

Г.Б. СРАТДИНОВА. Р.Х. ЕЛМУРАТОВ

**USING GAMES IN
TEACHING A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE**

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ВЫСШЕГО И СРЕДНЕГО
СПЕЦИАЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ
УЗБЕКИСТАН

КАРАКАЛПАКСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
ИМЕНИ БЕРДАХА

Г.Б. СРАТДИНОВА. Р.Х. ЕЛМУРАТОВ.

USING GAMES IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

*Методическое пособие по использованию различных игр в обучении
иностранному языку*

*Для преподавателей и студентов факультетов и отделений
английской филологии высших учебных заведений и учащихся
академических лицеев*

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Данное методическое пособие предназначено для преподавателей и студентов факультетов и отделений лингвистической филологии высших учебных заведений и учащихся академических лицеев. В нем описывается роль использования различных игр в обучении иностранному языку, преимущества и недостатки использования игр в обучении иностранному языку, также описываются 25 различных игр, которые очень эффективны в развитии всех языковых навыков (аудирование, говорение, чтение и письмо). Преподаватели иностранных языков могут использовать эти игры в обучении студентов с разными уровнями знания (с начинающего до продвинутого).

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Introduction

Uzbekistan is making its entry into the international arena. After the independence was proclaimed the republic was faced with the necessity of creating national educational system with new realities that meets world standards and government coped with this task. Recently has been adopted new law of the Republic of Uzbekistan about sustaining reformulated, effective learning of foreign languages (with accent on English) in the country.

On December 10, 2012 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov signed a decree “On measures to further improve foreign language learning system”.

It is noted that in the framework of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On education” and the National Program for Training in the country, a comprehensive foreign languages, teaching system, aimed at creating harmoniously developed, highly educated, modern-thinking young generation, further integration of the country to the world community, has been created.

According to the decree, starting from 2013/2014 school year foreign languages, mainly English, gradually throughout the country will be taught from the first year schooling in the form of lesson-games and speaking games, continuing to learning the alphabet, reading and spelling in the second year (grade).

As it is stated in the decree we have to use a lot of different games in order to make our lessons more productive and interesting. Games are fun activities that promote interaction, thinking, learning, and problem solving strategies. Often, games have an aspect that permits the players to produce information in a short time period. Some games require the players to engage in a physical activity and/or complete a mental challenge.

Games are effective tools for learning because they offer students a hypothetical environment in which they can explore alternative decisions without the risk of failure. Thought and action are combined into purposeful behavior to accomplish a goal. Playing games teaches us how to strategize, to consider

alternatives, and to think flexibly”. That quote summarizes my beliefs about using games to teach, practice and reinforce a foreign language.

Today’s high school classrooms are filled with teenagers who have the world at their fingertips due to affordable, portable and rapidly functioning electronic devices like computers, cell phones, iPads, blackberries, etc. Kids today have the World Wide Web at their beck and call for information, games and music. It provides them with endless hours of entertainment and instant gratification that schools cannot emulate, or keep up with. Not only does the computer satiate their knowledge, it keeps them coming back for more. “The World Wide Web has had a significant effect on the way they [young people] think and learn. They are used to thinking on multiple tracts at once, but have little patience with linear reasoning or delayed gratification” (Teed, 2010). Furthermore, since technology is solving problems for them, they need to be challenged to think independently and creatively to set themselves apart from the rest. Secondly, they are sitting at home for hours in front of their computer becoming increasingly socially inept and lacking in the interpersonal skills which are important in life. Additionally, these students face government legislation that regulates student learning via standardized testing, to reinforce “learning principles that ... are still based on drilling skills” (Johnson, 2003). They are lacking preparation for the real world where they must think independently, make complex decisions, work collaboratively and communicate effectively in order to be successful. Since many students are bored by the monotony of the school day, how can teachers stimulate them so that they are more engaged in their schoolwork and learning in general? How many of the students are paying attention? How can we reach the others? How can we engage them in their learning? How can we empower them to take responsibility for their learning? How can we get them to talk in English with each other? It was those questions that prompted us to think about young children and how they learn. We instantly thought of children playing games like Candy Land, Trouble, Hi Ho Cherry-O, Chutes and Ladders, and Connect Four. Children love playing games like those and countless others. These games are fun and educational for children. These

games, in particular, teach children appropriate social interactions, colors, numbers, strategy, logical thinking skills, vocabulary, reasoning strategies, and how to follow rules and procedures. If games can teach this much in the early stages of childhood development, then surely, games could be used in our foreign language classrooms for teenagers who were learning to talk, just as they do for toddlers.

1. Games as a foundation for learning

“A game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun... Games should be regarded as an integral part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of the term.” This definition highly evaluates the importance of games in teaching. It adds to teachers’ techniques in teaching that games serve not only as an ‘amusing activity’, but as a technique to carry out tasks to learners amusingly as well [Haldfield, 2003; p.86].

Haldfield adds: “Games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving at one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a chance to use the language freely and as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They can also serve as a diagnostic tool for teacher, who can note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action.” Haldfield further emphasizes the effective use of games. Students are always lazy to do the tasks. Therefore, games are used suitably in the way in which learners are led to participate in the games so that learners can have a chance to practice or use the new language items they have just learnt eagerly and willingly instead of forcing them to do the tasks unwillingly. It is more effective in a way that students can play and learn at the same time.

Lee defines: “Games in the strict sense, which have a definite beginning and end, are governed by rules...” Similarly, Haldfield defines games as "an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun." Games are not carried in chaos. Games have the rules, and for it is necessary players to digest these rules before the start so that they can play the games smoothly without committing them.

