

## LANGUAGE GAMES – COMPANION TO LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE

\* Dr. Jignesh B. Patel

\* Associate Professor, Department of Education, Children's University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

### Abstract:

The traditional teaching process referring to chalk-and-talk has become outdated in present-day classrooms. Most of the successful teachers preferred the most common and preferred teaching strategies i.e., the use of language games in the language classroom. Many researchers have used various language games to show their effects on learners' knowledge, competency, and motivation in learning a language, focusing on different targeted language areas and skills such as grammar. Therefore, this paper, based on reviews of past literature, will explore the use of language games in teaching and learning and discussed 'Games' as a useful tool for teaching a second language, types of language games, advantages of language games, active learning in games, and game as a motivator and role of the game in language acquisition.

**Keywords:** Language, Game, Second Language, Learning, Teacher, Teaching Learning,

**Copyright © 2024 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial Use Provided the Original Author and Source Are Credited.

### Introduction:

Everybody loves playing irrespective of their age, whether they are young or old. From early childhood, playing is an enormous part of most children's and it plays a key role in their overall development as well. Children start playing as early as infancy but as they develop throughout their childhood they keep playing, and as they grow up and mature the nature of their play changes. When children enter middle childhood (6-12) their play starts to change into games that are different from play in the sense that they are more organized and planned, and they usually include a variation of rules and a specific objective (Rixon.1981). When playing most games participants are needed to communicate with each other to execute the plan of the game and try to make their team win. The need for communication during games, and the informal setting games provide encourages students to be unafraid to talk, which practices their fluency, a valuable communication skill.

Thus, we can say that language learning is arduous work. Anyone who wants to master the language must try to understand. To repeat accurately, to manipulate newly understood Language, and, to use the entire range of known Language in conversation or written composition. Games help and encourage Learners to sustain their interest and work.

### Understanding the Meaning of 'Games'

A single definition of the word 'games' is difficult to find All available definitions are seen to be descriptive of the most common characteristics of games It seems that if a certain activity is felt to be interesting, amusing, or entertaining, it is likely to be referred to as a game.

In the Macquarie Dictionary (1997), a game is defined as "amusement or pastime; diversion; contest with rules, the result being determined by skill, strength or chance." (p.871). 'Language games' is a general term used to cover a variety of language activities. Language items such as grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and spelling; and for developing basic Language skills such as listening. Speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW).

### Types of Language Games:

In the field of language teaching, the word ‘game’ has been a vague ‘umbrella term’ for all kinds of activities considered to be fun.

Littlewood (1981) and Hadfield (1996) divided Language games into two main types: communicative and pre-communicative games. Communicative games are those games where the emphasis is on successful communication, rather than on grammatical correctness. Communicative games cover such communicative functions as greeting, invitation, request, description, and narration, where the output is open-ended, unprescribed, or unpredictable.

Games that stress accuracy of Language use is called pre-communicative games as these types of games emphasize the accuracy of Language use, they have explicit definitions, such as ‘structural games’ or more direct ‘grammar games. Structure-aimed games aim to foster the Linguistic ability for certain syntactic patterns, same vocabulary areas and idiomatic expressions, spelling, and pronunciation skills, and new vocabulary. In pre-communicative games, the participants, the output is close-ended to ensure the correctness of Language use (Andreas, 1984).

**The Advantages of Using Language Games:** Many renowned writers and eminent educationalists opined that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value. Uberman (1998) states that “games encourage, entertain, teach, and promote fluency. If not for any of these reasons, they should be used just because they help students see beauty in a foreign language and not just problems that at times seem overwhelming.” Silvers (1982) says that real learning takes place in a relaxed atmosphere. There are several reasons for using language games in teaching a second language.

