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## Using Educational Games in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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**Abstract:**

Using educational games in English language teaching and learning **significantly** contributes to the goal of learning and acquiring languages through peers and social interaction. Previous studies **demonstrated** the importance of using games as a basic strategy in language education. Although **playing** is essential to a child's development, it is also beneficial for people of all ages. Using games in teaching the **target** language is strongly related to Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory. Using games in teaching can add joy and fun to the teaching and learning process, relieves stress, connects learners to others and to the world around them. Using games, whether they are played face –to-face or online, can make learning more useful and enjoyable. This research tries to shed **light on** some basic elements that educational games should have as well as their features, patterns, and conditions. Finally, this research explains some examples of educational games that teachers can apply in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Games, Educational games, Learning, Teaching

## المخلص باللغة العربية

تساهم الالعب التعليمية في تدريس وتعلم اللغة الانجليزية بشكل مهم وكبير في تعلم واكتساب المفردات الجديدة من خلال تفاعل الاقران والتفاعل الاجتماعي ، وقد اثبتت الدراسات السابقة اهمية استخدام الالعب كاستراتيجية اساسية في تعليم اللغة. وبالرغم من ان اللعب هو أمر مهم لتطور الاطفال الا أنه ايضاً أمر مفيد للاشخاص من كافة الاعمار. استخدام الالعب التعليمية له علاقة وطيدة مع نظرية الذكاءات المتعددة للعالم غاردنر. يمكن لاستخدام الالعب في التدريس أن يضفي الفرح والسرور على العملية التعليمية التعليمية ويقلل من التوتر ويوصل المتعلمين مع الاخرين ومع العالم من حولهم. يمكن للالعب (التي تلعب بشكل مباشر **وجها لوجه**) او باستخدام الانترنت) ان تجعل التعلم اكثر متعةً وذو فائدة اكبر عند تدريس اللغة. يحاول هذا البحث ان يسلط الضوء على بعض العناصر الاساسية التي يجب ان تتوفر في الالعب التعليمية اضافة الى بعض الخصائص والانماط والشروط. واخيراً ، يقدم البحث بعض الامثلة للالعب التعليمية التي يمكن للمعلمين الافادة منها وتطبيقها في الغرفة الصفية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الالعب، الالعب التعليمية، التعلم، التعليم

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## Introduction

Using educational games in teaching English as a foreign language is a modern educational method in teaching English as it focuses on the learner as the focus of the educational process. It provides the learner with pleasure and psychological comfort, helps him building his physical, mental, psychological and social aspects of his personality, and makes him a permanent state of activity, interaction and exploration in order to achieve a particular goal.

Educational games are also a means of renewal, prompting learners to revitalize their activity and increase their academic achievement. Educational games earn students specific characteristics such as mental development, discovery, accuracy and the acquisition of concepts that help them express themselves well. (Melgani, 2016).

Language games are one of the most important communication activities in the linguistic class. Because the linguistic class is an artificial place to teach the language, linguistic games reduce the phenomenon of industrialization that surrounds the teaching process within the class as well as achieving a great deal of realism in the practice of a language which is an important complement to the educational process. Learning a language is wearisome for adults as well as young learners, so learning a language by playing educational games in an atmosphere full of pleasure and fun help learners accelerate the acquisition of the language, and also develop a spirit of competition among students and their ability to work in a group or individually. Not only the learners will enjoy the language class, but also the teacher will find himself enjoying these language games if he stimulates his creativity and imagination in creating new games or developing the existing ones.

Play is an educational tool that is based on bringing concepts closer to the student and providing him with assistance in order to understand the meanings of things and adapt to life and its realities. Games are effective tools in to foster new vocabulary as they cater for individual differences among students. It is known that play is one of the main channels based on the transfer of technology, values, knowledge, traditions, customs and trends from student to student and from generation to generation.

### **Literature Review**

(Hong, 2002) aims to emphasize the impact of the use of games in learning English for young people. The researcher stressed the need to choose strategies for playing and include them with the explanation plan of the lesson. Teachers should think about which games to use, when to use, how to link them to the curriculum, textbook or program, and more specifically how different games will benefit students in different ways. (Ibrahim, 2017) aims to recognize the advantages of using language games in teaching English as a foreign language in Sudan's basic schools. One of the research findings is that teaching language games is useful for English as a foreign language. Language games can help students build a good relationship with the new language. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that curriculum designers should include adequate language games within the curriculum. The study also discusses the effects of using games in improving vocabulary learning in English as a foreign language or English as a second language.