Games provide a constructivist classroom environment where students and their learning are central. “Learning through performance requires active discovery, analysis, interpretation, problem-solving, memory, and physical activity and extensive cognitive processing” (Foreman 2003: 16). Students draw their own meaning from these experiences while learning from their mistakes and also from each other. The students also build upon their previous knowledge and use their new knowledge in a situation separate from the activity in which they learned it. Furthermore, the teacher is now able to make observations on each student and see what areas the class or individuals are struggling with or excelling at as well as the social dynamics of the group. Teachers are trained in theories which promote learning through experience. They remind us that when small children learn, trial and error is a part of everyday life. “The learning process should be interesting, easy and it should be fun to learn. It also should fit with an everyday task and the working environment in order to achieve optimum results” [Pivec & Dziabenko 2010].

Games allow for creativity, independence and higher order thinking. Usually, questions posed by the classroom teacher are fact based and have only one answer, not allowing for creativity, personal expression, or testing hypotheses. The answer is either right or wrong, but games can allow for multiple answers. They improve participation, self-esteem, and vocabulary usage and allow the learners to see that there are many ways to solve the same problem. Additionally, it is more like real life. For instance, most conversations start with open ended questions: “How are you?”, “What did you do yesterday?”, “How can I help you?”, and “What would you like for dinner?” As foreign language learners, it is important that they are provided with scenarios that are as realistic as possible.

Games, if produced well, can do the same thing. Easy ways to do that involve the students finishing a sentence, listing words that begin with a certain letter, answering open ended questions on a board game or telling a story. Games also reinforce learning through many of Gardner’s multiple intelligences. Since individuals receive and process information in very different ways, it is important

that teachers utilize different strategies and styles. Games often incorporate logical reasoning, communication, kinesthetic, visual stimulation and spatial relations.

Games include analysis and interpretation of new and old material which makes learning concrete. Furthermore, the hands-on experiences are integral to critical learning, retention and recall. Games stimulate interactivity. The students are actively processing and working with the material as well as with classmates. In a grammar translation classroom, the students are working solely with the text and few voices are heard throughout the class session. In a foreign language classroom, it is imperative that the students practice speaking with each other. The goal of the foreign language learner is to speak proficiently and independently in various situations. He or she will never be able to do so unless there are ample opportunities for guided and independent practice. The interactivity amongst the students also promotes a community of learners. The students will begin to see each others as individuals and will learn more about each other instead of seeing what they are on the surface.

Games allow the students to work as a team and to work collaboratively towards a common goal. This collaborative effort is more than just learning to work with others. It promotes a symbiotic relationship where they can learn from each other. Students must supply reasons for why their answer is the best, listen to their teammates' rationale and then determine which answer is the best and why. So now, the collaborative effort is promoting a spontaneous discussion about the material, improving pronunciation, increasing participation, aiding in comprehension, all while the students are thinking quickly on their feet. The students are also developing trust and self-esteem in this process. Trust develops within and among the players. The learners must trust their own instincts and others' rationale about the answer as well as the ability to produce it. Self-esteem grows as their answers are validated and teammates rely on them to be pivotal players in the game. "Games enhance repetition, reinforcement, retention and transference" (El-Shamy 2001: 10). Because each game has a specific learning objective in mind, each player's turn deals with the same concept or skill in a

different way. Therefore, what students do not learn on their own turn, they may grasp from someone else's turn. Moreover, the responsibility for learning and practicing is the job of the student and it is willingly accepted.

There are people who oppose using games in classrooms. They feel that the competitive nature of games creates a hostile learning environment. However, competition is a natural part of our world: candidates compete for jobs in the interview process; teams compete in sporting events; and, companies compete to retain or gain clients. Competition is also already present in our schools with test scores and class rankings. As a matter of fact, some kids rise to the challenge because they love to compete even if they do not love to do homework, study or participate in class. Competition in classrooms can be achieved without being detrimental to the learning process or to the fun intended to take place. Depending on the age of the students, the competition can be for the head of the lunch line, the first one to pick a lollipop, or simply bragging rights. Not every success in life has an immediate, tangible reward. For instance, sometimes people change jobs because it will make them happy, not because it will increase their bank account. Additionally, the games we play at home, except for those related to gambling, don't come with a fabulous prize. It's the competition, the camaraderie, and the entertainment that keeps game players coming back for more.

Also, playing games in a classroom makes it a place filled with "good noise". The students are actively engaged and sometimes a bit over zealous. In classes with many students, it could mean that twenty people are talking at the same time. In schools with thin walls, it may be a bit distracting to other nearby classrooms, especially if the other students are engaged in testing, or other quiet exercises.

2. Guidelines for using games effectively in the classroom

1. The game must have a clear learning objective and purpose. It should be clear what the students are learning and practicing in the activities and procedures of the game. For example, for vocabulary identification the students can draw or act out

the word. These games have a clear purpose and their format can be repeated in different sections or units.

2. The teacher should assign students to teams. The grouping may depend on many things but it should ultimately depend on the task the students will be completing. Having fair teams depends on knowing the students' abilities and personalities fairly well. Try to separate the smartest or best and also those that struggle the most so each team has a fair chance. This will also allow those that are struggling to learn from the ones who are more secure and confident about what they have learned. Random grouping is not recommended because often one group may have an unfair advantage intellectually, or students will choose to work with their friends. Obviously, the latter option does not usually promote much discourse about the language or learning in general. Other students will try to pair up with the know-it-all and be carried through the game.