- They are both motivating and funny, which can help and activate students who may have been inactive before.
- They encourage students to communicate and interact which helps build relationships through the friendly atmosphere they create among participants who feel all equal so that they can interact easily.
- They give learners an opportunity to use the language in the various skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in circumstances from their real life.
- They break the routine since they add uniqueness to usual classroom activities.
- They permit students to take on more responsibility and acquire new experiences. This results in an increase in their confidence level.
- They emotionally include students which have a positive effect on their learning because while exposed to the target language, they need to feel something such as happiness, excitement, amusement, and surprise.
- They provide a good chance for shy, calm, and reluctant students and for those with low confidence because the atmosphere is not as serious when playing a game and it is easy to forget shyness. So, they can foster whole class participation and engaged all kinds of participants.
- They produce diversity in classes among students of all ages and levels, and diversity is needed for any school work to be progressive.
- They help learners acquire vocabulary more quickly and easily by doing actions during playing the game.

Finally, they are valuable for all language learners since they can be easily adjusted for age, level, and interests. Julkunen (2001) suggests that games are interesting and effective because the tasks that attract and motivate the learner are those that include an optimal amount of uncertainty and unpredictability. When faced with comprehensible input, at the language level, that is incongruous or metaphorical, such that it is at first conceptually incomprehensible, learners are compelled to expand their semantic range to make sense of these incompatible, incongruent, or metaphorical, images (Giraud 1980; Monnot 1988). Learners would have to expand their understanding of the meaning of the words from a basic, logical, obvious meaning, to a more flexible, accommodating, potential meaning. The learners are compelled to notice in detail, the structure and the meaning of sentences that may conceal a metaphorical idea. They will see or create a metaphorical meaning. In SLA theory, “noticing” is thought to be a necessary condition for SL acquisition (Sharwood-Smith & Kellerman, 1986; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Schmidt, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995; McLaughlin, 1990; Lewis, 1997).

By making semantic adjustments, the learners will either restructure or reinforce their interlanguage, which may result in acquisition. Sentences that will not make sense under any circumstance will also stretch the learners’ semantic range as they will have to concede that two clauses combined make no sense. To do this, the learner will need a thorough understanding of the language used and of the potential range of meaning of the given lexical items. It may be argued that improbable images created while playing a language game may have beneficial results for the learners. Mollica (2001), while referring to games used in the classroom to improve learner acquisition of morphological features, states.

Teachers will find that some students, to be amusing, will think of improbable combinations, but these humorous, improbable combinations will stand out in the students’ minds and will help them recall these endings more easily and more readily (p. 468).

Whether or not the images created by the participants in a word game are probable or improbable, the learner is often required to render an additional cognitive effort to find meaning. Robinson (2022) finds that when learners expend an additional cognitive effort to complete more complex tasks, together with a perceived need for communicative resource expansion, conditions are created for language development. Differing learner interpretation may additionally lead to interaction and negotiated meaning. In this respect, the word games resemble the problem-solving tasks that have been shown to promote the type of interaction that produces comprehensible input that, theoretically, leads to the possibility of acquisition of new structures (Duff 1986). Moreover, playing word games in the SL classroom places the teacher in a supportive role; the teacher is a facilitator. Robinson (2021) believes that this relaxed, ludic environment creates connivance: pleasant complicity between learner and teacher. Thus, word games allow for more student autonomy as they work in pairs or groups and shift the learning environment away from teacher-fronted instruction. These conditions have also proven to be beneficial for the negotiation of content (Rulon & McCreary 1986). The design of the games as language learning tasks also ensures the learners’ active engagement in the learning process. This may result in the transformation of the task, the learner, and the group (Platt & Brooks 2002). These conditions may also lead to a sense of learner autonomy and increased learner self-confidence.

### Active Learning in Games:

Games provide unique Learning opportunities to meet students' needs while engaging in an Active Learning process. These advantages are summarized in the following quotation attributed to Confucius (Silberman, 1996):

“I hear and I forget,

I see and I remember

I do and I understand.”

Silberman (1996) emphasizes the need for students to be given a more active role in the Learning process because merely hearing something, or seeing something, is not enough to learn it. Thatcher (1990) promotes games as a significant form of experiential learning. During a game, the Learner is engaged in an experience in which resolutions or decisions must be made. Evaluation, discussion, reflection, and application all occur during playing games and all promote Learning. Games provide more opportunities for students to practice in a meaningful Linguistic situation. This contributes to greater retention and more satisfactory Learning outcomes.