(Khatir, 2015) conducts a study in which he confirms that games can also help teachers create authentic contexts where language is useful and meaningful. The researcher proves that the game - as a way to teach English lessons in elementary classes- is very useful to interacting with children. That is because toys perform many functions in the child's development process such as facilitating the learning process, helping to learn growing subjects each year, and indirectly developing the required competencies.

(Caganaga, 2016) aims to know the importance and effectiveness of games when they are used in English as a foreign language. The researcher concludes that games should be used in classrooms to teach the foreign language as they provide a good atmosphere for English language learners where there is more pleasure, motivation which will surely results in high educational performance.

Furthermore, various studies have revealed that games are useful in learning vocabulary because they enhance students' ability to memorize words, encourage student interaction, improve their communication skills and enhance students' motivation.

### **Games and their relation to Multiple Intelligences Theory (MIT)**

Gardner proposed a theory which has eight basic intelligences. These are mathematical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, musical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, and naturalist intelligences. Game-based learning is greatly supported by Multiple Intelligences when it is adopted as an educational philosophy in teaching. Games allow learners to express, talk, and participate individually which helps them acquire the language using their dominant intelligence. For example, story-telling

games in which learners have to use their verbal abilities more are related to linguistic intelligence. Learners with excellent abilities in mathematics prefer games which have numbers and demand them to think logically.

## Definition of Educational Games

Although the concept of educational game is still ambiguous and often misinterpreted, some researchers have reached some definitions. (Mubaslat, 2012) defined educational games as the activities that can take place within or outside the school, individually or collectively under the leadership of a person who has the ability to guide learners whether he is a supervisor, a teacher or a guardian who choose the right game in the right place and time, taking into account the pupil's age and level of performance. If these conditions are met, the game provides pleasure within the learners and prompts them to prove their skills. Other researchers tried to focus their definition on the format of games and to separate gaming from simulation. (Dempsey, Lucassen, Gilley, & Rasmussen, 1993-94) defined games as any overt instructional or learning format that involves competition and is rule-guided. (Willis, J. et al, 2017) define a game as the one which are developed specifically for educational purposes. The best definition of educational games is the one which includes as many good elements as it could.

## Basic elements of educational games

**Any game and in order to be educational should have the following basic elements.**

1. **Goal:** Any game should have a clear and specific learning goal that matches the goal which the player wants to reach at the end of his lesson. A good way of thinking about goals is to have a clear look at Bloom's Revised Taxonomy.

2. **Rules:** Any game should have a challenging component i. e. rules which explain to students how to play the game. These instructions should be "taught" to students before you play the game.
3. **Competition:** Achieving the outcomes of the lesson depends on the element of competition, which may be between a learner and another or between the learner and the organ, or between the learner and a test or criterion, in order to master a skill or achieve specific goals.
4. **Challenge:** The game should include some appropriate challenge that depletes the individual's abilities to the extent possible. This challenge should be a little bit higher than students' present level.
5. **Imagination:** The game provokes the imagination of the learners and this stimulates students' intrinsic motivation and their desire to learn.
6. **Entertainment:** The game should achieve a tangible element of amusement and pleasure. That is not the goal of the game, but must take into account the balance between pleasure and educational content.

**In addition to the previous elements in which traditional and electronic educational games are shared, there are special elements that must be available in electronic educational games as they are often dispensed with the role of the teacher. These include:**

1. **Adaptation:** It must take into account students' different learning patterns, their different past information, and their different expectations and objectives.



2. **Excitement and Positive Response:** The educational attitude in online games presented to the learner requires a positive response to move to a new step.
3. **Feedback and instant enhancement:** Since the learner has responded to the thrill, the educational game presents him with the immediate result and serves as a boost to the learner he pays to continue playing (Syukroni, 2020)

### Features of Educational Games

- They use audiovisual effects, so involving more than a human sense makes learning more effective and more influential.
- Pupils' learning motivation increases because play is an innate tendency of the learner, so it can be used to encourage the learner to know things they have never encountered before (Misa, 2022).
- Freedom from adversarial and conflict if playing unilaterally without the need for a colleague's participation.
- Self-proof by playing and achieving the goal without hiring others.
- E-games are fun and one of the most interesting and attractive educational tools.
- Using games is one of the most thought-provoking means in the learner and promotes his mental development, especially creative thinking.
- E-Learning games are not time-bound. A learner can play at any time they wish and for whatever time they want.
- Electronic educational games divide information into small steps that require a response and give immediate feedback, focusing on the educational objective and driving the learner to continue playing.

