AIMS FOR USING FUN GAMES TO IMPROVE THE ESL STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY

TUJUAN PENGGUNAAN FUN GAMES UNTUK MENINGKATKAN KEMAMPUAN SPEAKING PEMBELAJAR ESL

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Abstract

This article reveals the reasons why fun games are effective to help the students improve their vocabularies and use the language actively. The use of games can be a good language learning tool. During the games, a student not only competes with other students to achieve the learning goal but also collaborates with the others. This process makes the students do the game as good as possible for the sake of winning. When the games are applied, the students are „forced" to speak and they will try to use vocabularies related to the theme of the game. It would be very helpful especially for the students in building their confidence and improving their speaking ability. Moreover, games can be used to help the students of beginning level through the silent period. They facilitate the students through many kinds of learning so that the ESL students can absorb the language very well. Not only the reasons to use fun games in the classroom, this article also shares how to choose suitable games for the students completed with their application in the classroom.

Keywords: Fun games, ESL students, speaking ability

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengungkapkan alasan mengapa fun games efektif untuk membantu pembelajar meningkatkan kosakata mereka dan menggunakan bahasa secara aktif. Penggunaan game bisa menjadi alat pembelajaran bahasa yang baik. Selama permainan, pembelajar tidak hanya bersaing dengan siswa lain untuk mencapai tujuan pembelajaran, tetapi juga bekerja sama dengan orang lain. Proses ini membuat pembelajar melakukan permainan sebaik mungkin demi kemenangan. Ketika game diterapkan, siswa 'dipaksa' untuk berbicara dan mencoba untuk menggunakan kosakata yang terkait dengan tema permainan. Ini akan sangat membantu terutama bagi pembelajar dalam membangun rasa percaya diri mereka dan meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa mereka. Selain itu, game dapat digunakan untuk membantu pembelajar dari tingkat awal (silent period). Game memfasilitasi pembelajar melalui berbagai jenis pembelajaran agar pembelajar ESL dapat menyerap bahasa dengan sangat baik. Tidak hanya alasan mengapa menggunakan fun game di dalam kelas, artikel ini juga berbagi tentang bagaimana memilih game yang cocok dan dilengkapi dengan aplikasinya di dalam kelas.

Kata kunci: Fun games, pembelajar ESL, kemampuan berbicara

A. INTRODUCTION

For ESL students, increasing their English vocabulary is very important to support their speaking ability. That is why teachers teach as many vocabularies as possible to their students. Conventionally, teachers give the students directly with English words together with their literal meaning. After that they ask the students to memorize the words. This way of learning is not effective because memorizing words is not an easy matter. Even when the students can remember the words, it wouldn't last longer, even the students can easily get bored. Those are the reasons why this study concerns to help the students to improve their speaking ability in a different way.

There are several ways to help students improve their speaking ability. One of them is using games. Game is an entertaining activity, and usually used as an educational tools. Game is different from work and art, although some forms of games involve working and some of them involve esthetic result. The example of working game is kinesthetic games, where the participant should do something individually or in a team. The example of an art game is puzzle or lego.

Most students like to play games. They find that game is something fun. Using games would be very effective while students are learning. It is because they would feel happy to do the activities without realizing that they are actually learning. A fun-filled and relaxing learning atmosphere could be obtained through games. "By doing games, students have the opportunity to use language in a non-stressful way" (Uberman in Chen: 2005).

This article would like to present not only reasons for using games but also some fun games that can be used in speaking class as well as the steps to play. This article also explains some factors that should be considered by the teachers to determine the suitable games based on the students,, characteristics and situation. The observation is containing experiences in using the games with a number of students. In summing, this article shows the result of using the games in learning process conducts some reason why using games are effective for ESL students to improve their speaking ability.

B. GENERAL PROBLEMS IN SPEAKING

Before giving solution to the students on their speaking problems, the teacher should observe some problems or causes which are faced by the students when they are conducting speaking. According to Ur in Aleksandrzak (2011), the problems that are generally undergone by a student in speaking L2 are:

1. Inhibition - fear of making mistakes, losing face, criticism; shyness;
Most students are not confident when they have to speak in front of many people. It is because they feel fear. They have a burden and fear to make mistake. Most of them are shy and feel forced to speak up. That is why the students would prefer to keep silent or having conversation in their language. In fact, they are still learning a new language, and it is a common thing for them to make a mistake.

2. Nothing to say - learners have problems with finding motives to speak, formulating opinions or relevant comments
Besides unconfident to speak, most students have lack of vocabulary. This is the main problem in speaking. How can the students talk much if they do not have enough vocabulary to speak? Of course, they will be able to talk about many things if they possess sufficient vocabularies. Those who have lack of vocabulary will be the passive participants.

3. Mother tongue use - particularly common in less disciplined or less

motivated classes, students find it easier to express themselves in their native (L1) language.

