



## SCAFFOLDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING and DRAMA THROUGH GAMES

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores how games in general and language games in particular can be used in drama and English Language Teaching, to boost the linguistic proficiency, communicative ability and learning confidence in learners for second language acquisition. A list of activities has been suggested for use during English Language Teaching. For drama related games, one example activity each has been suggested for group making; community building; creating and sustaining focus and context building. It has been shown that carefully chosen and well planned language games, not just sustain the interest of the learners but facilitate a greater understanding of the lesson.*



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### **Introduction**

*By playing games, you can artificially speed up your learning curve to develop the right kind of thought processes.*

Nate Silver

Games can be used in drama to establish trust, set the rules and to build confidence in the learners, as they interact socially and think on their feet. Games are also beneficial in assessing the weaknesses and strengths of a particular group dynamic. If planned and executed properly, these can indeed lead to creative and personal development of the learners. To ensure meaningfulness of the games, they must have a context. The meaning of 'context' here is that there should be a story or drama from which it emanates.

Most English Language Teachers would agree that language learning happens best when the linguistic skills and content are transacted meaningfully in a classroom. For this, a variety of procedures and techniques should be followed, so that language learning becomes a pleasant and enjoyable experience for the learners. Language games come to the rescue of teachers in this regard. Language games are generally used as short warm-up starters or plenary activities. A language game should not be regarded as peripheral, filling in those moments,

when the teacher and class have nothing better to do. Carefully chosen and well planned language games, not just sustain the interest of the learners but facilitate a greater understanding of the lesson. Their value cannot be under estimated.

Some teachers, who are of the view that, these only lead to noise, chaos and entertainment, would however agree that, they are still worth paying attention to because their implementation leads to motivating learners, promoting communicative competence and generating fluency, along with sustaining interest of the students. Does one need anything more for acquisition of second language?

Language games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class. Games develop language proficiency of the learners by firming their Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills; and strengthening their communicative competence, vocabulary and grammatical ability.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Mubaslat , M (2012) attempted to determine the role of educational games on learning a foreign language. The researcher compared games with more traditional practices, as effective learning tools, on the basic educational stage of students of governmental schools in Jordan. An experimental research was conducted using three groups. To determine the relationship between learning a foreign language and educational games among the participants, a one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed based on achievement levels. For the relation between educational games and learning a foreign language, a Pearson's Correlational analysis was used. The results of the post test for the experimental group were better than the controlled one, which showed that games had a good effect on improving the achievement for the primary stage and to create an interactive environment. It was recommended to use games since they were very effective, especially for teaching a second language at the primary level.

Íslands (2010) wrote an essay that focused on the use of games inside the classroom and argued that games were a good teaching method when teaching foreign languages. It looked at why games should be used as a teaching method and showed how the positive result on language learning could be maximized. The various game categories in language teaching have been explained in the four language skill areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

### **LANGUAGE GAMES**

Games are vital in the language curriculum. Traditionally, games have been used in the language class as warm-ups at the beginning of class, fill-ins when there is extra time near the end of class, or as an occasional bit of spice stirred into the curriculum to add variety. As said

above, this should be avoided. Games must constitute a more substantial part of language courses (Lee, 1979; Rixon, 1981, Uberman, 1998). In the Presentation-Practice-Production framework (Mauer, 1997), (in which language items are first *presented* for students to listen to and/or read, then *practiced* in a manner in which the language used is controlled, e.g., students read out a dialogue from the textbook in which the two characters compare study habits, and then *produced* by students in a less controlled manner, e.g., two students discuss their own study habits), the games can be either for practicing specific language items or skills or for more communicative language production. Similarly, games can also be used as a way to revise and recycle previously taught language (Uberman, 1998).

Children often are very enthusiastic about games, but precisely for that reason, some older students may worry that games are too childish for them. Teachers need to explain the purpose of the game in order to reassure such students that there is such a phenomenon as “serious fun.” Also, older students can be involved in modifying and even creating games. Furthermore, adults have long participated in games on radio and television, not to mention the fact that popular board games, such as Monopoly, are played by adults.

