

USING LANGUAGE GAMES TO INCREASE MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS FOR GRADE 8 STUDENTS AT NGUYEN BINH KHIEM BOARDING SCHOOL

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Received:	20/3/2023	The article presents findings of a recent study which investigated language games to increase motivation in English speaking class for grade 8 students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Boarding School. Language games were applied for 12 weeks during the English lessons of grade 8 class with 40 students. The survey questionnaires, class observation and interview were used to collect data for analysis. Results of the study showed that students' motivation for learning speaking was much improved with the employment of frequent language games in the teaching and learning process. Most students found language games make speaking lessons more enjoyable and more fun. Especially, language games can help to create more chances and more talking time for students; thus, they felt more relaxed and enjoyable in learning speaking. Moreover, while their level of anxiety was lowered, their confidence was enhanced when language games were integrated in their class sessions.
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SỬ DỤNG TRÒ CHƠI NGÔN NGỮ ĐỂ NÂNG CAO ĐỘNG LỰC TRONG CÁC GIỜ HỌC NÓI TIẾNG ANH CHO HỌC SINH LỚP 8 TRƯỜNG PHỔ THÔNG DÂN TỘC NỘI TRÚ NGUYỄN BÌNH KHIÊM

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	20/3/2023	Bài báo trình bày kết quả của việc sử dụng trò chơi ngôn ngữ nhằm tăng động lực trong giờ học nói tiếng Anh cho học sinh lớp 8 trường Phổ thông Dân tộc Nội trú Nguyễn Bình Khiêm. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện trong 12 tuần trong các giờ học tiếng Anh đối với 40 học sinh lớp 8. Các hoạt động khảo sát, quan sát lớp học và phỏng vấn đã được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu và phân tích. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy động cơ học nói của học sinh được cải thiện nhiều sau khi sử dụng thường xuyên các trò chơi ngôn ngữ trong quá trình dạy và học. Hầu hết học sinh nhận thấy các trò chơi ngôn ngữ làm cho các giờ học nói trở nên thú vị và vui vẻ hơn. Đặc biệt, trò chơi ngôn ngữ có thể giúp tạo ra nhiều cơ hội và thời gian nói cho học sinh. Học sinh cảm thấy thoải mái và thích thú hơn khi học nói. Học sinh cảm thấy ít lo lắng hơn trong khi nói và cảm thấy tự tin hơn khi các trò chơi ngôn ngữ được tích hợp trong các giờ học tiếng Anh của mình.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Speaking skill and its role in language acquisition

As a matter of fact, speaking plays an important role in our daily life. According to Sharma [1, p.1] “speaking is the first way to interact with others in the social community. Moreover, the success in learning a language at first can be seen from the ability of the learner’s speaking”. Wong and Yunus [2, p.3] said that “speaking skill is one of the eminent skills to master in the process of learning English”. Richards and Rodgers [3] added that speaking skills were neglected in classes using traditional teaching approaches since reading and writing abilities were prioritized. Speaking is the most significant and crucial of the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - that are essential for efficient communication.

Speaking has been claimed to be of major importance for human interaction by Efrizal [4] who stated that people speak every day and everywhere. Speaking is the spoken method of conveying thoughts and messages. If we want to encourage students to communicate in English, we should use it when we speak to one another.

1.2. Motivation

In his word, Ellis stated that “motivation involves the attitudes and effective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2” [5, p.75]. Woolfolk [6, p.366] also defined motivation as “an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior”. Similarly, according to Crookes and Schmidt (1991) (cited in [7, p. 2]), motivation is “interest in and enthusiasm for the materials used in class”.

Motivation can also be divided into “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” ones in general learning theory. [8, p.14]. Intrinsic motivation is what learners bring to the learning environment that is their internal attributes: attitudes, values, needs, and personality factors. Extrinsic motivation involves performing a behavior as a means to an end, that is, it originates outside the individual and is concerned with external environmental factors that help shape students’ behavior.

