

The procedure of using games in teaching English grammar

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Abstract: No one can deny the importance of grammar in language teaching and learning, especially English. Grammar is the central heart of language, grammar is also the tool to help students' comprehension of the target language. Therefore, in terms of teaching English grammar, using games is one of the most effective ways. Through games, not only good students but also shy and weak ones are encouraged to join in activities because games help them to get the motivation to learn and sustain their interest and help the teacher to create the contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The paper presents the definition of games, the characteristics of games, the types of games in language teaching, the steps of applying games in teaching English grammar, and the requirements of using games in teaching grammar. Through using games in teaching English grammar, students can remember well what they have learned and the teacher can save time in teaching.

Keywords: Games, English grammar, teaching, learning

1. Introduction

Mastering grammar is the foundation of the proficiency of a language. Grammar teaching is also an essential part of language teaching. Language learning is a challenging task requiring constant effort, especially for young learners. To obtain effectiveness in English learning, games have been used in teaching all aspects of learning, from listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills to even grammar. Games encourage learners to direct their energy toward language learning by providing them with meaningful contexts. Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby [6] In a lot of games, learners are required to cooperate to achieve the goal so in this case, teamwork and group work become priorities. In any situation, games stimulate students' interest through classroom activities and as a result, students become motivated and willing to take part in activities. In a language class, games contribute to decreasing students' anxiety, increasing positive feelings, and improving self-confidence because learners work with their partners, most learners love cooperation and interaction and learners can learn from each other. Games bring authentic contexts/ situations to the confinement of the classroom which supplies learners with a chance to use language in reality.

2. Content

2.1. Definition of Games

According to Haldfield [2], "A game is an activity with rules, a goal, and an element of fun. Games

should be regarded as an integral part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of the term."

Avedon and Brian [1] define a game as a way of behaving in play, in which several individuals share and generally form a pattern a pattern tends to be confirmed. The elements of organization, which bring about a definite and often repeated climax, emphasize the game pattern. In a game, not emphasize the elements of success and failure, players try to practice to improve through their own efforts. A language game is a game with rules that have linguistic aims and they are agreed upon by 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 to understand. 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.

In conclusion, it is difficult to find a single definition of the word "game". However, summarizing all the definitions, we can recognize that all available definitions have the same characteristic of a game, that is a certain activity that is felt to be interesting, amusing, or entertaining is likely defined as a game. A game that encourages not only an active participant but also generates fun as well as specific linguistic language outcomes to achieve.

2.2. The Characteristics of Games

According to Lee [3], all games have the following four characteristics.

Firstly, all games have a goal. The goal here is that graders use their skills to achieve a particular endpoint. The goal that the teacher wants to achieve when giving a game is not only that students can understand more about the grammar point, but also that they will feel more relaxed after learning a hard and boring structure. The second characteristic is that all games must have rules. The rules in games have to provide both descriptive and defining frameworks for how the goal is to be achieved. Thirdly, all games have restrictions. Games will also include rules about what is not allowed in the course of play. Hadfield [2] points out that nearly all games include rules and more efficient ways to achieve the goal. Indeed, sometimes the most logical and easiest solution is not available. Take soccer for example. Most of us would agree it would be easier to throw the ball into the goal than to kick it. However, if this were the case, soccer would cease to be soccer and would become handball. How often during a game of golf do you wish you could kick the ball from behind a tree or throw it out of a bunker or over a water hazard? The fourth necessary condition to legitimize a game is the acceptance of the constitutive rules. Unless all players are operating from the same set of rules and agree to these, the game cannot exist. Although fair play is defined as conduct that adheres to the rules, it is still preceded by the acceptance of these rules in spirit so as to make the game possible. How often do backyard games break down because of disputes over the agreed-upon rules?

In conclusion, all games must fulfill the four conditions. There must be a goal, rules that provide the framework of the game, rules that restrict what people can do in order to provide challenges from both thinking and physical perspectives, and players who are in accord when they play the game. When teachers want to design their own games, it is useful for them to begin by thinking of these conditions.