### Games as Motivator:

A widely perceived advantage of Language games is also their ability to improve student motivation. Researcher the importance of motivation for successful L2 learning. Language games can promote the Learners' motivation not only through their changeable forms of activity and Kaleidoscopic nature of engagedness but also through their positive effect on the level of anxiety. Games can lower Learners' anxiety in the classroom and thus improve their Learning. In a conventional classroom, there is a lot of stress put on students trying to master the target language.

### The Role of Games in Language Learning:

The benefits of Language games can be summed up in the following points:

- Games are fun and amusing the acquisition of input is, therefore, more Likely.
- Games are motivating They provide students an incentive to keep up with the challenging work and strain of Learning a Foreign Language by creating a competitive environment to use the target language.
- Games are engaging and make students forget that they are Learning.
- Games make students focus on the use of Language, rather than on the Language forms so that they unconsciously apply grammar and vocabulary.
- Games are an opportunity for intensive practice.
- Games bring the foreign Language to Life by creating a meaningful, real-life context for using the foreign Language.
- Games reduce anxiety and stress in the classroom, which helps Learners remember things faster and better.
- Games allow students to learn using all their senses.
- Games allow Language practice in various skills at the same time (listening, speaking, reading, writing-LSRW)
- Games are a positive diversion from the regular Language class routine.
- Games are an evaluative tool for the teacher and the student.

- Games create a Learner-centered environment because they are usually played in groups or pairs.
- Games positively influence the teacher-student relationship.
- Games engage all Learners and involve them actively rather than passively.
- Games increase the amount of student speaking time.
- Games encourage shy students to participate.
- Games promote and increase co-operation among students in groups and create a feeling of team spirit.
- Games allow peer teaching and peer correction.
- Games allow interior differentiation and accommodate the different Learning paces of students.

It is undeniable that games have a high pedagogical value in the foreign Language classroom when they are appropriately chosen and used.

#### **Role of Teacher in Games:**

Teachers are often expected to be constantly actively engaged and to interact with their students. When games are integrated into the curriculum, the teacher's role is still important. First, the teacher is charged with the role of an organizer, and an educational manager (role 1), determining the demand for games, analyzing their cost-benefit ratio, and ensuring the game runs smoothly. Doing that first requires assessing the suitability of the game (age, level of education, Linguistic competence, intellectual abilities, cultural and social background of the players) and preparing explanations that are necessary so that a game can be played successfully.

When playing a game, students expect a person to issue proper orders and instructions that they must follow. The teacher therefore also must take the role of an authoritative figure, a referee or arbiter (role 2) who distributes rewards and sanctions. Although it is not the primary role of the teacher in a game-based classroom content anymore, the teacher still acts as a transmitter of knowledge (role 3), informing the students about the content, the structure, the course, and the benefits of a specific game.

As a mediator and negotiator (role 4) the teacher is responsible for mediating between all players, managing group processes, and group dynamics. The teacher also acts as a facilitator of Learning (role 5). The teacher should provide Learning opportunities in the classroom that enable students to engage with one another and to develop their understanding and skills in the Language being taught.

The use of games in Language teaching also entails acting as an information or Language consultant (role 6). If students have a question or need help with vocabulary or sentence structures to be able to communicate effectively during a game playing process, they can consult the teacher as a language resource. However, the teacher should only become active on request. In a game-based context, the teacher is also actively engaged as an observer, monitor, and corrector (role 7). During the playing process, monitoring the course of the game and analyzing potential problems (errors) that occur.

The fact that the teacher is a specialist in the specific field that is being practiced explains the significance of the role of an assessor and mentor (role 8). The teacher is expected to advise the students and help them solve problems. In the capacity of a coach (role 9). The teacher observes, supervises, and counsels the Learning process and tries to help students become independent Learners and eventually undertake Learning tasks on their own.

The teacher also acts as a trainer (role 10). By giving students practice and training in specific abilities and skills. In the role of a motivator (role 11). A teacher must explain the profit of acquiring specific knowledge and the advantages of the use of games in the Learning Process, and forecast the benefits and possibilities the acquired knowledge will provide. As an animator and activator (role 12). The teacher initiates games, encourages students to actively participate, and lowers the students' inhibitions. Finally, the teacher also acts as a judge and evaluator (role 13).