In this study, language games were relied on with a view to enhancing intrinsic motivation for long-term effect. To increase intrinsic motivation, teachers are supposed to create classroom activities with supportive environment to facilitate their learning in which language games are included. Some motivational strategies that teachers should consider include encouraging students to set their own goals in learning, increasing learners' self-confidence by providing regular experiences of success and emphasizing what students can do, promoting self-motivating by raising students' awareness of relevant strategies, using visual aids in teaching, diversifying activities and ensuring the relevance of the curriculum [9], [10].

1.3. Language games

Byrne [11] defined a game as a form of play that is governed by rules. They may be enjoyable and soothing. They provide more than just a diversion or pause from daily tasks. Additionally, they enable the student to use the language while playing the game. According to Emine & Cagda [12, p.2], games are one of the most important components in EFL classrooms. They include activities which have goals and rules at the same time fun.

There are some benefits of language games. Firstly, language games can be considered as an attractive learning environment. Lee [13] said that language games can eliminate the boredom of the classroom, and instead create a happy learning environment that increases students' interest in learning, making them ready to attend class. Secondly, language games can be regarded as an active learner-centered teaching method. Teachers no longer play the role of controlling and dominating all classroom activities, specifically what students have to present. Finally, language games help to increase learning motivation for learners. From Kamra’s viewpoint [14], games are a great way to motivate students to study and are frequently seen as the first step in drawing their attention to the context of foreign language instruction.

There are some communicative language teaching games provided by Rixon [15] including information-gap game, guessing games, matching games, role-play games, sorting, ordering, or arranging games. In this study, most above different types of games were applied for students. The choice of games for each class session was made by the teacher of the class based on the appropriateness of an activity with a particular lesson.

1.4. Previous studies

The effects of language games on English speaking motivation were acknowledged by Savitri, [16]. The findings of the study show that the students gained motivation and became more interested in their English lessons. Besides, the students improved their fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, and vocabulary. Furthermore, language games enabled the students to perform speaking at ease.

Fajariyah [17] studied how games improved the students' speaking proficiency. Based on the findings, students' speaking abilities improved in terms of orally responding to the teacher's questions, selecting grammar and vocabulary in their expressions, making correct sentences using suitable grammar and vocabulary, and the way they express their ideas. Besides, the atmosphere of the classroom was improved as the students became more active in taking part in the activities, discussing their difficulties with their teachers, and communicating with friends. Moreover, their learning motivation was greatly enhanced.

Trang and Hien [18] carried out the research to find out the relationship between using language games and developing students' English-speaking skills as well as the way to use language games for this purpose effectively. The research claimed that language games have a powerful impact on developing students' speaking skills by creating an alive learning environment. The study results also indicated that language games can enhance students' motivation.

All of the reviewed previous studies confirmed the benefits of using language games in improving students' motivation to learn speaking skills and investigated deeply the use of language games in the setting of a secondary school with students at different English levels in a class. The review of studies showed that language games had the potential to increase students' motivation for learning English speaking, even though they were of difference age groups.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research aims and questions

The research goals were to investigate the impacts of language games on the grade 8 students' motivation for learning to speak English to answer the question on how effective language games are in motivating grade 8 students' motivation students in learning speaking skill.

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted with the participation of 40 grade-8 students at Nguyen Binh Khiem Boarding School in Vo Nhai, Thai Nguyen. The students have a lot of difficulties in learning English because most of them are ethnic groups and study conditions are limited.

2.3. Data collection instruments and analysis

To measure students' level of motivation before and after the use of language games, survey questionnaires following the suggestion from Dornyei [19] which addressed motivational issues and contained a scale assessing the participants' willingness to communicate and participate in the speaking sessions were used through language games.

The pre-questionnaire was intended for getting to know students' attitudes perspectives towards speaking lessons, students' attitudes toward language games and students' preferences of teacher's techniques exploited in speaking classes.

The post-questionnaire items were designed to investigate students' feeling and attitudes towards language games exploited by the teacher, students' evaluation of the use of language games in speaking classes, students' expectations to the teacher when using games in speaking lessons.

