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## USING LANGUAGE GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS OF LOCAL UNIVERSITIES

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### ABSTRACT

The article is based on the theory of language games and the role of language games in teaching to show the principles of using language games in teaching such as preparation before organizing games, game instruction, game conduct, player engagement, and evaluation; At the same time, propose 4 measures to use language games in teaching English to students of local universities to create a fun and engaging learning atmosphere; help students master knowledge, excitedly practice skills in using English effectively in communication.

**KEYWORDS:** language games, teaching, English, students, local universities.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

On October 16, 2022, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China opened at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. General Secretary Xi Jinping made a report to the congress on behalf of the 19th Central Committee. On the basis of reviewing the past ten years of changes in the new era, the report plans the goals, tasks and major policies for the development of the party and the country in the next five years or even longer. Among them, the relevant statement on the housing market is "insist on the positioning that houses are for living in, not for speculation, and accelerate the establishment of a housing system with multi-subject supply, multi-channel security, and simultaneous rental and purchase."

Implementing Resolution No. 29 – NQ/TW on “Keep radically changing the teaching and learning methods towards modernism; encourage the learners’ independence, creativity, and application of knowledge; avoid imposition of knowledge, passive learning, rigid memorization. Focus of teaching learning and thinking methods, encourage and enable the learners to update knowledge themselves, improve their intellect, skills, and capacity. Diversify the methods of learning, focus of social activities, extra-curricular activities, and scientific research” [1], at the same time meeting the reality in adapting to conditions caused by natural disasters and epidemics. The innovation of educational methods takes place in many aspects and is associated with creative innovations in teaching.

In Vietnam's general Education program, English is one of the subjects that plays an important role in helping learners have a foreign language background to meet the increasingly strong requirements of international integration. With the goal of comprehensively renovating the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the national education system and implementing new foreign language teaching and learning programs at all levels, in order to create an integrated, multilingual and multicultural working and learning environment, in 2008, the Prime Minister approved the Project "Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system for the period 2008-2020" [2]. In 2017, the Prime Minister approved, adjusted and supplemented the Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Project to promote integrated foreign language teaching in other subjects such as math and science subjects in foreign languages [3]. In the key task for the period 2017 - 2025 in 2022, the Prime Minister has continued to research, evaluate, perfect, develop and issue foreign language programs and materials according to international output standards, continuing to focus on integrating some subjects such as math and science in foreign languages [5].

Along with the development of science and technology and innovation in teaching methods, English subject has also had a strong change in awareness, taking learners as the center and innovating teaching methods according to increase practice time by creating communication space, working in groups, in pairs of learners, ... under the direction of the teacher.

The article delves into the concept and role of using language games in teaching English, points out general principles, and proposes some measures to use language games in teaching English to students of local universities in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning and meet practical requirements.

## **2. CONTENTS**

### **2.1. Game concept in teaching English**

Game is one of human activities for the purpose of fun, entertainment and relaxation after hours of hard work and study; At the same time, individual games improve physical fitness, develop thinking, practice skills, and draw lessons from experience.

Byrne, D. argues that in teaching, games are a form of play based on rules and their nature is fun [6]. Greenall, S. again points out: "games are used whenever there is an element of competition between students or groups in a language activity" [7, p. 6]. With the same point of view, author Rixon points out two features of the game: competition and cooperation between players [8]. The common point of these concepts shows that the common goal of all language games is to develop and improve language skills.

Teaching through games is a method that requires teachers to devote a lot of enthusiasm and creativity to each lesson. Using games in teaching will help learners promote their positivity, initiative, creativity as well as practice skills in learning. In teaching English, it will help to make the lessons more attractive, interesting, "learn to play, play to learn" [9].

## ***2.2. The role of using language games in teaching English to students***

Language games in teaching English are actually games with play content associated with lessons designed, created, and put into teaching English for students by teachers to improve the quality of training. According to research, I give some roles of using language games in teaching English as follows:

### *Firstly, create a vibrant atmosphere and stimulate students' interest in learning*

Language games create a fun learning environment. Author Lee (1979) found that in teaching, the use of language games can help learners dispel boredom, and instead create a happy learning environment, increase interest and make students always ready to attend class [insert 10].

