Using Board Games to Teach English Grammar

Sainzaya.S[1], Oyun-Erdene.T[2], Namuun.S[3]

[1]Lecturer, Foreign Language Department, Mandakh University, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
[2]Lecturer, Foreign Language Department, Mandakh University, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
[3]Lecturer, Foreign Language Department, Mandakh University, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Abstract: *There is a need to use language game designated for age and psychological feature to motivate and teach adults grammar. One way of reducing anxiety of grammar lesson is to use language games. We conducted grammar and revision lesson using the board game and aimed to demonstrate that board game is essential to students' development and behaviour through this article. We have analysed data from questionnaire, observation and interviewing carried out among freshmen and lecturers at Mandakh University. In conclusion, we conducted experiment using board game and the result of implementation in lesson will be discussed.*

Keywords: *board game, teaching grammar, positive attitude*

1. INTRODUCTION

Everyone studying English language has to study grammar as it helps us to understand language shaping our world and improve ability to read, write and speak clearly. For students, grammar can be though, complicated, boring and puzzling as they study on grammar rules, sentences pattern and regular or irregular verbs and then repeated or written to remember. If teacher can figure out the right method and approaches to motivate students and eliminate their fears, it will benefit students in efficient ways. Chitravelu pointed out that there are many methods and approaches having pros and cons to teach grammar. First, the Grammar-Translation Method which encouraged students to translate endless text made them bored. The method somehow hindered their will to get know grammar. Second, the Audio-Lingual Method used both listening and speaking for the students to listen and repeat the right grammatical structures. This type of approach gave more benefits of children as they performed a lot of drills. Besides, Communicative Approach on the other hand focused merely on speaking practice rather than form. The students would at the end able to produce the language but with grammatically incorrect structures. Lastly, the Total Physical Response and Natural Approach were more suitable on children and the beginners rather than the youth as they gave emphasize on meaning rather than form. Therefore, it is important for the educators to let the students explore both form and function (Chitravelu, 2005). According to Hawanum, there is another solution is to use activity which is meaningful or the integrated approach while teaching grammatical rules (Hawanum, 2004). In addition, Brown claims that meaningful learning as one of the cognitive principles of Second Language Learning as it "will lead toward better long-term retention than rote learning" (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, there is only one possible way and method to teach grammar effectively and interactively. Thus, we should conduct lesson by combining interesting methods and activities to draw students' attention and improve their grammar proficiency.

1.1 Teaching grammar through Board game as a tool

Most scholars and lecturers are willing to find out and apply modern approaches and activities to give lesson in efficient ways. Thus, many studies have been carried out throughout the world. Many researchers see teaching grammar through games in different ways. For instance,

"The more people play, the more positive emotions are generated, which in turn makes play easier and thus helps to generate even more positive emotion" (Schwarz, 2012). Besides, teaching grammar through games is a successful and effective approach" (L.Musilova, 2010). Scholars and educators assume that the students are tired of the rules and grammar vocabulary that are complicated and hard to master, "meta language" (Gribbin, 1996)

Intrinsic motivation is an internal drive that explains the great influence of using games in grammar classes. If the games are applied properly, students will be able to learn while they are playing. (Vernon, 2009). Furthermore students will be able to build their sense of control and at the same time enhance their self-confidence through games and electronic activities (Guerrero, 2001). "Pupils can learn English as twice as fast when they are excited about learning" (Vernon, 2009). Therefore, using appropriate games in classroom can be helpful for students to

enhance their grammar. According to researchers, game based lessons create a friendly and collaborative environment among students in learning grammar. "Offering students such options encourages them to embrace grammar mastery and build foundational grammar skills" (Thomas, 2005).

Here, we will take Board Games into consideration. One of efficient ways of teaching languages is using board game.

Huizinga.J states that one way of learning is through playing board game, which is different from free play in that players must follow game rules with opponent players. So in addition to skills, children can learn social skills how to interact with peers, how to follow game rules, and how to apprehend other's perspectives (Huizinga, 1950).

There are specific rules in applying board games. Thereof,

- Limit the amount of players that a game can have,

- Limit the number of spaces on a board, the number of possible moves

- Limits of what can be done in a particular move.

In the game, dice and/or playing cards are used as a main tool. Dice in a board game generally relates to the movement of the tokens on the board.

Generally, all board games are based on a turn and require two or more players, yet there is the option of other people joining the game. Board games have the important aspect that they are social in nature because they require players to interact meaningfully with other players. As we can see, board games have a particular set of criteria which separate them from other forms of games. The key component of a *classic* board game is that it is fun and that it teaches important early learning skills.

How does it work?

Kate Bain suggested that possible form, structure and steps of board game.

Step One: Students get into groups of 3 - 4.

Step Two: Students decide who will take the first turn. They will play in clockwise order thereafter.

Step Three: Students move their game pieces along the path according to the number indicated by the dice.

Step Four: Students do the task that they land on to the group.

When teachers use a Board Game, followings should be taken into consideration.

Be familiar with board games in your class.

• Reflect on what works and what doesn't

• Establish classroom routines for board games

• Model play to the whole class before dividing students into groups

• Monitor groups to answer questions and to ensure fairness

Teachers can also create their own Board Games with following steps.