As Hopskin [20] suggested, observation can be employed to measure the level of motivation among students. Therefore, the observation sheets for the teacher to make notes about students' classroom behaviour and evaluate the overall class motivation were also used. The observation aimed to find out information on students' involvement in the lesson. The variables consisted of Physical environment, Materials, Language games, and Students' behavior. There are certain indicators for each variable and for each indicator, the observer, also the researcher, made descriptions, comments, and summaries for each week.

Interviews also were used because of the need to see factors that could not be observed directly such as students' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions [21]. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to reveal their views about using language games in speaking lessons.

2.4. Procedures

The research lasted for 12 weeks. Each week, students had three periods of English, one of which was scheduled for language games as planned by the teacher. Before language games were applied, the researcher collected information about students' initial opinions using the pre-questionnaires. Then, language games were applied to promote motivation for learning speaking. Observation sheets were filled by teachers in all speaking lessons. After eight weeks of application, the post-questionnaires were distributed to students and interview were carried out to track any significant changes in students' motivation for learning speaking under the impacts of language games implemented in speaking class and their attitudes towards the use of these activities.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Pre-questionnaires

Table 1 provided students' attitudes and perspectives towards speaking lessons.

Table 1. Students' attitudes and perspectives towards speaking lessons

Questions	Options	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Among the four language skills, which one is the most difficult to you? A. Listening B. Speaking C. Reading D. Writing		70	17.5	7.5	5
How is speaking skill important to you? A. Very important B. Important C. Normal D. Not important at all		40	50	10	0
How do you find speaking topics and speaking activities introduced in "Global Success" textbook? A. Very interesting B. Interesting C. Normal D. Boring		5	10	57.5	27.5
Are you willing to speak in speaking classes? A. Yes, I like speaking very much B. Yes, sometimes C. No, I am never willing to speak		30	35	35	
If you choose B or C, please specify the reasons for your unwillingness to speak?					

As could be seen in table 1, speaking was considered the most difficult language skill by 17.5% of the respondents. The importance of this skill was also highly appreciated. It was considered very important by 40% of the students, and important by 50% of them. However, only 15% of the students thought the speaking topics and speaking activities introduced in the "Global

Success” textbook were very interesting (5%) or interesting (10%). Regarding the willingness to speak in speaking classes, only 30% said that they liked speaking very much. The number of students who sometimes spoke in class and never spoke was the same (35%).

More specifically, students’ attitudes toward language games were given in figure 1.

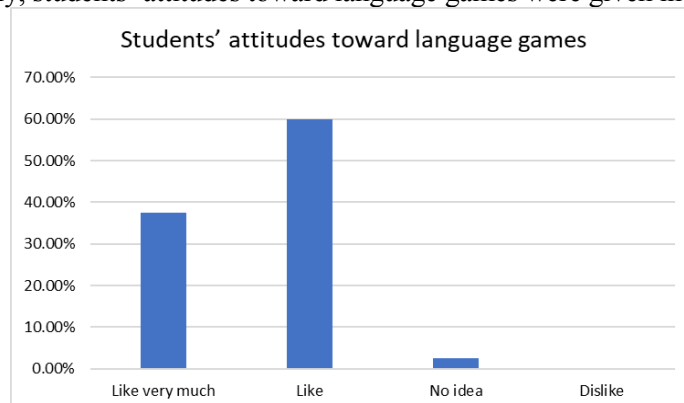


Figure 1. *Students' attitudes toward language games*

According to figure 1, almost all students had a positive attitude toward language games. Specifically, 37.5% admitted that they liked language games very much and 60% of the students liked them.

According to the survey, students’ preferences of teacher’s techniques exploited in speaking class were shown in table 2.