The use of modern teaching methods (especially the use of technology in teaching) in teaching English to improve teaching quality has become popular. To attract learners, teachers have used many forms of learning organization. Language games in teaching have brought deep knowledge to the lesson, creating a fun classroom atmosphere, and avoiding learners' passive listening - recording or listening-speaking. Learners become the center of learning activities.

### *Secondly, create situations for students to develop language and form intellectual power*

Through language games, students can practice and develop their language skills and especially form intellectual power in choosing and using languages appropriate to each situation. According to the authors Avedon and Sutton-Smith, students can absorb their learning effectively and with enjoyment thanks to the motivation and interaction created during the play. [11]

Students participating in language games will increase their ability to use language in each context - each specific communication situation. By understanding the content of the question, and expressing it in a clear and understandable way to the audience, students not only develop their vocabulary but also increase their ability to express themselves. At the same time, students' imagination, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc. are also effectively trained.

### *Thirdly, perform the practice function for students*

Language games help students form skills to distinguish English knowledge, and grasp and understand deeply and fully the knowledge they have learned. Since then, students know how to choose words in daily communication interactions, avoiding shortcomings as well as limitations in the cognitive and intellectual activities of students. [13], [14]

### *Fourthly, form in students' honesty, discipline; sense of self-control, independence*

Each game when designed has specific principles and rules for players. When students participate in the game, they are required to comply with those principles and rules. From there, creating a mutually binding relationship between team members as well as all players [15], [16]. To win, players must know how to work as a team, know how to reconcile individual and collective interests, and know how

to regulate and perform assigned tasks. Through the game will form in students honesty and discipline; sense of autonomy and independence [17], [18].

In short, language games are useful and effective tools in the classroom in general and in teaching English in particular.

### ***2.3. General principles in using language games in teaching English to students***

Using language games in teaching English should adhere to the following principles:

#### ***2.3.1. Prepare before organizing the game***

In order to use language games appropriately and effectively for each lesson and specific activity during the lesson, teachers need to research specifically, determine at what stage of the lesson to organize the game in order to provide the appropriate type of games. Specific steps as follows: 1/ study the rules of the game; 2/ Prepare materials for the game. Note: Teachers need to pay attention to the number of players, specific requirements when participating, time, tools and facilities for the game, etc.

#### ***2.3.2. Instruct the game***

Game instruction is the first and most important step in game organization. Because, in order to conduct the game, knowing the rules of the game will help the player to firmly grasp and have a specific direction to be ready to perform the task. To ensure this principle is effectively implemented, teachers need to pay attention to attract students' attention with a clear, specific, precise and concise introduction about the game's purpose and rules.

#### ***2.3.3. Conduct the game***

When the game is conducted, the teacher observes and monitors groups and individuals to assist if students do not understand or have doubts, so they cannot do it. In the process of organizing, the teacher manages the game and controls it in a "soft" way to create a joyful and nervous atmosphere to urge students to participate. Especially when players get used to the game and get caught up in the game, the speed, tempo, and atmosphere will be faster, the teacher can actively relax the playing time but need to finish it before the students feel tired.

#### ***2.3.4. Motivate player participation***

Depending on each game and depending on the individual consciousness of the students, their spirits and attitude are different. It is inevitable that in the class there are students who are timid, slow, and do not interact with their classmates. Therefore, teachers need to support, give suggestions and create silence for students to think and actively participate. On the contrary, for dynamic and active students who will be the motivation for the game to take place ebulliently, it is also necessary to promote group activities. Therefore, when grouping, teachers need to pay attention to the equal distribution in each group with both groups of students mentioned above.

### *2.3.5. Review after the end of the game*

The teacher's assessment after the end of the language game plays a very important role because of the following: Firstly, it meets the students' wishes after completing the game. Students are nervous and look forward to being assessed after their own and the team's efforts; secondly, the timely assessment will help students recognize the mistakes that need to be overcome and promote their strengths; Thirdly, the teacher approved the comments to encourage, motivate and praise the learning spirit of the students. This helps students to be more confident and ready to participate in the next learning activities.