3. Be sure to explain all necessary procedures and rules clearly and slowly. Make sure everyone is listening and understands. If necessary, ask the students to restate them. With games that have been played before, ask the students to state the rules and procedures prior to beginning game play.

4. Be consistent. If necessary, use a timer to make sure that everyone has the same amount of time to answer. Do not start another round if all the teams will not have a chance to go before class ends. Decide if only the first answer will be accepted because sometimes students say things incorrectly, realize it after they say it and then fix it.

5. Be prepared. Make sure that there are enough materials, time, questions, etc. As an educator the unexpected always happens: an assembly, absent students, extra or not enough time. It is the facilitator's job to make educated and well-thought out decisions on the spot. Knowing how the game works helps making those decisions.

6. Maintain a non-threatening environment. All standard classroom rules and procedures should be observed when playing games. For example, unacceptable behavior should include name calling and belittling. However when playing a

game, some students become emotionally charged and may react negatively, especially if the outcome is not what they expected. Sometimes they may be little others, including their teammates. Before we play our very first game we discuss how to treat and talk to others. However, if in the heat of the moment a negative comment may surface and at this point, I remind the students that games are meant for fun and by saying those things the fun is being minimized. Additionally, by saying those things certain students may become less likely to participate and thus their learning is curtailed and they are entitled to more. Furthermore, it is just generally hurtful and mean.

7. It may be useful to have students create games. We only recommend this after the students have had exposure to educational games in the classroom setting so that they are familiar with game operation and how the teacher chooses to manage them. It is important to set boundaries or requirements for the games so that the students can narrow the focus of their creativity. For example, the students must: include fifteen current vocabulary words, use the past tense, or focus on the culture of Mexico. If the students do create games, we usually make them the facilitators of the game groups. They will lead the class since they are the “expert” and will be responsible for facilitating the game. It is fascinating to see the learning process at work in young adults just like when they were young children. There is an air of excitement about what is occurring in the classroom, as well as an immersion in and focus on the material. The students are producing spontaneous responses and building confidence because they do not spend too much time thinking about what to say, an answer just comes to them. Sometimes it is right, sometimes not. But, what we love is that they are clueing into their instincts, going through the file drawers in their head to find the right answer, interpreting the ‘clue’, saying words in English that could be the right answer, and getting corrective feedback and positive encouragement from their teammates, not just from the teacher. Games allow the students to show a little of their true personalities, build relationships with others, and practice various skills. They also allow the facilitator to see who knows the information and who is or is not afraid to share it. Also it becomes

more apparent what students need more instruction or what concepts can or cannot be performed adequately.

The more you use games, the easier facilitating becomes. Furthermore as you progress, making groups, sharing and implementing rules and procedures, being consistent, dealing with competition and collaboration as well as evaluating the benefits of educational games becomes second nature.

3. Characteristics of good games

1. They are based on a learning objective. This gives the developer a focus point for the format, skills involved and material covered. Through play, the players use previously learned knowledge and skills to acquire new knowledge and enhance their abilities. For example, games that require recall improve the players' memory as they test strategies for memorization. Their knowledge is reinforced with success and mistakes are corrected due to negative consequences. They also are able to manipulate strategies for memorization and recall. Hopefully, if the players falter, they realize that extra studying or help may be necessary to acquire the skill or pass the "test."
2. They give the player control over his own destiny. Not only does this increase motivation and responsibility, but it also improves decision making skills by showing that there are direct consequences for actions made or those not taken. The player is adapting to the situation in order to succeed or he is coping as a result of making poor decisions.
3. They include doable challenges. The player should succeed and struggle at various points throughout the game. This increases the player's determination and drive towards success and completion. Challenge students by adding new information or a new situation to which previous knowledge can be applied.
4. They are fun and interesting, thus motivating. This encourages the player to not only play today but to return later to the game. Because of the emotion and excitement involved, the student often forgets that he is learning something. Furthermore, it is likely that the player will begin to research information, study harder and practice more so that the next outcome of the game meets his ideals.

By calling class activities a game when they really aren't, the students get excited and have fun without realizing that they are learning something.

5. They are based on reality in order to intrinsically motivate the players to continue to play the game. The player is able to practice a useful skill without the stress that the real situation may incur. There are chances for multiple practice and redemption. There is support from peers as well as time to think and react. Situational games allow the players to assume a new identity in a simulated world where they feel comfortable making mistakes and testing hypotheses. In this instance, the games we play are not really games at all, but are perceived as games by the students because of the introduction or build up we give it. They involve speaking and listening skills. For example, describing someone's outfit in the room while others guess who it is; giving directions from one place to another while someone else makes it into a map; or, describing your room while others draw it.

6. They require interaction. The players should interact with material on a variety of levels and of course with other players, more and less experienced or knowledgeable. Once again, this promotes learning from sympathetic peers who have been in or will be in a similar situation.

7. Games must include everyone. Each student should be able to participate as a player in order to effectively develop and promote social interaction, good communication and a sense of community. Games are meant to level the playing field giving everyone an equal chance to win because everyone starts with the same amount of resources and time while seeking to accomplish the same goal. While the students are playing the game, the teacher should be observing the students and their interaction with each other and the material.