In less-disciplined and less-motivated classes, the students are usually enjoying to use their language rather than English although they are in English classes. They think that expressing something using their language is easier than using English. That is why just motivating them is not enough. High motivation and discipline in speaking English should be applied in those kinds of classes if the teacher wants the students to improve their ability in speaking.

Based on the problems, it can be summed up that the students need a revolution in learning. They need a new way of learning where they can feel they are not studying, but in fact, they are.

C. REASONS FOR USING FUN GAMES

The following are some reasons why fun games are effective for improving students' speaking ability. They are:

1. Games are motivating

Through many games students will always compete with each other. In language learning activities, games do the same way. Games also give impulse or stimulus to the students to use language (Prasad in Chen: 2003). During the games, the students will try to concentrate and are stimulated to use English.

2. Games are relaxing

Using games to learn language is one of non-stressful ways (Uberman in Chen: 1998). When playing the games, the students are not paying too much attention to the linguistic form, but they will speak up and do anything for the sake of winning. It

means that the students,, anxiety is reduced, so that they can build better speech fluency and communicative competence. The students learn the materials more quickly in unstressful and comfortable environment (Chen: 2005).

3. Games are improving the students' pronunciation

In some kinds of games, students can express and share their ideas. Here, they would try to use the language as good as possible especially about the pronunciation so that they would be understood by the other students. During the games, the students are listening to each other. By listening, the students memorize the ways to pronounce certain vocabularies. It means that they are building better pronunciation.

4. Games are stimulating collaboration and motivating. Some games enable a group of students to make groups. Here, they can discuss each other and make collaboration. The students can easily share ideas and speak up by collaborating each other.

5. Games are integrating some language skills

Games can make the students study not only one language skill but also two or three language skills. There are some games which can integrate some language skills, for instance, Speaking and Writing, Speaking and listening. This condition may help the students to learn more.

D. DETERMINING WHICH GAME TO USE

There are many kinds of games that can be applied by the teachers in the ESL Classroom. The games can be taken from many sources, especially internet. The teachers have been shown many choises,

but of course they should be wise in choosing what games that are suitable to use in the classroom and consider some factors into account. Carrier (1990) mentioned that the teacher should consider the level of the game to fit with the student's language ability.

There are some factors which the teachers should consider while they would like to use games in their classroom. The first is the characteristics of the learners and the second is the situation. The characteristic of the learners is something that defines and distinguishes a person or a group. The example of considering characteristics of the students is thinking over the students' age, whether they are old or young. The old students will get bored easily when the game they play is monotonous and too easy. On the other hand, the game would be very hard to do for the young. So, the teacher should observe the game whether it would be suit with the age of students or not.

The other example of considering learners' characteristics is that the teacher should think over the learners' motivation, whether they are having high or low motivation. This is important to observe because certain games are not suitable to be applied in a low motivation class. In a high motivation class, many kinds of games can be easily used. We can choose either kinesthetic games or art games, where hard thinking is required. It is different from the low motivation class, where kinesthetic games are preferred to the art games.

The second factor is situation. The teacher should consider whether the game will be applied in the morning or in the afternoon. Usually in the morning, the students,, conditions are still fresh and they are ready to begin the activities. In the afternoon, most of the students find difficult to concentrate rather than in the morning. Kinds of game would make them enjoy the lesson. In the afternoon most of the students are commonly tired and would not be interested in the lesson activity. That is why the teacher

should be observing and using the appropriate games in such situation.

What is important is that the game chosen must be more than just fun. The use of the games should support the students in understanding the materials in a fun, relax and friendly environment, otherwise, it is only wasting time. All students should involve and active in the game so that the classroom can be alive and the goal of the lesson can be gained.

E. GAMES TO SHARE

Here are some games that can be used for speaking lessons as well as the steps of doing the game:
1. Who is she/ who is he?

   The game is good for teaching speaking and vocabularies dealing with famous persons. This game also allows the students to practice their listening skill by listening to the other student's description about someone.
   Here are the steps of doing the game:

   - Have the students imagine their famous actress or actor. Ask them to not say who he is/ who she is.

   - Then ask one of your students to come forward.

   - Ask him/her to describe the actress/actor's physical appearance

   - The rest of the students listen and pay attention to presentation

   - One who can guess who the actor or actress is directly raise his/ her hand and get some scores.

2. Landmarks

   The game "Landmarks" is good for improving the students' speaking ability and knowledge about famous places in the world. Through this game, the students will collaborate with the other students in a team and also make a good team work.
   Here are the steps of doing the game:
   - First, make groups of students consisting of two or three students for each group

- Prepare some pictures of famous landmarks
- Ask one students from each group to get one picture randomly
- Give them time to arrange the information about the picture
- Ask the groups one by one to present their picture

3. What a funny/ frightening story.

The game is good for teaching speaking and vocabularies and improving students,, writing skill. The students will enjoy the game because the topics are interesting and based on their real stories.
Here are the steps of doing the game:

- Have the student to compose one or two paragraphs containing a funny or frightening story of their own.
- Choose a student and give him/her a ball.
- As long as the music play, the ball should come to one student to the other students.
- When the music stop, the student who get the ball must come forward to retell the story without any text at all.
- The students who come forward will get score/ reward.