2.3. The Types of Games in Language Teaching

Games in terms of language teaching, defined by Lee [3], are classroom activities, which give learners an enjoyable environment to study a foreign language. Games in the strict sense of language learning are considered communicative games.

Based on the aims of using a game, games are classified into many types by Lee (1979), as follows:

- Structure games provide students opportunities to use a particular structure in communication.

- Vocabulary games focus mainly on words.

- Spelling games help learners to spell words correctly.

- Pronunciation games provide drills or exercises that help learners to improve their pronunciation.

Number games help learners get accustomed to spoken and written forms of numbers.

Skills games such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing games develop learners' four English skills.

2.4. Steps of applying games in teaching English grammar

According to Harmer [4], to teach grammar effectively, teachers have to follow these six following steps.

(1) Provide an example of the structure in context.

(2) Draw attention to the specific structure by eliciting an example of the structure by a question or a prompt.

(3) Briefly explain the form.

(4) Give similar examples of the same structure.

(5) Ask students to perform a controlled exercise to practice using the structure.

(6) Introduce an activity that lets students communicate using the structure in real contexts.

2.5. The requirements of using games in teaching grammar

Learning English, especially English grammar, is so hard and boring, so it's very important for the teacher to find an interesting way to teach grammar. Using games is an effective way to get graders' attention and interest because they are motivating and challenging. During hard and boring lessons with a lot of grammar, a small game can make graders feel more relaxed and find it easier to focus on their learning. To learn a language, graders need a great deal of effort, so games can help them to make and sustain the effort of learning. When using games, the teacher can help graders practice many skills, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading because students have to interact and communicate as well as create meaningful context for language use in a flexible, meaningful, and communicative way.

Firstly, Wright [5] mentioned that games make graders feel fun in learning. Games create a fun atmosphere and reduce the distance between the teacher and graders so the graders are willing to participate in the teacher's teaching without thinking

about what they have to do. It can also be useful with the weak able graders because all graders are encouraged to participate; even shy learners can be motivated to speak.

Moreover, using games is a good way to revise what graders learned before. It's not easy for graders to remember all they have learned immediately in the class. Therefore, if the teacher uses games at the beginning of the lessons like a warm-up activity, the games will lend themselves perfectly to quick bursts of revision so that the teacher can revise a massive amount of grammar as well as vocabulary in a few minutes.

The last but not least important reason is that games help and encourage many graders or learners to sustain their interest and work on learning a language. Using games in language teaching can help graders develop their structure and produce the same grammar and structure repeatedly. We can also use games as vehicles for language teaching. Games can help teachers to create contexts in which language is useful and meaningful. Teaching English involves the teaching of patterns. This pattern can be taught meaningfully through games. Games provide the repeated use of language form or drill. By making the language convey information and opinion, games provide the key feature of a drill with the opportunity to work on language as living communication. Games for teaching English grammar are not only for low-level graders on low-level grammar but also for advanced-level graders on high-level grammar (complete grammar).

In conclusion, to make the lessons more interesting and to make graders feel more excited with the boring grammar points, games are extremely useful. It not only allows graders to practice and internalize vocabulary, grammar, and structures extensively but also makes graders focus on the activity and end up absorbing the grammar subconsciously.

3. Conclusion

The success in teaching a foreign language, especially English, is measured in terms of the learners' ability to communicate, so communicative competence is the goal of language teaching and learning. In recent years, more and more teachers show their consideration in using games in teaching. Using games in language teaching has pedagogical values. The most important value is students are encouraged while learning English through games. The atmosphere in the classroom is not tense as

games bring a lot of laughter into classes. As a result, students can learn a language unconsciously. Playing games is not only entertaining but also learning. Games employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts which help students to work on the language whilst they are playing with their friends. They, therefore, obtain both linguistic and communicative abilities. To teachers, while students play games, the teacher will have a chance to observe them and know more about students' ability and their strengths and weaknesses. The teacher can adjust the teaching planning for the future so that their students can learn better.

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