4. Some challenges for using games in a classroom

Games must include everyone. We think, this may be the hardest for the facilitator to achieve. When playing games for an extrinsic reward, the slower shier student may withdraw not wanting to be resented by his teammates for "blowing the game." Smarter students with more outgoing personalities or confidence may be regarded as the hero or the ringer. For example, use "numbered

heads together” where everyone in the group is given a number and they have to answer the question, or no one can answer a second time until everyone has answered once. Secondly, if the game involves physical activity it is imperative to examine safety precautions and student (dis)abilities. We have used games which involve the students leaving their desk and going somewhere else, such as the board, a certain spot in the room, etc. A multitude of things could have happened like tripping or running into something. In those games, the students have to walk. Running disqualifies them. Thirdly, each student brings their own personality to class. Balancing the passive and outgoing students as well as the geniuses and the average kids is challenging. The passive kid in each group typically will not participate except for when it is their turn, because someone else is always more willing. Outgoing students tend to be impatient, loud and constantly in motion. Those actions will typically increase the passive nature of some students. For those reasons and many more, the facilitator may want to form teams or establish rules for participation, as previously recommended.

Games can be noisy. If like me, you have a neighbor who says to you, “What were you doing in there last class period? We thought those kids were going to bust through the wall.” You either have to be strong enough to answer honestly and make a strong case for using games as a learning tool or come up with a quieter format for your game. One time during standardized testing week, my students got a bit out of hand relieving some of their stress. I was really embarrassed and felt bad for the students next door who were still trying to concentrate on their exams. Since then my games have been a bit tamer, and better planned not to coincide with such important events.

Cheating is a constant worry of mine as a high school teacher. Sadly, we believe that most kids cheat by copying homework, sharing answers and using copyrighted information without citations, and sadly, they don’t feel it is wrong. Therefore, it is not beneath them to cheat during a game. We have seen open books and notebooks, students giving answers to others, or a team strategizing to frame another group. During physical games there may be pushing and other potentially

harmful acts. The facilitator of the game must have clear rules and consequences for breaking those rules. If the rules are violated the consequences must be enforced. That usually minimizes the cheating. Teachers often take away points, or make the cheaters skip a turn. Guilt is also a good tactic. For example, end the game because of the cheating; then, the cheater feels like they have ruined it for the rest of the class. In my classroom, game playing is a privilege that the students must earn and maintain by demonstrating respectful and honest behavior.

Competition can work positively as a motivator, as discussed previously, or negatively. Winning should never be the focus or goal of the game or the players. In some instances, the competitive edge of a student may take over and cause hurtful things to be said. In this instance, we usually stop the game and address the situation. We remind them how we treat each other in class and continue by stating that even though we are playing a game, we are still in class. Furthermore, games are supposed to be fun and by saying those things the fun is being spoiled. It is also important to watch for intimidating or dominating personality traits from some students. Usually they will yell at others or just use an angry tone. Not only does this ruin the fun of the game, but it also encourages other students to not play the game with this individual or to react similarly. In this instance, we have tried two tactics. The first, letting students work it out, did not work too well, because the entire group started to fight amongst themselves. Additionally, the negativity spread to other groups. The second tactic was a bit more involved but seemed to work better. We interrupt and discuss with the group the observed actions, unobserved actions, the players' feelings, game procedures and possible consequences. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it does not. In cases where it does not, we make a mental note about who is having trouble working together and try to separate them for a few group activities before we try pairing them together again. Ultimately, if the inappropriate behavior persists, then we no longer play games in that class.

Rules must be fair to everyone. The first time introducing a new game to our students, we are always nervous about how it will go. There are many "what

ifs?” going through my head. Often, after explaining the procedures and rules, a student may have a question that addresses something we had not thought of. Therefore, only after trial and error will the set of rules be complete, but we recommend trying to work out as many of the kinks before using the game in the classroom. If it does not work the first time, it is likely that the students and you may not be interested in trying it a second time.

The element of chance should be minimized and the learning emphasized. “For a game to be involving and motivating, there must be some challenge to it. It cannot be won too easily. Skill, chance and endurance are elements that provide challenge. Most [training] games have at least some element of chance involved, for instance, the roll of the dice, the hand you are dealt, and the obstacles you encounter” (El-Shamy 2001: 12). Similarly, if the same student or group is consistently winning, it is necessary to change the dynamic. The easy answer is to change the group that is working together. A similar solution is to take the winning group and give them the same game to play with new or more challenging material. Since the players and the game have gotten more challenging, their learning experience is heightened.

In conclusion, we feel that this section of our workbook is very important in explaining the usefulness and educational value that games can have in a classroom. It is becoming increasingly important and necessary for teachers to justify their classroom procedures to administrators, parents and their students. When we started having our students play games, it was mostly for taking a break from the monotony of teaching from a book, filling extra class time or reviewing for a test. Now, having researched and learned about the deep, critical learning that takes place while game playing, we realize that games have more purpose than creating fun in the classroom.

5. The games we play

The games found in this section have all been played by many students while learning English as a foreign language. Our students find them to be fun, without realizing the educational value that they have. Regardless of the level of

the student, the following games challenge them as language learners and producers in situations that they may not be accustomed. Some of the games are adaptations of established board games, television game shows, or of childhood games. Some of the games have been taught to me by various colleagues, inspired by student ideas, or borrowed and adapted from various publications.

Each game description includes the recommended learning level, skills reinforced and materials needed. Procedures, variations and suggestions are also included. Since each learning environment is unique, try playing the games and making adaptations that suit you, your teaching style, or the learning style of your students. Depending on your cultural background, many of the games may be familiar because of their title or their description. However, we feel it is important to include them to show the simplicity of using games in classrooms. It is our desire to show that games can be played with varying levels of preparation from the educator. If these games appeal to you and your students, there are many more available. Have fun!