As with other learning activities, teachers need to pay careful attention to the difficulty level of games. Part of the appeal of games lies in the challenge, but if the challenge is too great, some students may become discouraged. The challenge can be of two kinds: understanding how to play the game and understanding the language content. Some suggestions for promoting both types of understanding are:

- a. Modelling how the game is played. The teacher can demonstrate with a group of students or a group can demonstrate for the class.
- b. A kind of script of what people said as they played or a list of useful phrases. Similarly, key vocabulary and concepts may need to be explained.
- c. Clear directions. Demonstrations can accompany directions, and instructions can be given when needed, rather than explaining all the steps and rules in one go. Also, some student-initiated modifications can be accepted.
- d. Games already known to students.
- e. Games used to revise previously studied content, rather than involving new content.
- f. Groups are heterogeneous in terms of current language proficiency, so that the more proficient members can help others.
- g. Resources, online or print, such as dictionaries and textbooks.

The games listed below are devised to facilitate student talk and collaboration (and which do not simply practice isolated elements of grammar or pronunciation). Each suggested one has clearly identifiable objectives. Most of the games feature information gaps, which motivate students to find out from, and share with each other, the pieces of information needed to make up a whole 'picture'.

<b>LANGUAGE GAMES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS</b>	
Language games are used to test vocabulary, practice conversing, and build grammatical and other linguistic skills. Here is a list of classic ESL games:	
<b>1. WORD RELAY RACE</b>	Word Relay Race is used for revising vocabulary.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Split the class into teams and give each team a colored marker.</li><li>• Assign a designated space to each team on the board.</li><li>• The students must then write as many words as required by the teacher, related to the topic in the form of a relay race.</li><li>• Each team wins one point for each correct word. Any words that are unreadable or misspelled are not counted.</li></ul>
<b>2. BLUFF</b>	The game is brilliant for practicing speaking skills.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask a student to write three statements about himself / character from a literary piece, on the board, two of which should be lies and one should be true.</li><li>• Let the students ask him questions about each statement and then guess which one is the truth.</li><li>• If they guess correctly then they win.</li><li>• Extension: Give students time to write their own two truths and one lie.</li><li>• Pair them up and have them play again, this time with their list, with their new partner.</li><li>• Bring the whole class back together and have students announce one new thing they learned about another student as a recap.</li></ul>
<b>3. SIMON SAYS...</b>	This game is used to see if students can follow directions.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stand in front of the class (you are Simon for the duration of this game).</li><li>• Do an action and say Simon Says [action]. The students must copy what you do.</li><li>• Repeat this process choosing different actions.</li><li>• Then do an action but this time say only the action and omit 'Simon Says'. Whoever does the action this time is out and must sit down.</li><li>• The winner is the last student standing.</li><li>• To make it harder, speed up the actions. Reward children for good behaviour by allowing them to play the part of Simon.</li></ul>

<b>4. WORD JUMBLE RACE</b>	This is a great game to encourage team work, competition and for practicing tenses, word order, reading and writing skills and grammar.
<b>How to play:</b>	<p>This game requires some planning before the lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write out a number of sentences, using different colours for each sentence.</li><li>• Cut up the sentences so you have a handful of words.</li><li>• Put each sentence into hats, cups or any objects you can find, keeping each separate.</li><li>• Split your class into teams. Teams must now put their sentences in the correct order.</li><li>• The winning team is the first team to have all sentences correctly ordered.</li></ul>
<b>5. HANGMAN</b>	For vocabulary building, this game works well.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think of a word and write the number of letters on the board using dashes to show how many letters are there.</li><li>• Ask students to suggest a letter. If it appears in the word, write it in all of the correct spaces. If the letter does not appear in the word, write it off to the side and begin drawing the image of a hanging man.</li><li>• Continue until the students guess the word correctly (they win) or you complete the diagram (you win).</li></ul>
<b>6. Pictionary</b>	Pictionary can help students practice their vocabulary and it tests to see if they're remembering the words you've been teaching.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before the class starts, prepare a bunch of words and put them in a bag.</li><li>• Split the class into teams of 2 and draw a line down the middle of the board.</li><li>• Give one team member from each team a pen and ask them to choose a word from the bag.</li><li>• Tell the students to draw the word as a picture on the board and encourage their team to guess the word.</li><li>• The first team to shout the correct answer gets a point.</li><li>• The student who has completed drawing should then nominate someone else to draw for their team.</li><li>• Repeat this until all the words are gone.</li></ul>
<b>7. THE MIME</b>	Miming is an excellent way for students to practice their tenses and their verbs. It's also great for teachers with minimal resources or planning time, or teachers who want to break up a longer lesson with something more interactive. It's adaptable to almost every language point.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before the class, write out some actions - like washing the dishes - and put them in a bag.</li><li>• Split the class into two teams.</li><li>• Bring one student from each team to the front of the class and one of them chooses an action from the bag.</li><li>• Have both students mime the action to their team.</li><li>• The first team to shout the correct answer wins a point.</li><li>• Repeat this until all students have mimed at least one action.</li></ul>