Thus, the use of language games in teaching English for students needs to adhere to 5 principles include the following: prepare before organizing the game; instruct the game; conduct the game; motivate player participation and review after the end of the game. These principles need to be strictly and logically designed by the teacher

## ***2.4. Proposing a number of measures to improve the effectiveness of using language games in teaching English to students of local university***

### *2.4.1. Select language games suitable to teaching content and circumstances*

Games in teaching include many types. Based on function, teaching games are classified into cognitive development games, value development games, and motivational games. The teaching functions of the game include team building, communication improvement, presentation skill development, memory training, creativity training, and disciplined behavior training, ... With these functions, the games can be divided into 3 groups that are suitable for the lesson, such as the followings:

Group 1, the games of the group introduce new content. These games are used at the beginning of the lesson to help students start thinking and lead the lesson naturally and joyfully. In addition to being used at the beginning of the lesson, the game is also used to transmit the content during the lesson to help students change their state, relax and create new stimulation for the lesson. For example, at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher uses the game "Transmit the electricity" to start. The outstanding advantage of the game is that many students can participate in the game with quick answers in succession. This will help students focus their thoughts and be ready to answer questions. The purpose of the game is to help students consolidate their knowledge of the lesson, and practice quick reaction skills and attention. The organization is as follows: The teacher states the content of the question and assigns 1 student to answer. After the correct answer, students will "transmit the electricity" to other students, etc. The game will end when the teacher "disconnects the electricity".

For example, the teacher gives a vertical crossword which is a 4-letter word with the meaning "verb describing the activity of re-reading the letters in a word". Teams won the right to guess through the teacher's signal to ring the bell and raise their hands. The order of the teams to take turns guessing in the order the teams raise their hands.

Group 2, the games of the group acquire new knowledge. This group of games helps students promote their existing knowledge and, at the same time, acquire and develop their own knowledge. For

example, using the game "Quiz" to consolidate students' existing knowledge, form and evoke students to absorb and assimilate unknown knowledge. The organization is as follows: The teacher gives quizzes - Students listen and give a signal to answer. Whoever answers correctly and quickly wins.

For example, The teacher whispers into the ears of 2 students, who are at the top of the 2 groups, the word "break time"; Students take turns whispering in the ears of their teammates until the last one. The team that transmits the message the fastest and who correctly pronounces the word "break time" wins.

Group 3, the games of the group used to reinforce and review. This group of games is used to test the knowledge or skills learned by students. Thereby, helping students consolidate knowledge, practice self-discipline and positive skills. For example, use the game "Crossword puzzles" to give facts to reinforce and students find those facts.

For example, the teacher gives a vertical crossword which is a 4-letter word with the meaning "verb describing the activity of re-reading the letters in a word". Teams won the right to guess through the teacher's signal to ring the bell and raise their hands. The order of the teams to take turns guessing in the order the teams raise their hands.

Team 1, guess the letter "a", the teacher said there is no "a". Team 2 guesses the letter "s", the teacher says there is an "s". Teams guess key words. If no team guesses the keyword, team 2 continues to guess the word.

Team 2 continued to guess the letter "l", the teacher said there were two "l". If team 2 can guess the key word, end the crossword. If team 2 doesn't guess, the opportunity will be won for the teams... take turns guessing the word until they find the crossword. If the teams don't guess, the opportunity is for the fans below the class.

Thus, in order to use language games in teaching English to students of local universities, it is required that teachers pay attention, enthusiasm, and sophistication in using games appropriately, ingenuity, and flexibility during each school hour to achieve teaching goals. Depending on the purpose and content, teachers use games to create a joyful, engaging atmosphere and stimulate curiosity, positivity, and active participation in learning activities. Some points teachers need to pay attention to in organizing games to improve the activeness and initiative of learners: 1/ Studying playing techniques; 2/ Studying carefully how to play and how to organize the game; 3/ Preparing lesson plans and preparing conditions and means for the implementation of the game; 4/ Clearly and specifically define the goal of using games in the lecture.

#### *2.4.2. Building the steps of the language game*

For games in general and language games in particular, the design of the game's steps is extremely important. Because the game can only be conducted smoothly and most effective when it is clear right from the preparation to the end/assessment.

In order for a game to be effective, teachers need to follow the activity with the following steps:



- Activity 1: Prepare

- + Step 1. Identify specific goals in each content of using language games.
- + Step 2. Select the appropriate language game.
- + Step 3. Design game content.
- + Step 4: Design game rules, form, and how to organize the game, etc.

- Activity 2: Organize the game

- + Step 1: Introduce the game, game rules, and how to play.
- + Step 2: Identify players – students participate.
- + Step 3: Organize students to participate in the game.
- + Step 4: Determine the winner of the game.