1. The Newlywed Game

Level: Intermediate and Advanced

Skills reinforced: Asking and answering questions, community and vocabulary development

Materials: Player: piece of paper and writing utensil; Teacher: A variety of questions of a personal nature

Procedure: Students, in groups of two, ask each other relatively personal questions. For example, When is your birthday? What is your favorite color? With whom do you live?, etc. The groups now arrange their desks so that they are seated back to back so they cannot communicate with each other. Each player should have a piece of paper and a writing utensil. The facilitator asks random questions, that the students were not aware of beforehand. One student writes down her answers to the question and the other writes down what she thinks her partner will say. As a group go over answers of the pairs, and then repeat the process with the

pairs changing roles. The goal is for the pairs to match answers and develop connections. The pair with the most matching answers wins.

Sample questions:

- What is your favorite color?
- Which hand do you write with?
- What did you do over the summer/weekend?
- What is your favorite class?
- What extracurricular activities do you participate in?
- What did you eat for breakfast?
- Who is their favorite actor/actress?
- How many siblings do you have?
- Do you buy or pack your lunch?
- When is your birthday?

2. Pyramid

Level: Intermediate and Advanced

Skills reinforced: Describing or defining words; Vocabulary Development or recall

Materials: Either pictures or words for the describer to use as prompts

Procedure: The class divides into pairs, facing each other. One student is given the prompts and describes them to his partner. For each correct answer the team is given one point. If the native language or the name of the item is used to describe it, no points are awarded. Time should be monitored. Suggestion: Two words per thirty seconds

Variations:

- the words can be grouped into categories
- gestures can be permitted

3. Line Ups

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Non-verbal communication, community development

Materials: none

Procedure: Teacher gives instructions that speaking is not permitted, but other types of communication are. The teacher gives the students an order that the students must put themselves in:

- alphabetical by first, middle, or last name
- chronological order by birthday (year is not important)
- from shortest to tallest
- lightest color hair/shirt to the darkest
- alphabetical by their favorite... (vacation spot, TV. show, band name, book title, etc.)

Once the line is formed have the students say their name/birthday, etc. Ask if anyone needs to move, let them do so and then go through the line again.

4. Scattergories

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Spelling, Thematic Vocabulary recall

Materials: Paper, pencil, timer

Procedure: The facilitator gives a theme. The students write down words that relate to the theme. When time is up, each student reads their list. If another team has the same word, the word is crossed off all the lists. Words remaining score one point.

Variations:

- Play with teams or individuals.
- Give the starting letter that all of the words must begin with.
- Have the students use the words in a sentence to receive the point.

Suggestions:

- Determine if proper nouns are valid answers.
- Increase the difficulty of the theme to match the players' ability level.
- If playing in teams, attempt to spread out the groups as much as possible to prevent answers being overheard.

Possible themes:

- adjectives to describe people

- animals
- at the coast or in nature
- celebrities or people from history (of the target culture)
- clothing articles
- colors, numbers, days, months, etc.
- foods (fruits, vegetables, beverages, breakfast, dinner/lunch, etc)
- greetings and farewells
- hobbies & pastimes
- items in a particular room
- items that are ... (choose a color, or material)
- modes of entertainment
- modes of transportation

5. What is your comfort level?

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: None, but it allows the teacher to see the comfort level and prior knowledge of the students in the class.

Materials: A list of concerns that students have in a foreign language classroom, or grammar topics to be studied in the course.

Procedure: Using the four corners in the room, label each one a comfort level: no problem, almost no problems, some problems, and many problems. With each concern/topic have the students move to the corner that best describes them. Keep track of how many are in each corner.

Variations:

- Instead of using the corners, tape lines on the floor and have the students move to the section, take a written survey, make tally marks on the board, raise their hands or use counters and a piece of butcher paper.

Suggestions:

- Keep the list brief, the students get tired of moving around and start to talk too much.

6. Pictionary

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: vocabulary recall and identification

Materials: butcher paper or a chalkboard for drawing, and a writing utensil

Procedure: Divide the group into teams. Students will take turns being the artist. Repeat artists will only be permitted when all students have had a turn. The artist will receive a word or phrase to draw from the teacher. The artist must not use letters or numbers in his/her picture. Symbols are allowed. Other players will attempt to guess the word from the drawing. If their guess is correct, then they score a point. Move to the next team, for the next artist.

Variations:

1. Have the group play as individuals and the person who guesses the word is the next to draw or may select someone to draw in his/her place.
2. Have them draw with their non-traditional hand, with their eyes closed, or without lifting their pencil.

Other Suggestions:

- Require hand raising and correct pronunciation from the guessers.
- Use a timer if necessary.
- Use current vocabulary words.
- If using it to review, give a category for the word.

7. Bluff

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: Pronunciation development, vocabulary identification

Materials: None

Procedure: Divide the group into two teams. The teacher will ask one team to define a vocabulary word. Any student who knows the definition will stand up. A student on the opposing team will select one of the students standing to translate. If the student's definition is correct, then one point for each person standing is awarded. If the student's definition is incorrect, then one point per person standing is deducted.

Variations:

- Pose a question to be answered instead of just translating a word.
- Have the student use the word in a sentence to define or explain the word.