1. Choose a theme

    • Grammar pattern or topic

2. Create questions, prompts or cues for each space

    • Add chance and surprise by adding prompts like "Lose a turn," "Go back # spaces," etc.)

3. Test the game before you play in class

4. Model for your students

5. Have students play the game

6. Revise if necessary(Kate Bain)
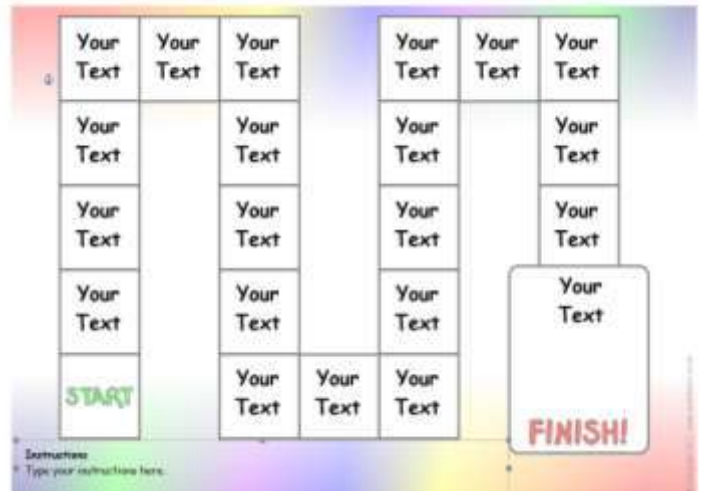
Students are able to create a Board Game as well.

1. Make sure students are familiar with classroom games

2. Give students a list of topics to choose from

3. Model or do a "think aloud" for creating your own board game

4. Students work in groups to create board games

5. Teacher corrects and grades board games

6. Students make changes and revisions as needed

7. Have a game day in class – students play each other's board games!

2. STUDY ON APPLYING BOARD GAME TO GRAMMAR LESSON

Before using the game, we conducted questionnaire about students purpose of learning grammar, how they feel about grammar as well as which way is the most efficient for students to learn grammar. From the survey, most of the students said that grammar is "boring" and "though", commented that game and videos or movie are efficient way to learn grammar as well as their purpose of learning is to not only communicate with others but also write in English correctly. Then we looked for a way to teach grammar by motivating students, cooperating, communicating and easing student's fear and tension and found out that board game which is useful tool to solve these issues. After conducting 7 lessons using board game, most students assumed about the aspects of fun, participation and things that were lacking in their previous grammar lessons. For example: one of students wrote that "It's better than just memorizing grammar pattern and makes grammar more joyful". When we asked what they learned from the game, some students commented that they paid attention to grammar target of lesson, was easy to memorize grammar pattern and words or phrases as well as was involved in the lesson massively and effectively. For instance, one of our students said that we have a chance to learn and get new ideas from others' mistakes. In conclusion, it is obvious that feedback from students was positive for our strong belief that students can learn while having fun.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Board game is an essential teaching tool to create excitement in grammar lesson and it recommends students enjoyable and satisfied learning environment. Many positive consequences have been revealed after some functions were conducted in the classroom. In the case of using board game as the supplement, the students are interested in the grammar lesson. While students are playing the game, they are in a joyful surrounding and they pay attention to the game, not correctness of the linguistic elements. It will eliminate their fear about grammar so that students build their self-confidence. It helps them to learn new words and structure of sentences unconsciously. It is also essential for the lecturers not only to supervise students having poor knowledge on grammar but also assess student's ability and performance directly.

REFERENCES

[1] Brown, H. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

[2] Chitravelu. (2005). *ELT Methodology: Principles and Practice.* Shah Alam: Penerbit fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.

[3] Gribbin, B. (1996). TheRole of Generalization in studying Grammar and Usage. *English Journal*, 56.

[4] Guerrero, A. (2001). Technology Grabbing Bigger Role in Classrooms. *Knight Ridder Tribune News Service*.

[5] Hawanum, H. (2004). Using Simple Poems to Teach Grammar. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10(5). Retrieved from http://iteslj.Org/Techniques/Hussien Poems.html

[6] Huizinga, J. (1950). *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture.* Boston: Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

[7] Kate Bain. (n.d.). Fun with Grammar: Bringing Language Learning to Life through Games.

[8] L.Musilova. (2010). *http://is.muni.cz/.* Retrieved from http://is.muni.cz/th152741pedf/Grammar Games_in ELT.pdf

[9] Schwarz, R. (2012). *We're No Fun Anymore.* New York: Routledge Taylor&Francis Group.

[10] Thomas. (2005). Fun wuth Fundamentals: Games and Electronic Activities to Reinforce Grammar in the College Writing Classroom. *Proquest Education*. Vernon, S. (2009, May 17). Retrieved from http://www.teachingenglishgames.com/4-12.htm

AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY

Sainzaya Sumiya having bachelor's degree in Education and master's degree in linguistics of Mongolian National University of Education and 5 years experiences of teaching English as a second language is at lecturer at Mandakh University.

Tumurbat Oyun-Erdene having bachelor's degree in Education and master's degree in linguistics of Mongolian National University of Education and 7 years experiences of teaching English as a second language is at lecturer at Mandakh University.

Namuun Sergelen having bachelor's and master's degree in Business Administration at Mandakh University and 7 years experiences of teaching English as a second language is at lecturer at Mandakh University.