Table 2. *Students' preferences of teacher's techniques exploited in speaking classes*

Questions	Options	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	E (%)
In order to encourage students to speak and get them more involved in speaking activities, you think the teacher should: (You can choose more than one)						
A. Use visual aids (pictures, charts, etc).		15	87.5	55	7.5	2.5
B. Use language games						
C. Use songs						
D. Use group work and pair work						
E. Others (please specify)						
What do you think of using language games in speaking classes for?						
A. For relaxing only						
B. For teaching only		2.5	0	97.5	0	
C. For both relaxing and teaching						
D. Time covering						
If your teacher of English exploits language games in speaking lessons, are you willing to join?		100	0			

All of the students who are involved in the survey admitted that they would like the teacher to use language games in speaking lessons. This is very beneficial to the study as the researcher intended to apply this technique to motivate students to speak. Songs and visual aids were the next choices, taking up 55% and 15% respectively.

When being asked “What are the purposes of using language games in teaching speaking?”, most of the respondents (97.5%) thought that language games were used for both teaching and relaxing meanwhile a small number of students (2.5%) supposed that language games were suitable for relaxing only.

Regarding the students' willingness towards using language games in speaking classes, it really came up to expectations when all of the informants (100%) showed their willingness to join in language games. This is very advantageous to apply this technique to speaking classes due to the students' interest.

3.2. Post questionnaire

Table 3 shows how students felt and their attitudes towards language games exploited by the teacher.

Table 3. *Students' feeling and attitudes towards language games exploited by the teacher*

Questions	Options	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Do you like language games given by your teacher during speaking lessons?					
A. I like them very much					
B. Yes, they are ok		37.5	60	0	2.5
C. I don't like them at all					
D. I have no idea					
What do you do while playing games?					
A. Actively take part in the games					
B. Join the games only when being asked by teacher		87.5	5	7.5	0
C. Join the games only when feeling interested					
D. Do not play games					
How do you feel after playing games?					
A. relaxed and motivated		77.5	22.5	0	0
B. normal					
C. uncomfortable					

Almost students showed their keenness on language games accounting for 97.5% while only 2.5% had no concern about language games. Especially, no one disliked language games.

Regarding the students' participation when playing games, the number of the participants who actively took part in the games built up to 87.5%, meanwhile only 12.5% of the informants were inactive. They claimed that they joined the games only when being asked by the teacher or only when feeling interested, which only accounted for 5% and 7.5% respectively. There was no one that refused to play the games given by the teacher.

After playing language games, 77.5% of students felt relaxed and motivated meanwhile only 22.5% felt normal, and no one felt uncomfortable.

Language games had been exploited and implemented in speaking lessons for the past one month. Therefore, it enabled the students to evaluate its effectiveness in motivating students to speak. Table 4 shows the students' evaluation of the effectiveness of language games used in speaking classes. The table shows that 32.5% of the students felt more motivated to speak during and after playing games. Over half of the students 55% admitted that if the games were of their interest, they would actively take part in speaking lessons. Unexpectedly, there existed 12.5% of the students showing their low motivation and reluctance to speak despite the teacher's efforts to employ language games.

When asking students to self-evaluate the effectiveness of using language games in speaking classes, most of the informants found these games effective, taking up 95% whereas only 5% of the students did not consider these games an effective teaching technique.

As can be seen from the findings, more than half of students (55%) agreed that language games made speaking lessons more enjoyable and more fun. 17.5% raised their voice that these games made speaking lessons less challenging and less difficult. These numbers are really meaningful as based on data collected from the pre-questionnaire, there remained a large number of students who found speaking topics and speaking activities rather boring and challenging. Meanwhile, 25% of the students approved that they felt much more confident in speaking

English because the speaking classes were no longer covered with the feeling of anxiety and they no longer felt shy when speaking in front of a crowd. This positive result reassures that language games do a great help in raising students' motivation in learning the speaking skill.

In addition, the notable thing is that language games can help to create more chances and more talking time for students. This point was supported only by 2.5% of the respondents.

Table 4. *Students' evaluation of the use of language games in speaking classes*

Questions	Options	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)
Are you willing to speak during speaking lessons?					
A. yes, I feel more motivated to speak		32.5	55	12.5	0
B. It depends on the speaking activities and language games given					
C. No, I feel unmotivated and reluctant to speak.					
In your opinion, is the use of language games to motivate students to speak effectively?					
A. Yes		95	5	0	0
B. No					
What are the benefits of language games to your speaking skill? (You can choose more than one opinion)					
A. Language games makes speaking lessons more enjoyable and more fun					
B. Language games make speaking lessons less challenging and difficult		55	17.5	25	2.5
C. Language games lower my anxiety and shyness, and then develop my confidence in speaking					
D. Language games create more chance for students to speak.					

