# The Advantages of Using Games on Speaking Exercises for Independent Learning

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This article is based on experienced textbook and methodology manuals writers have argued that games are not just time-filling activities but have a great educational value.

W. R. Lee holds that most language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. He also says that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching programme. A similar opinion is expressed by Richard-Amato, who believes games to be fun but warns against overlooking their pedagogical value, particularly in foreign language teaching. There are many advantages of using games. "Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely" (Richard-Amato). They are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy students more opportunity to express their opinions and feelings (Hansen). They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson. Furthermore, to quote Richard-Amato, they, "add diversion to the regular classroom activities," break the ice, "[but also] they are used to introduce new ideas". In the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better (Wierus and Wierus).

Further support comes from Zdybiewska, who believes games to be a good way of practicing language, for they provide a model of what learners will use the language for in real life in the future.

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.

Ti ere are many factors to consider while discussing games, one of which is appropriacy. Teachers should be very careful about choosing games if they want to make them profitable for the learning process. If games are to bring desired results, they must correspond to either the student's level, or age, or to the material that is to be introduced or practiced. Not all games are appropriate for all students irrespective of their age. Different age groups require various topics, materials, and modes of games. For example, children benefit most from games which require moving around, imitating a model, competing between groups and the like. Furthermore, structural

games that practice or reinforce a certain grammatical aspect of language have to relate to students' abilities and prior knowledge. Games become difficult when the task or the topic is unsuitable or outside the student's experience.

Another factor influencing the choice of a game is its length and the time necessary for its completion. Many games have a time limit, but the teacher can either allocate more or less time depending on the students' level, the number of people in a group, or the knowledge of the rules of a game etc.

Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson. Yet, as Lee observes, a game "should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do". Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. Rixon suggests that games be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they are suitable and carefully chosen. At different stages of the lesson, the teacher's aims connected with a game may vary:

Gunes also lend themselves well to revision exercises helping learners recall material in a pleasant, entertaining way. All authors referred to in this article agree that even if games resulted only in noise and entertained students, they are still worth paying attention to and implementing in the classroom since they motivate learners, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency. However, can they be more successful for presentation and revision than other techniques? The following part of this article is an attempt at finding the answer to this question.

Famous British teacher and educator Andrew Wright in his books' Language learning is hard work ... Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work.'

Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information."

The need for meaningfulness in language learning has been accepted for some years. A useful interpretation of 'meaningfulness' is that the learners respond to the content in a definite way. If they are amused, angered, intrigued or surprised the content is clearly meaningful to them. Thus the meaning of the language they listen to, read, speak and write will be more vividly experienced and, therefore, better remembered.

If it is accepted that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of language, then they must be regarded as central to a teacher's repertoire. They are thus not for use solely on wet days and at the end of term!

Another distinguished scholar, Aydan Ersoz, of USA noted them following:

Language learning is a hard task which can sometimes be frustrating. Constant effort is required to understand, produce and manipulate the target language. Well-chosen games are invaluable as they give students a break and at the same time allow students to practice language skills. Games are highly motivating since they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Furthermore, they employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They also encourage and increase cooperation.'

Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of communication.

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