<b>8. HOTSEAT</b>	Hot Seat allows students to build their vocabulary and encourages competition in the classroom. They are also able to practice their speaking and listening skills and it can be used for any level of learner.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Split the class into teams.</li> <li>• Elect one person from each team to sit in the Hot Seat, facing the classroom with the board behind them.</li> <li>• Write a word on the board. One of the team members of the student in the hot seat must help the student guess the word by describing it. They have a limited amount of time and cannot say, spell or draw the word.</li> <li>• Continue until each team member has described a word to the student in the Hot Seat.</li> </ul>
<b>9. WHERE SHALL I GO?</b>	This game is used to test prepositions of movement and should be played after this subject has been taught in the classroom.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the students arrive, turn your classroom into a maze by rearranging it. It's great if you can do this outside, but otherwise push tables and chairs together and move furniture to make your maze.</li> <li>• When your students arrive, put them in pairs outside the classroom. Blindfold one student from each pair.</li> <li>• Allow pairs to enter the classroom one at a time; the blindfolded student should be led through the maze by their partner. The students must use directions such as step over, go under, go up, and go down to lead their partner to the end of the maze.</li> </ul>
<b>10. PROBLEM</b>	This game is a great way for students to see what they have remembered and what needs reviewing.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write ailments or problems related to your most recent lesson on post-it notes and stick one post-it note on each student's back.</li> <li>• The students must mingle and ask for advice from other students to solve their problem.</li> <li>• Students should be able to guess their problem based on the advice they get from their peers.</li> <li>• Use more complicated or obscure problems to make the game more interesting for older students. For lower levels and younger students, announce a category or reference a recent lesson, like "Health", to help them along.</li> </ul>
<b>LANGUAGE GAMES FOR OLDER LEARNERS</b>	
<b>1. INTERACTIVE GAMES</b>	These build the speaking and thinking ability of the learners by making them brain storm, think and analyse before putting their thinking to speech.
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debates / Declamations: Students in teams, argue for and against a motion.</li> <li>• Slam Poetry Competitions: Self composed poems are recited by children either individually or in pairs, on a topic that they feel very strongly about.</li> <li>• Panel Discussions / Group Discussions: A panel / group of students try to resolve a crisis, by discussing the issue, looking for solutions.</li> </ul>



<b>2. SOLITARY PLAYERS</b>	Children speak individually on a topic. They can be made to compete against each other using the following activities:
<b>How to play:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poetry Recitation Competitions: Children recite poems and are judged for their recitation skills, voice modulation, intonation etc</li> <li>• Speeches / dramatic monologues: Students prepare speeches or rehearse monologues for presentation before an audience.</li> <li>• JAMs: Just A Minute sessions, where students speak on a given topic for about a minute.</li> <li>• Pen portraits / Word Blasts: Students write pen portraits (biographies) of people who they admire. This may require them to use a variety of different words and phrases.</li> <li>• Writing Skills: Argumentative / persuasive/ discursive/ descriptive / factual writing through stories, biographies, auto-biographies, diary and journal entries, magazine and newspaper articles, reports etc</li> </ul>
<b>GAMES THAT CAN BE USED IN DRAMA</b>	
<b>CIRCLE: For drama teaching, the best combination of students is in the shape of a circle.. The circle ensures equal participation from all students. This circle should be considered as a forum for games, discussions and performances.</b>	
<b>RULES: Rules are important for games to work and to be fair.</b>	
<b>1. GROUP MAKING GAMES</b>	These are for a group of learners who have come together for the first time to create a practical drama. These are considered to be good ice - breaker activities too.
<b>How to play:</b>	<b>OBJECT PASS:</b> Players select a personal object such as a pen, a hair band, a bottle etc. They approach another player, introduce themselves and the object and swap their objects. They then move on to the other players and continue to pass the objects telling the player, who it belongs to. The process continues until the teacher asks the students to stop. In the end, the players call out to the individuals to whom the objects belonged.
<b>2. COMMUNITY BUILDING GAMES</b>	These games help to create a community; break down physical, social and emotional barriers among students and teachers.
<b>How to play:</b>	<b>POLICE and THIEF:</b> One student is the thief and stands with his back turned, while other children are seated in a circle, one of whom is the police. An object is placed in the centre as the booty. The thief creeps into the circle, to steal the booty, unknown of the police. He has to pick it up and run to save himself. If he is caught, then the police becomes the next thief.
<b>3. GAMES THAT HELP TO CREATE and SUSTAIN FOCUS</b>	These games require a lot of concentration and skill. Students work together to find a collective focus.
<b>How to play:</b>	<b>LEADING FRIENDS:</b> The students make pairs. One partner closes his eyes and is guided by his partner around the room. This could be a physical / verbal