- Activity 3. End

+ Teachers help students self-review and draw out the meaning and purpose of the game and point out the knowledge and skills gained after participating in the game.

+ Teachers assess, comment and encourage students to actively participate in the next activities.

#### *2.4.3. Using a combination of language games and teaching media and techniques*

Currently, in response to the requirements of innovating teaching methods in order to improve the quality of training as well as respond to the complicated developments of natural disasters and epidemics, teaching activities have undergone many changes. In particular, the learning environment is not limited to the traditional classroom but has expanded to combine classroom learning, online learning, etc. With the support of technology, teaching activities have undergone a drastic change. This makes teaching activities highly effective. However, along with the application of technology and techniques in teaching, there are many difficult problems such as the capacity to use technology, conditions for using technology, and attitude to use technology, ... in teaching from both schools, teachers, and learners. These issues are also opportunities as well as challenges for the use of language games in teaching.

When using language games in teaching English to students of local university, we can use a combination of teaching means such as the followings:

- In the classroom, the teacher uses Overhead projectors to project the content of the question; In online classes, teachers use features on Office 365 software, Zoom, Google Meet, etc. to present games.
- Based on the purpose, content, form, time, and facilities conditions ..., teachers use computers and teaching software to organize teaching games for students. Some commonly used software today such as Powerpoint of Microsoft Office suite, Violet, Fontpage Activinspire, Geoplan-Geospace, Minionotebook, etc.

- In the process of using the game with Powerpoint presentation: The teacher must arrange the logical game sequence in the lesson progress. During the teaching process, when the teacher wants to organize the game, it is necessary to inform the students about the task to be solved. Teachers build games that must have answers available (if they can be illustrated with pictures, explanations, ...) to save time without having to lecture and explain much, but students still grasp the problem more deeply.

#### *2.4.4. Improve awareness, skills, and attitudes of teachers and students in using language games*

For the teaching process, raising awareness, skills, and attitudes is a cross-cutting process that needs to be done by teachers and students.

- Using language games in teaching English to students is a complicated process because this is both a fun activity and a form of learning. Therefore, for teachers, the construction and design of language games in the lessons not only bring attractive lessons but also the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students are achieved. In other words, through learning games, teachers not only provide students with a certain amount of knowledge, but also help students acquire that knowledge, equip them with working skills, and develop their positive and independent thought. Therefore, in order to achieve the above effects, teachers must spend a lot of time, effort, and enthusiasm in the preparation, construction, and design of language games suitable to the goals, content, and curriculum of the subject.

The process of organizing games and assessing also requires teachers to have profound organizational, management, and evaluation skills. Accordingly, in the process of organizing learning games for students, teachers need to know how to flexibly combine voice and gestures, ... so students are attracted and participate actively, excitedly, and enthusiastically.

- For students, learning activities are cognitive activities of a research nature in order to acquire knowledge, skills, and techniques to form qualities and competencies for themselves. Therefore, under the guidance of teachers, students need to grasp and understand the purpose and content requirements of the subject that need to be achieved in order to prepare for the lesson. In addition, students need to actively explore and discover new knowledge from extensive sources on electronic libraries, the internet, etc. to prepare to comprehend the lesson's content more quickly.

- In the process of participating in language games, teachers need to satisfy the needs and interests of students. The teacher as the guide and organizer is a "fulcrum" to help students in times of need, to create conditions and opportunities to rise. At the same time, they must also ensure their freedom and voluntariness in the process of playing.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Using language games in teaching is considered one of the effective teaching techniques, in order to create a process of interaction, attraction, and encouragement of students to participate in cooperation to improve subjectivity and self-discipline and create opportunities for them to practice applying their experiences and knowledge... in order to contribute to improving the learning quality of English language courses of students of local universities. The use of language games in teaching has many



advantages and has specific principles such as preparing before organizing the game; instructing the game; conducting the game; motivating player participation and reviewing after the end of the game. From assessing the role and clarifying the principles of using language games in teaching English, we have proposed 4 measures to improve the effectiveness of using language games in teaching English to students of local universities. Proposed measures to help students' learning environment change in the direction of fun and attraction; help students change their status, thereby actively and actively participating in class to acquire knowledge, and practice skills and promote initiative and positivity in learning as well as practice in practice.

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