4. Who am I?

The game is good for improving students' speaking and vocabulary dealing with occupation. This game also allows the students to practice their grammatical skill by asking correctly in grammar to the other student.
Here are the steps of doing the game:

- Ask the students to sit in semicircle with one student sit in the middle.
- Ask the student who sit in the middle to write down his/her profession on a piece of paper and close it.
- Other students have to guess the profession by giving questions, e.g. Do you use pan and stove when you are working?

- The student in the middle may only say "yes" or "no".
- Open the paper when the student can guess the profession.
- The winner is that who can guess the profession.

5. Run and Hit (Big Class)

The game is good for teaching speaking and vocabularies dealing with food. Students directly practice and improve their listening skill through this game.
Here are steps of doing the game:
- Prepare a number of foods and drinks flashcards.
- Stick the flashcards on the whiteboard.
- Make two groups of students
- Ask one of student from each group to stand up in the corner of the classroom.
- The teacher choose one picture of flashcard but he/she must not tell anyone about the picture
- The rest of the students guess the picture by asking to the teacher, e.g. Do you usually drink this in the morning?
- As the teacher you should only say "yes" or "No"
- When the teacher says "yes", the two standing students have to run as fast as possible and hit the flashcard directly.
- The fastest student is the winner
(Taken from genkienglish.com)

6. Run and Hit (Small Class)

The game is good for teaching speaking and vocabularies dealing with food. This game also allows the students to practice their listening skill by listening to the other student's question to the teacher.
Here are the steps of doing the game:

- Prepare a number of foods and drink flashcards.

- Put the flashcards on the floor
- Ask the students to make a circle around the flashcards
- The teacher choose one picture of flash card but he/she does not tell anyone about the picture
- One by one the student guesses the picture by asking the teacher e.g. Do you usually drink this in the morning?
- The teacher have to say "yes" or no" to answer the students" questions.
- Whenever the teacher says "yes", the two students who are standing in the corner of the class must run quickly and hit one of the flashcard mentioned.
- The fastest student is the winner.
  (Taken from genkienglish.com)

F. OBSERVATION

I had applied the fun games above in my speaking class at FBS Unipdu. Throughout the fun games, my students looked very interested in the game. Their enthusiasm to the lesson was developing. The students were more attracted and try to use English as much as possible. By using games, the students were more relaxed to express their ideas without being afraid of making grammatical errors. For instance, in the game "Who is she" who is he?" and "Who am I", the students could freely express their ideas by using English even though they made some errors in their pronunciation.

By using fun games, my students were motivated to speak because they must compete with the others to win the game. For instance, in the game _Hit and Run,, for small class, the students were very active asking question to the teacher and tried to hit the flashcard as fast as possible to get win. The classroom became alive and it can ease their bored and tired immediately.

Some games need collaboration by making groups for a number of students. This process let the students discuss with each other. In the game "Landmarks" the

students are faced by a material which have to be presented in collaboration. The students in groups should share their ideas dealing with their knowledge about the picture before explaining to the other groups. This chance let the students to practice their confidences and also pronunciation

The games can also be used to integrate two language skills or more. For instance, in the game "Run and Hit" the game stimulates the students to practice their speaking and listening ability. During the game, the two students in the corner have to pay attention to the other students,, questions before they run in front of the class and hit one of the flash cards. It means that they practice their listening skill. The rest of students automatically practice their speaking skill by asking questions to the teacher based on the picture of the flashcard. This is also identified that by using games in language learning, not only the students,, speaking ability were improve but also other language skills, more specifically listening skill.

Moreover, the fun games had also made the students think creatively by asking some questions. It indicates that the games stimulate the development of their speaking ability. In short, the games were good stepping stone for them to develop their speaking ability.

G. CONCLUSION

There are several reasons that can be summed up why fun games are effective for improving the students,, speaking competence. It is because fun games are motivating, relaxing, encouraging students to have a good pronunciation, constructing collaboration, and integrating some linguistics skills.

The games enable the students to work with their other friends and motivate them to communicate in English. Furthermore, by using fun games the

students can learn more than one linguistics skill. After using the fun games, the students are more motivated to be more active in using English. According to Uberman in Chen that games encourage, entertain, teach and promote fluency and communicative skills (2005). There are many choices of games that can be used in the classroom. Not all the games are suitable to be applied with the students. The teacher should help the students to use the suitable games that fit with their language ability by observing some factors, such as: their characteristics and situation. The characteristics including their age and motivation, while the situation deals with the time of the game which are going to conduct.

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