Other suggestions:

- Allow each student a turn at choosing a member of the opposing team.
- Don't let them pick the same student two rounds in a row.
- Make sure that the words or questions are of similar difficulty per round.
- Set a limit for points, i.e. the first team to fifty wins.
- The teacher could pick a person to answer from the students standing.

8. Memory

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary identification and memory recall

Materials: index cards

Procedure: Have the students create matching pairs. The most common set up would be to have a word on one card, and its corresponding picture on the other. Turn the cards face down, and rearrange them so that no pairs are near each other. Each student takes a turn attempting to find the match. When a match is made, then he or she gets to go again. The student with the most pairs wins.

Variations:

- Have the students match questions and answers.
- The pairs could also be of opposites.

Other suggestions:

- The cards can be used for many other things besides just memory.

For example:

- The students could form a chain of the words based on something they have in common.
- The words could be used as flashcards.
- The students could chose the cards randomly and have to use them in a logical sentence or short story.

- Use the cards to play the card game “Go Fish”, where the students ask someone else in the group if they have a certain card to make a pair.

9. Pass the Chicken

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary recollection

Materials: An item to pass around the circle, perhaps a rubber chicken!

Procedures: Have the students sit, or arrange their desks in a circle. Give the chicken to one of the students, who will pass it around the circle. The student with the chicken needs to name 5 items in a category before the chicken makes it all the way back around. The teacher should say the category and then the chicken should be passed. If the chicken makes it back before the student finishes the list, he or she should go again. When the student finishes the list, the person with the chicken is now “it”.

Variations:

- Have other students in the circle say a category, but if the chicken makes it all the way around, have him or her finish listing 5 items. If he or she can't, then he/she gets the chicken and the other student's turn is done.
- Share all the categories beforehand. Give the students time to brainstorm with a partner.
- If 5 things weren't named, solicit other possibilities from other students. Use the category again in this game.

Other suggestions:

- Enforce appropriate passing techniques.
- If the student gets the chicken three times consecutively, allow him or her to choose the next student to take a turn.

Sample categories: Use the ones listed in game 4 (Scattergories) or...

- sports that don't use a ball
- countries (or cities) that speak your target language
- articles of clothing that you wear in the summer
- female family relations (sister, mother, aunt, etc.)

- parts of the face
- electronic devices
- desserts
- foods that are... (yellow, green, kept refrigerated, used on sandwiches, etc.)
- items that have wheels
- languages or nationalities

10. Charades

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary identification and recollection

Materials: none

Procedures: Divide the group into teams. Students should be given a word or phrase to act out. Other players guess the word. If their guess is correct, then they score a point. Move to the next team, for the next actor.

Variations:

- Have the group play as individuals and the person who guesses the word is the next to act.

Other suggestions:

- Allow them to use props, or work in tandem as necessary.

11. Sparkle

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: listening comprehension, spelling

Materials: none

Procedures: Have all the students line up or stand in a circle in the front of the room. The teacher says a word in the target language. The students should spell the word. One person says one letter until the word is complete. The next student should say “sparkle” to indicate that the word is complete. A new word is given and the spelling starts with the next student.

Variations:

- Have someone write down the letters that are being spelled to reinforce visual learning.

- If the word is spelled incorrectly, have the student who said the wrong letter sit down.
- If the word is spelled correctly, have the student after the student who says “sparkle” sit down.
- Have each person say a word to make a sentence that incorporates the word the teacher said initially.
- Divide the class into two teams to see who can correctly spell the most words.

Suggestions:

- Review tricky letters of the alphabet, especially if the alphabet is new to your learners.
- Use the teachable moments to explain rules of spelling or pronunciation.

12. Nice to meet you

Level: Beginner to Advanced (but should be done at the first class session)

Skills reinforced: making introductions, team building

Materials: Note cards or pieces of paper, 2 per person

Procedures: Each person in the group should write their first name (or name they go by) on one card, and their last name on the other. The teacher should collect all the cards and redistribute them so that no one gets either of their own cards. The students should then go around and introduce themselves to each other until they get both of their cards back.

Variations:

- Add a third card, where each person writes something down about him/herself.

Suggestions:

- Make sure the students don't share whose cards they have.

13. Getting to Know You

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Answering questions, team building

Materials: Cards with questions on them

Procedures: Have all the students sit in a circle. Give each student a card with a question on it. Have each student read their card and each person around the circle will answer it. After each student has read their question, go back around soliciting information about each person from the other students.

Variations:

- Have the students write their own question.

Suggestions:

- If you have a lot of students, then just have a few questions or perhaps select five or so students answer each question.

Example questions:

- What is your favorite movie (color, food, dessert, etc.)?
- What is your ideal job?
- What would your best friend say about you?
- Where do you work?
- What sport do you play?
- What is your least favorite chore?
- How did you get here and how long did it take?
- What did you do before you came here?

14. Word Pyramid

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: vocabulary development

Materials: triangles to match together and eventually make a pyramid

Procedures: The teacher should take the triangle template and add synonyms in various locations. Duplicate as needed and cut the pyramid into its individual components. Break the class into groups. Give each group a packet of triangles. The students should match the synonyms to make the pyramid.

Variations:

- Turn it into a competitive game. Turn the pieces upside down. Have the students pick 5 triangles each. Pick one to be the center of the triangle. Each student will take a turn trying to match their words as a synonym to the

pieces already played. At the start of each turn, he or she should pick up another triangle so that they always have 5 triangles in their hand.

- Use other word pairs like antonyms, rhyming words, countries and cities, occupations and what they do, etc.

