

THE ROLE OF GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract. *This study explores the role of teaching in English to young learners and highlights their impact on language acquisition. In recent years, there has been growing interest in interactive and student-centered approaches, particularly in early language education. Games are considered an effective pedagogical tool as they create a motivating and low-anxiety learning environment.*

Key words: *English teaching, language games, young learners, language methods, interactive games, motivation.*

In today's globalized world, it has become a bit difficult to direct children towards education. They prefer to watch videos on their mobile phones and surfing on the internet rather than learning foreign language. That's why there are a lot of focus on teaching young language learners through games. Language learning games are considered very important because they encourage students to be more active, increase self-confidence, provide motivation, reduce anxiety, and help create an active learning environment. Therefore, various game-based methods are being developed in Teaching English.

Several researchers have found that games increase student's motivation and participation in the classroom. Language games provide a platform for learners to communicate using the target grammar forms in a more interesting and authentic manner as supported by Ellis (2006). Learners play an active role (Thirusanku&Melor, 2014) and the active involvement from the learners when accomplishing language games create consciousness on the importance of practicing the grammar forms in their interaction freely. The real-life situations act as a platform to enrich ESL learners' language skills and confidence when facing various and common events. However, a study done by Alijanian (2012) shows that "CLT and direct grammar teaching were both favored by the teachers" (p.416)

There are two types of language games; digital and non-digital or physical games with both being widely used to aid language lessons. Non-digital language games such as board games; World chain game, Sentence Building Race, Dominoes and Wheel (WOG) are still relevant among teachers and learners.

In addition, there are numerous types of language games suitable for English classrooms, including:

Vocabulary games (Word shake, Crossword, Cards for games, and Word search).
Grammar games (Who am I, Battleships, Consequences).

Speaking games (role-play, discussion cards).

Listening games (dictation race, spot the difference, Simon says).

Reading games (Jigsaw reading, sentence order game, True or False race).

Digital games (Kahoot, Quizlet live, Word wall games).

Such kind of games are now popular among young learners and played during the class. As a result, this method quickly attracted students and is showing its effectiveness.

There are different methods for learning English through games. Here are some examples of methods to teach young children a foreign language.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): this method focuses on real communication and students learn English by speaking and interacting.

Gamification: adding game elements like points, badges, levels and rewards into learning. It motivates students to participate actively and makes lessons more enjoyable.

Role-playing Games (RPG): students act out real-life situations using English. This improves speaking, fluency, and confidence.

Total Physical Response (TPR): they learn English through physical movement and actions. It can help improve memory, reduce stress and is very effective for beginners and young learners.

These methods make learning fun and enjoyable, thus students are more motivated to participate actively. They do not feel bored and are more willing to learn. Games and physical activities create a relaxed atmosphere. Learners are less afraid of making mistakes. In addition, when students learn by doing, playing, and interacting, they remember information longer.

In general, these studies, among others, highlight the positive impact of using Games in Teaching English to young learners. Here are some advices to efficiently teach learners a foreign language:

Create a fun and engaging learning environment: use colorful visual materials, flashcards, songs, games and interactive activities to make the language learning experience enjoyable.

Focus on Listening and Speaking first: use simple instructions in English, encourage repetition and imitation, do not force grammar explanation early.

Use creativity (Drawing, Storytelling, Role Play) : let students draw and describe, tell simple stories, use role-play.

Be Energetic and Supportive: use gestures, voice, and facial expressions, be patient and friendly. (Teacher's energy = student's motivation).

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