Next, the students' expectations to the teacher when using games in speaking lessons were shown in table 5.

Table 5. *Students' expectations to the teacher when using games in speaking lessons*

Questions	Options	A (%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	E (%)
What did the teacher should do to make the use of language games in speaking classes more effective? (You can choose more than one option)						
A. Teacher exploited the language games that suit students' level						
B. Teacher explained to students what to do in clear and simple language.		45	30	60	20	5
C. Teacher exploited a variety of language games in different speaking classes						
D. Teacher demonstrated what to do to students						
E. Others (please specify)						
What stage(s) do you think the teacher should exploit the language games?						
A. Warm-ups						
B. Pre-speaking						
C. While-speaking		15	10	15	10	50
D. Post-speaking						
E. At any stage of the lesson						

As illustrated in table 5, over half of the students expected the teacher to use a variety of language games in different speaking classes. This number indicates the positive attitudes of students toward language games. 45% of the students would like the teacher to exploit the language games that suit students' level. 30% hoped the teacher to explain to them what to do in clear and simple language and the same number wanted the teacher to demonstrate what to do to them. There were 5% of the students who specified other expectations, including an expectation of having more rewards after each game as well as increasing the time of each game.

3.3. Interview

The semi-structured interview was conducted with five voluntary interviewees. Regarding what the students thought about the language games used in your speaking lessons, all of them

had positive attitudes toward using language games in learning speaking. They claimed that language games were useful, interesting, and fun. They admitted that after using games in speaking lessons, they were more motivated to participate in the lessons. However, some interviewees shared the difficulties in learning to speak using games such as fluency, teacher's instruction, game time management, shyness.

3.4. Observation

For each class meeting, the researcher observed and made descriptions for each indicator. Through the analysis and summary, the researcher got information about the physical environment, the materials, the language games, and the student's behaviour.

In the first meeting, the researcher noted the general situation of the speaking class. Firstly, the favourable condition is that the physical environment was generally sufficient, meeting the demand of a speaking lesson as the class is equipped with a projector, speakers, and other necessary equipment. There is only one barrier which is the tables of the students. The tables sometimes made it hard for the students to move from one place to another.

Secondly, the materials in general were at a reasonable difficulty level, with sufficient and relevant content. The attractiveness was not satisfactory; therefore, it is required to have more activities to attract the learners' attention.

The language game for the first lesson was "interview". Some of the instructions were quite long and complicated. The game itself was not difficult; however, it could not facilitate speaking opportunities for the majority of the students. Therefore, the class atmosphere was not as good as expected.

The participation of the students was not satisfactory as well. It took students quite a long time to understand what they had to do so many of them stayed quiet and just answered the questions whenever the teacher asked them to do.

After the first meeting, the researcher could identify the problems when using games in teaching the speaking class so she made some adjustments. Firstly, the instructions were made shorter and simpler. Secondly, the researcher changed the way of organizing language games so that it could facilitate the participation of the whole students. Visual aids were also added and fun factors of games were considered carefully. The positive change could be seen week by week.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrated that language games were useful for improving students' motivation in the speaking lessons. Thanks to the application of the language games, most students were interested in speaking lessons than before. There is evidence that language games can be used as a motivator for students to speak because the majority of students might become more interested in speaking as a result, and they highly valued the usefulness of language games. Additionally, it is imperative to give the expectations and preferences of the students' sufficient consideration in order to increase the success of playing language games. They appear to favor language games that are pertinent to their interests, their proficiency in the target language, and give them lots of opportunities to communicate. The use of language games has a good impact on students' motivation levels for acquiring vocabulary. In other words, the findings revealed that the use of language games increased students' motivation to learn their key vocabulary. Additionally, the findings showed that students gave games a positive overall evaluation.

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