### **The Suitability of Game:**

Many teachers think that games can only be used with specific students, of course, factors like age, proficiency level, intellectual capabilities, social relationships, cultural context, class size, timing, and classroom settings must be considered when choosing a game. However, most Language Learning games can be used successfully with any group of students if the games are adapted accordingly. Language Learning games are reasonable and useful for all age groups, from kindergarten children to college students as well as senior Learners. Infact, all game types work for all ages but the content of the games makes them age-specific. The content of the game must be relevant to the students so that they feel playing it is of importance to them. All games can be adjusted to a specific proficiency level by simplifying them or making them more challenging. Variety is another crucial factor teachers should keep in mind when choosing a game. The teacher should try to make lessons different from each other in some way to do justice to the full range of students' Learning styles. In general, teachers must choose not to give up on Language – Learning games but look at failure as a remarkably effective lesson and try to figure out what exactly caused the problem and learn from it.

To sum up, we can say that Language games have been proved to be an extremely useful tool to learn a foreign language easily in a natural way.

### **References:**

- Andreas, W. (1984). *Games for Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Duff, P.A. (1985). *Another Look at Interlanguage Talk: Taking Task to Task*. ESL 750 Term Paper. The University of Hawaii.
- Hadfield, J. (1996). *Elementary Communication Games: A Collection of Games and Activities for Elementary Students of English*. England: Wesley Longman.
- Julkunen, K. (2001). *Situation-and Task-Specific Motivation in Foreign Language Learning*. In Z.Dörnyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 29-41). University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- Lewis, M. (1997). *Implementing the Lexical Approach*. Language Teaching Publications.
- Littlewood, w. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McLaughlin, B. (1990). "Conscious" versus "unconscious" learning. *TESOL Quarterly* 24, 617-631.
- Mollica, Anthony., 2001, *Teaching/Expanding the Student's Basic Vocabulary*, American Association of Teachers of Italian, Vol. 78, No. 4



- Platt, Elizabeth & Brooks, Frank. (2002). *Task Engagement: A Turning Point in Foreign Language Development*. *Language Learning*. 52. 365 - 400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00187>.
- Rixon, S. (1981). *How to use Games in Language Teaching*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Robinson, P. (2021). *Task-Based Language Learning: A Review of Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00641.x>
- Rulon, K.A., & McCreary, J. (1986). *Negotiation of content: teacher-fronted and small group interaction*. In RR Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition* (pp. 182-99). Newbury House.
- Schmidt, R. (1990). *The role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning*. *Applied Linguistics* 11, 129-158.
- Schmidt, R. (1993). *Awareness and second language acquisition*. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13, 206-226.
- Schmidt, R. (1994). *Implicit Learning and the Cognitive Unconscious: Of Artificial Grammars and SLA*. In N. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 165-209). Academic Press.
- Schmidt, R. (1995). *Consciousness and Foreign Language Learning: A Tutorial on the Role of Attention and Awareness*. In R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning* (Technical Report No. 9) (pp. 1-64). University of Hawai'i at Manoa.
- Schmidt, R., & Frota, S. (1986). *Developing Basic Conversational Ability in a Second Language. A Case Study of an Adult Learner of Portuguese*. In R. Day (Ed.), *Talking to learn: Conversation in second language acquisition*, (pp. 237-326) Newbury House.
- Sharwood Smith, M., & Kellerman, E. (1986). *Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Silberman, M. (1996). *Active Learning: 101 Strategies for teaching any subject*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Silvers, S. M. (1982). *Games for the Classroom and the English-speaking Club*. *English Teaching Forum*, 20,2, pp- 29-33
- Thatcher, D.C. (1990). *'Promoting Learning through Games and Simulation: Simulation and Gaming*. Pg.262-273.
- Uberman, A. 1998. *The Use of Games: for Vocabulary Presentation and Revision*. *English Teaching Forum* 36 (1): 20. <http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/vols/vol36/no1/p20.htm>

**Cite This Article:**

**Dr. Patel J.B. (2024).** *Language Games – Companion to Learn a Second Language*. In *Educreator Research Journal*: Vol. XI (Issue III), pp. 21–27. **ERJ.** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12924041>