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- Through play, the learner gets rid of the psychological pressures resulting from the educational practices or socialization.
  - Integrates knowledge with skills such as: logical thinking skill, problem solving skill, planning skill and decision making.
  - They are effective tools in the uniqueness and organization of learning to address the individual differences and educate learners according to their potential and abilities. The possibility of repeating educational games programs ensures the student's learning is growing up to the stage of achievement and mastery. (Ibrahim, 2017)
  - They serve as training for learners to deal with computing devices and give them experience which can be difficult to acquire with deliberate training.
  - With these advantages and benefits, the frequent use of e-learning games without rationalization and control has health and behavioral risks for learners.

### **Educational gaming patterns**

Educational games take diverse patterns, among them are:  
**Competitive style:** In this pattern, there is a winner or loser in all cases whether it is between a learner and another, or between an educated group and another, or between a learner and an educational device such as a computer.

**Exploratory Scientific Style:** In this style, the educational game aims to develop innovation, creativity and thinking among participants. The game is based on the use of ingenious and intelligent strategies, to outperform an individual or a team over another so as to master a skill, or achieve specific goal.

## Types of educational games

Educational games can be divided into many categories. They can be individual or collective in terms of the number of participants, indoor or outdoor in terms of place, and muscular or mental in terms of the human aspect.

## The role of educational games in EFL learning

Games could become extremely beneficial when used correctly in the specific situation of EFL learning and teaching. For example, competitive games give students a natural chance to work as well as communicate with one another, which helps them learn the foreign language in the same way they learn their native language. Due to the obvious encouragement and interaction provided by these games, information processing will be faster and more efficient. Furthermore, educational games tend to encourage students as foreign language learners to participate in any exercise due to the sheer individual's innate desire to win. This will result in reducing students' stress which rises their motivation to learn (Talak-Kiry, 2010).

In addition, rather than simply practicing language in a classroom setting, using educational games in EFL classrooms can teach students how to use the language well. No one can deny the fact that actual conversation occurs when people interact with one another in real life situations. As a result, teachers could use games to develop a relaxing environment, which can lead to increased concentration and reduced levels of stress and anxiety.

Several educators and researchers believe that learning through doing or playing, as provided through the use of games, is indeed very significant. This could assist students to overcome boredom caused by serious, strict, and repetitive classroom learning practices. E-learning games could then be used and incorporated into classrooms. Various types of electronic games are being used in a wide range of ways to enhance educational practice, with the simplest being to use the gameplay as a multiple-choice test, with the game serving as the students' real reward.

Furthermore, one of the several significant benefits of using educational games in teaching English is that it encourages children as foreign language learners to communicate unconsciously and joyfully. The use of games can help students relax by lowering their stress and anxiety levels. Furthermore, the use of such games can help learners develop responsible personalities by boosting their self-confidence and self-esteem. (Farrah, 2019).

### **Conditions of learning by games**

1. These games should be suitable to the child's age, physical and mental development level.
2. Games should not be complicated or incomprehensible; the most important must be characterized by ease, clarity and lack of complexity.
3. These games should be connected to the surrounding education environment.

4. There are no risks to children's safety in these games.
5. The game should be exciting and enjoyable.
6. These games should help the child observe, reflect, balance, obtain and access facts in logical and visible steps.
7. The game should suit the children's abilities, experiences and tendencies.
8. The game should allow learners to choose.
9. These games should help the trainer assess the student's ability to acquire more experience and skills, and know his weaknesses, with a view to strengthening them by teaching him the appropriate experiences that address these points.
10. Most importantly, the extent to which the game is linked to the teacher's particular educational objectives or outcomes.

### **Teaching using educational games**

Educational games are one of the main teaching entrances that are concerned with the pupil's activity and positivity and with the comprehensive development of his personality in various aspects. They reflect the abstract concepts by attracting learners to interact with educational attitudes with their good teaching materials and targeted educational activities. This makes learners more active as they learn via these educational situations that are almost realistic and offer them the chance to achieve the desired goals of the lesson. (Yunus, 2019) Teaching using educational games is one of the most important teaching methods and strategies that take into account the psychological aspect of the learners, as this teaching method demands interaction between

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teachers and their pupils during the educational process through activities and games developed and implemented in a structured scientific manner. Educational activities play an important role in the educational process at all levels of education, contributing to the achievement of educational objectives and constituting an essential element of the curriculum by which different areas of it can be linked. Through this curriculum, teachers can provide children with first-hand experiences that enable them to understand and absorb key meanings and ideas in an integrated way.

