxed, it helps them with their inhibitions. Learners are highly motivated and the level of stress is at the low level. In the practical part writer showed that teaching grammar through games is a successful and effective approach. Both students and teachers were satisfied with the game and they would appreciate similar in English lessons. We hope that involves games into teaching English will be advantage in the real one. It is definitely a good way of making grammar more pleasant and accessible for young learners. Although the preparation for teaching grammar by this way is a little bit time-consuming and it needs much thinking and creative approach for the teacher, but it is definitely worthy because children do not consider grammar as the necessary evil.

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