Suggestions:

- Use durable paper like card stock or manila folders.
- Have students make their own pyramid for other groups to complete.

15. Who am I?

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: Sentence structure, reading, speaking, team building

Materials: Pens and papers

Procedures: Give each student a piece of paper and writing utensil. Have them write three things about themselves. Fold the papers in half and collect. Redistribute the papers. Have the students read the statements and guess who wrote them.

Variations:

- The reader could form questions for other classmates, based on what they have read, to further the information sharing. Half the class can write the statements, while the other half guesses. The reader/guesser can make a suggestion (for a hobby, school activity, vacation spot, book to read, movie to see, etc.) based on the information on the paper. The reader/guesser can add information about him/herself that he/she has in common with the author.

Suggestions:

- This is a good activity to do when the students know each other fairly well, like at the end of a course. If this is done as an activity to familiarize students with one another, have them include information about their physical description to help make the guessing easier.

16. Always, often, never

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills Reinforced: Present tense sentences, adverb usage, reading comprehension, team building

Materials: paper and pencils

Procedures: Distribute paper and pencils to each student. Each student should write sentences about him/herself that uses various adverbs like always, almost always, frequently, often, sometimes, occasionally, rarely, almost never, never, etc. Fold the papers in half. Collect and redistribute. The students will now read the paper and guess who wrote those statements.

Variations:

- Students can write sentences about each other instead of about themselves.
- The teacher can ask questions about how often the student (or people in their family) does various activities.

Suggestions:

- Guessing who wrote the sentences is an activity that is best done when the students already are familiar with each other.
- Review adverbs prior to playing this game.

17. Describe and draw a picture

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Speaking, listening, question asking, giving orders, critiquing

Materials: paper, writing utensil, and other pictures

Procedures: Students should work in pairs. One member of the pair should have a blank piece of paper and writing utensil. The other member should be given a picture to describe. The partner with the picture then starts to describe it to his/her partner. All the while, either member can ask or give clarifying information based on how the description is going.

Variations:

- The students can write out a description of something they are familiar to use as the basis for their drawing. For example, a person in their family,

their best friend, their bedroom, a room in their house, an item in the school, etc.

- Hang all the drawings up on the board and ask the students questions. For example, where can you find a ..., who uses a ..., what can you find near a

Suggestions:

- Time the pairs.
- Limit the amount of times the speaker can say the same sentence.
- This game is fun even if there isn't a winner. However, the winner could be the one whose drawing is closest to the actual image, or the group that finishes first while being the most accurate.

18. Ball Toss

Level: Beginner to Intermediate

Skills reinforced: Listening, memory, community development, pattern development

Materials: a soft ball (like a stress ball, or even wadded up paper)

Procedures: Have all the students stand in a circle. Have the first person with the ball say their name and then toss it to someone else in the circle. Repeat until either everyone has gone, or until it might become too difficult to remember all the names. Now, the person with the ball throws it to the person who threw it to them saying the other person's name instead of their own. If the ball is missed, or the information is wrong, just go back to the last person who did catch the ball, or solicit help from others in the circle.

Variations:

- Use other information instead of just names, i.e. birthdays, favorite colors, places they have visited, etc.

Suggestions:

- Don't allow them to throw the ball to the same person more than once during the game.

- Make sure you have enough space in your learning environment to play this game.
- Remove any items in the vicinity that could be broken or damaged easily.
- Have two circles if there are a lot of students.

19. Word Association

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills reinforced: listening, memory, community development, pattern development

Materials: none

Procedures: Have all the students sit or stand in a circle. Give them a phrase to fill in. They should use words that start with the same letter or sound. For example, “My name is Ana and I like apples”. The next person will say the phrase for everyone before them, and then their own.

Variations:

- Advanced learners can name more than one thing, or can have various phrases to complete. For example, I visited..., I would like to be a ..., I play....
- After each student has made and said their own sentence, have classmates ask them questions using other words that start with the same letter. For example, “Ana, do you like archery?”

Level: Beginner to Advanced

- Remind students who have already gone to continue paying attention. 40

20. Hey!

Level: Beginner

Skills reinforced: Number recognition, counting, pronunciation, listening

Materials: none

Procedures: The students should all stand. The arrangement (line, circle, rows) is not important. They will take turns counting by ones. Start at zero, and continue until only one player remains. Pick a number, for example 3. Any student who is supposed to say a number that contains a 3, or is a multiple of 3 (i.e. 3, 6, 9, 12, 13...31, etc.) will instead say Hey! A student who says the wrong number, says a

number instead of Hey! or vice versa, or mispronounces the number is out and should sit down. The next player should say what should have been said. Continue playing until one player remains. He or she is the winner.

Variations:

- Start with the players seated and those who get out must stand.
- Use two numbers (3 and 4) instead of just one.
- Start at a different or larger number instead of zero to make it more challenging.

Suggestions:

- Make sure the players say their number loudly so everyone can hear.
- Repeat the last correct number at the end of a round.
- If many students get out, move the few players who remain to a centralized location so they can hear each other better.

21. Truth, Truth, Lie

Level: Intermediate to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Sentence writing, community development, listening comprehension

Materials: paper and pencil

Procedures: Distribute a paper and pencil to each student. Each student should write their name on the paper. Next, he/she should write three sentences about him/herself. Two of them should be true, and one should be a lie. Collect the sentences. Read the sentences to the class and have them guess which one is a lie.

Variations:

- Have the listeners explain why they think the statement is a lie.
- Have the author elaborate on one or both of the true statements.
- If the students are already familiar with each other, have them guess which person in the class wrote the sentences.