	guidance.
<b>4. CONTEXT BUILDING GAMES</b>	These games have the context of the story. They add structure and control to the context.
<b>How to play:</b>	<p>NEIGHBOURS: The students sit on chairs in a circle. One student stands in the middle and directs a question (Do you like your partner?) to one of the students in the circle. To this question, the respondent can give three answers. Each answer will lead to students changing their chairs.</p> <p>RESPONSE 1: YES If the student says, 'yes', then the two students sitting on either sides of the student swap places. The student who is standing tries to take one of their places.</p> <p>RESPONSE : NO If the student says, 'no', then the standing student says, 'Who would you prefer?' To this question, the student responds, 'I prefer _____ and _____' (names of two students are taken). Now the students sitting on either side of these two students get up and exchange places, while the standing student also tries to grab one of the seats.</p> <p>RESPONSE: I DON'T KNOW If the response is, 'I don't know', then everybody changes seats.</p>

**CONCLUSION**

Games add interest to what students might not find very interesting. Sustaining interest can mean sustaining effort (Thiagarajan, 1999; Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2005). After all, learning a language involves long-term effort. Games provide a context for meaningful communication. Even if the game involves discrete language items, such as a spelling game, meaningful communication takes place as students seek to understand how to play the game and as they communicate about the game: before, during, and after the game (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2005). This meaningful communication provides the basis for comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), i.e., what students understand as they listen and read, interaction to enhance comprehensibility, e.g., asking for repetition or giving examples (Long, 1991), and comprehensible output, speaking and writing so that others can understand (Swain, 1993). The emotions aroused when playing games add variety to the sometimes dry, serious process of language instruction ((Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) Ersoz, 2000; Lee, 1995). The variety and intensity that games offer may lower anxiety (Richard-Amato, 1988 ) and encourage shy learners to take part (Uberman, 1998), especially when games are played in small groups. Games can involve all the basic language skills, i.e., listening,



speaking, reading, and writing, and a number of skills are often involved in the same game (Lee, 1995).

Games are student-centered in that students are active in playing the games, and games can often be organized such that students have the leading roles, with teachers as facilitators. Many games can be played in small groups, thereby providing a venue for students to develop their skills in working with others, such as the skill of disagreeing politely and the skill of asking for help (Jacobs & Kline Liu, 1996). Other advantages of games played in groups include:

- a. The team aspect of many games can encourage cooperation and build team spirit (Ersoz, 2000).
- b. Although many games involve competition, this is not necessarily the case (Orlick, 2006).
- c. In most games, everyone has a turn, encouraging everyone to take a turn, rather than letting others do all the talking and other actions, and discouraging one or two people from shutting out others.

As many games can be played outside of class, they provide a means for students to use the language outside of class time (Ellis, 2005). Games can connect to a variety of intelligences (Gardner, 1999), e.g.,

- a. Games played with others involve interpersonal intelligence
- b. Games involving drawing connect with visual/spatial intelligence
- c. Games often have a hands-on element, such as cards, spinners, or pieces, which connect with bodily/kinesthetic intelligence.

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