## **Examples of games that can be used to teach languages**

### **1. Grammar Installation Game**

The teacher cuts a cardboard into two halves, then he/she divides it into four boxes, so that one half of the panel would write the sentences with a question. The other half would have the answer on it, and then on the back of the answer board they would draw a magnified, colourful shape. The board is divided into its four areas, and each group has to match the question with the answer. The winning group can evaluate the correctness of its answer by looking at the correctness of the composition of the posterior shape. This game can be designed using cardboard or sponge.

### **2. Wooden pocket panel game**

The teacher designs a magnified wooden panel with a fixed base, then he divides it into six wooden pockets as required. The teacher asks each group to withdraw a card from the wooden pocket panel, and classify the words according to the specific pocket in front of them. Questions and answers can be displayed on the computer after listening to the pupils' answers as a self-assessment.

### **3- Language Fluency Game**

The teacher asks each group to write a lot of words that are considered restricted to a category "names" for example on a sheet of paper. Students try to say the words they wrote without looking at the sheet of paper. The winning group is the one which can say all the words written on their sheet.

### **4. Who am I?**

The teacher asks some pupils to represent some roles for grammatical concepts in the form of educational puzzles entitled "Who am I?" By wearing masks, or via the puppet theatre, it is the winning group that can solve these puzzles correctly. This game can be applied orally, or by employing puppets via the puppet theatre.

### **5. Game of boxes**

The teacher brings two boxes, each representing a grammar or a spelling concept. Each group is required to classify the words before it according to the two previous boxes.

### **6. Clown Game**

A student dresses as a clown and identifies himself as saying "Welcome, my friends, I am your friend Tarbush, with the embossed face, with circumstances, prizes and sharks; I will play a beautiful game. Listen to me, I will pass you a basket of questions, and each group will have to withdraw one card, answer the question in the card, and the winning group will answer the question correctly and quickly, and I will present it with a valuable award.

## 7. Cat and Mouse Game

It is a game designed from sponge or carton pieces, where the teacher designs square models of the carton that include questions of a particular linguistic skill with digitization, and other models to answer with numbering by letters, after which sponge pieces (cat and mouse) are given to verify the answer (1: b).

## 8. Tipper Board Game

The teacher is given each set a miniature tipper panel in the form of a calendar, which contains questions including the extended name, and the opposite side contains a hidden answer to the question.

## 9- Debate game

The class is divided into groups, and each group is given a name with a specific grammar concept (he and her sisters), each of which is required to identify itself and oppose others, by mentioning their advantages, similarities and differences between them and other groups.

## 10- Game Discover Error

The teacher shows each set several floors of words, each floor contains the word error (born-picnic-beach-adventure), and the group is required to detect the spelling error found on each floor.

## 11. Silent Acting Game

The teacher selects a pupil to represent one of the hobbies he practises in his life, provided that the hobby includes a linguistic concept defined as a pronouns (I, it, us), The student act it in front of the pupils without uttering. The whole group tries to guess the answer.



## 12. Game words and letters

The teacher draws a rectangular shape, dividing it into five sections, for example, so that these sections represent word letters that represent a specific linguistic concept. The winning group is the one which can know the word.

### Conclusion

Using games to teach English is one of the educational tools and modern education, which depends on benefiting from the impact of games on students in childhood and work to transform this impact into a positive, useful educational tool to make students interact with their materials efficiently and increase verbal interactions between them and thus acquire new vocabulary in the language. Educational games are defined as the investment of children's motor energy, which expresses their physical activity mentally and helps to obtain many information by using entertaining educational methods. Learning through games has a stronger impact on memory, as the student will acquire a lot of linguistic elements and can use them efficiently in the classroom.

Learning English through games offers children a great opportunity to develop speech, language and listening skills. Children talk and listen during playtime, which helps them become autonomous users of the language. Using games allow children to learn a range of new skills, including experience, exploration and tradition, which help them complete the developmental tasks of their lifetime. Early-age play and learning help children discover themselves and the world better. It is noteworthy that textbooks designers include some games in their books to serve as a guide for not only novice teachers but also for experienced one to use in their classrooms.

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