Suggestions:

- This game is fun without needing to declare a winner.
- Ask the students to write lies that are close to the truth instead of something really outrageous.

22. Simon says

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: body part recognition, forming and giving commands, listening comprehension

Materials: none

Procedures: Have all students stand. Choose one student to be Simon. Simon is responsible for telling the others what to do. For example, sit down, touch your nose. However, only the commands that are preceded by “Simon says,” should be followed. Students that do not follow the command should sit, and are out of the game. When Simon gives a command that is not preceded by “Simon says” it should not be followed. Students that follow these commands should sit, and are out of the game. The last student standing is the winner, and has the option of being the next Simon.

Variations:

- Have two Simons and have them take turns so that the pace of the game is not too slow.

Suggestions:

- Review body parts and commands prior to this game.
- The teacher should be the first Simon to model appropriate commands.
- Have prepared commands in case Simon goes blank.
- The teacher should be the judge in who is out. In a large group setting, some students will copy their neighbors.
- Decide if the action from one command will be stopped before beginning another one. For example, Simon says hop in place. Simon says touch your nose. The students should stop hopping and then touch their nose, or will the students continue hopping until Simon dice stop hopping.

Possible commands:

- Touch your nose.
- Point to your eye.
- Spin around.

- Touch the floor.
- Sit down.
- Stand up.
- Jump up and down three times.
- Stand on one foot.
- Hop like a bunny.
- Hold out your arms.
- Rub your stomach.
- Pat your head.

23. Jeopardy

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Grammar and vocabulary reinforcement, quick thinking, listening comprehension

Materials: clues or questions prepared ahead of time for the students to answer, noise makers

Procedures: Ahead of time write the questions for four or five categories. The questions may be worth various point levels to coordinate to the difficulty level of the question.

Game Day

- Write the category headings and point values in rows and columns on the board.
- Divide the group into teams, seating arrangement is unimportant.
- Give each team a noise maker.
- Explain the rules.

Rules

- Only the person with the noisemaker may answer.
- Students cannot “ring” in until the question is complete.
- Students have only one chance to answer a question.
- The noisemaker will be passed after each question is answered.
- The team that answered the last question correctly will pick the next clue.

Variations:

- Have all the questions worth the same value.
- Deduct points for incorrect answers.
- Allow teammates to help the student with the noisemaker.
- Have a Double Jeopardy round where questions are worth twice as many points.
- Have a Final Jeopardy round where students can wager their points to answer one question.
- Have the questions be statements and the answers be questions to practice question words.

Suggestions:

- Be sure to prepare plenty of questions for the time you wish to play the game.
- Jeopardy is a great game when reviewing much material.
- Explain clever category headings that might catch the students off guard.

24. Relay Games

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Grammar and vocabulary reinforcement, quick thinking, listening comprehension, community development

Materials: Board and chalk, or butcher paper and markers

Procedures: Divide the group into even numbered teams, if possible. Location is important. Each group should be equidistant from the “target”. Give each group a surface or space for writing. Make each member of the team responsible for one piece of the finished product. The team that finishes correctly first gets two points. All other teams that finish the product correctly get one points.

Product Variations & Suggestions:

- Verb conjugations – Have each person on the team responsible for one form of the verb. Decide whether or not it must be written in a particular order.
- Sentence copying – Have a sentence posted in a spot in the room. The team is to recreate the sentence exactly. Each person can make one trip to the original.

- Make it challenging by only allowing certain people to relay certain parts of speech.
- Sentence additions – Post the same sentence in various spots of the room. Have each team member add a word to the sentence. The final sentence must be logical. Make it challenging by allowing certain people to add certain parts of speech.
- Vocabulary word spelling – Have each person on the team write one letter of the word.
- Vocabulary word usage – Have each person on the team write one word of a sentence that uses a vocabulary word. Give them a word to use, or give them a few seconds to plan what they'd like to write.
- Vocabulary word recollection – The teacher should say a group of vocabulary words, one for each person on the team. After all the words have been said, the students should take turns and begin writing the words one at a time on the board.

Miscellaneous Suggestions:

- Running should not be allowed.
- Rough housing and name calling is not allowed.
- Determine whether each student will have their own writing utensil or if there will only be one per team.
- Have a clear way of determining which team is completed first. Have them all sit down/stand up, or have them hang up their finished product.

25. Board Games

Level: Beginner to Advanced

Skills reinforced: Grammar and vocabulary reinforcement, quick thinking, listening comprehension, community development

Materials: game board, die, game pieces, clues or questions for the students to answer

Procedures: Ahead of time

- Using a game board, make enough copies for the groups in your class. A heavier stock of paper, or manila folder is recommended.
- Lamination will increase its durability as well.
- Prepare questions or clues for the students to answer.

Game Day

- Divide the students into groups.
- Each group should get one board, one piece per person, and one die, as well as a pack of cards that contain the clues.
- The group members should take turns rolling the die, answering the questions, and moving their man, until one person reaches the end.

Variations:

- Color the squares on the game boards in 4 or 5 rotating colors. Have each color represent a different category coinciding with the questions/clues.
- Write the questions, sentence starters or clues on the board itself. Make various game boards for various topics.
- The students may only move if they answer the question correctly.
- Incorrect answers warrant moving backwards.

Suggestions:

- The questions can be related to any topic or of any level of difficulty.
- Once the boards and questions are prepared, they can be used repeatedly for various topics and levels.

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