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Game Based Activities:
Teaching of Grammar to the Technical Students

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Abstract

English is the language of communication, so to speak. Use of English is considered as a mark of greatness and so all people aspire to speak English. For many second language learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and possessing knowledge on grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on

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which learners can build their knowledge and use the language effortlessly. To show students that learning grammar could be fun and interesting, different activities like games should be used to teach English. The teaching of "grammar" through different activities like games is better than teaching grammar as a formal system that includes mere exercises in the textbook. Through the process of teaching grammar through game-based activities, one shall see many positive results. The paper aims and attempts to improve students' sentence constructing, writing without grammatical errors and other such language skills and abilities through game based activities.

Keywords: Learning Grammar, Teaching Grammar, Game-based Activities

Introduction

English as a foreign language has always occupied a unique position in the educational system. It continues to be a major language having a prestigious position in society. English was retained for various reasons, as it had been a medium of instruction, the language of administration and law and the main vehicle to communicate with the rulers. The importance of teaching English in India as a modern foreign language lies in its international importance. English claims to be the first rate international language. And its knowledge promotes international understanding. By extending the radius of a person's horizon, it overcomes his prejudices, intolerance, and narrow mindedness. Thus, it is very helpful in fostering true internationalism and cooperation among the nations of the world. And the educational English is important for statesmen, politicians, scientists, doctors, engineers, educationists, businessmen and research workers.

Language Skills

Acquiring language skills is based on acquiring four main skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Listening and reading may be termed as passive or receptive or recognition skills. Speaking and writing are termed as active or productive skills. The former two skills are also known as skills of comprehension and the latter are termed as skills of expression. A good teacher will concentrate on imparting all the four skills.

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Listening is the fundamental skill of all the four skills. To listen means to pay attention to what is said. It is the beginning of the learning process. Listening is the first and foremost principle in language learning. Speaking skill is the basis for a good learning of the language. Speech precedes reading. Listening and speaking lay the very foundation for learning a foreign language. Listening to speak a language is the shortest road to learn, to read and write it. Reading is a process of looking at a written symbol and translating it into a sound. Skimming and scanning are the advanced skills of reading. Good reading depends upon a lot of practice of listening and speaking. Writing is putting speech in the form of letters. Through writing, a person can convey his/her thoughts to others. Teaching of writing is a complex process involving many of ideas being transformed into meaningful sequences and the expressing of thoughts and feelings with confidence and cause.

Problems in Language Learning

Nowadays, English communication is a huge problem for the students. The students treat English as a subject and not as a language. They give less importance to the English language when compared to the other major subjects which they feel to be very important. So, the problem can be solved by developing their interest in learning the language. The teacher can impart the grammar by using game based activities and situations where the students can develop their skills, especially speaking and writing which are needed for communication. "We speak in sentences, not in words or in parts of words. Sentences are made up of patterns of arrangement of words, words, stress, intonation and terminal borders". (Lado 142) This way of learning can help the students to learn and use the correct grammatical structure to show their communication skills during interviews. These are the interviews through which students can get jobs easily in the future, if they can begin to communicate in English fluently with the knowledge of good vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Situational Language Teaching

The aim of situational approach to language teaching is to teach practical command of the four basic skills of language, the goal it shares with most methods of language teaching. But skills are approached through structure. Through situation, concrete objects, pictures, and flash, together with actions and gestures can be used to demonstrate the meaning of new

language items. The form of new word and sentence pattern is demonstrated through examples and not through grammatical explanation or description. It is made clear visually (with object, picture, action, and mime). Practical techniques employed generally consist of guided repetition and substitution activities, including chorus repetition and drills.

Role of Games in Language Teaching

Games can help and encourage many students to sustain interest and work. In the whole process of teaching and learning through games, the students can take part widely and open-mindedly. To win the games each student or group should competitively answer the questions addressed top them by the teacher or other students or groups. Teaching grammar is clearly more than just presenting rules. It also includes a decision that words should teach the basics of how frequently they are used by the speakers of the language. Games are helpful for both teachers and students. The games relieve the students and the teachers from the burdensome routine. Grammar games are generally engaged in as a source of entertainment, but have been found to serve an educational purpose as well.

Games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving of one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a change to use the language freely and as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They can do serve as a diagnostic tool for the teacher, who can note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action (Hadfield 24).

Games can maintain students' motivation in grammar learning because they are amusing and interesting. In the relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better. Students tend to learn and retain grammar rules better when it is applied in a relaxed environment through games. Especially, labelling and displaying pictures depicting grammar is helpful, especially with beginners. Games can provide students with intensive and meaningful practice of language. "In fact most vocabulary games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms" (Lee 78).

But commonly and usually, the way of teaching makes the students lazy and bored. The teacher needs something different to make students interested because they get bored

easily. Therefore, a teacher needs something interesting which can help motivate them. It is based on the characteristics and attitudes of the students, since they are curious and often seek something to make sure that the teacher notices them and shows appreciation for what they are doing. So, to motivate them teacher needs something new that can stimulate their curiosity. A current analysis on communication in teaching language reveals that using games appears to hold a solution for many teachers.

Advantages of Games in Language Teaching

The advantage of using games in teaching is that students are interested in learning the material; they pay more attention to the given lesson. This condition gives a good chance for both the teacher and the students to introduce and learn. When the researcher delivered the material, the students understood what they learnt on that day. Games gave them more chance to understand the grammar and its function, because through playing games students grasp new words on their own.

Games and problem solving are task based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech. They are good examples of most preferable communication activities. The researcher argues that vocabulary games help students not only to gain knowledge, but also to apply and use that in mastering a language.

Games have the advantage of allowing the students to practice and internalize grammar and structure extensively. Students can do this because students are often more motivated to play games than they are to do desk work. Also, during the game, the students are focused in the activity and end up absorbing the language subconsciously. Use of games increases the cooperation and competition in the classroom. One can use games to add excitement through competition and games can create a longing among students to learn. Games motivate the students to learn a foreign language in a manner. Having such evidence, this paper recommends the wide use of games for grammar as a successful way of acquiring language competence.

Experimentation

The process of teaching grammar through game based activities consists of many steps. One is the motivating strategy that is done by greetings. In this part the researcher

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always began the lessons by greetings. It was used for students to use English greeting expressions. The researcher included games to warm up the students to learn grammar. Here the researcher applied strategies to gain the students' attention.

Researcher was giving some clues which are related to the material and made students to guess the place; and the researcher also included presentation strategy. In this step, the researcher started to give explanation about the material. Researcher introduced materials to the students through games. For these games researcher gave rules of games, but the students learnt the rules of both grammar and games.

Findings

For many students, learning grammar is a boring and a hard task. To show students that learning grammar could be fun and interesting, different activities like games should be used to teach English. The teaching "grammar" through different activities like games is better than teaching grammar as a formal system through striking exercise in the textbook.

Role of Teacher

Teacher's function is threefold. In the presentation stage of the lesson, the teacher serves as a model setting up the situations in which the need for the target structure is created and modify the new structure for students to repeat. Then the teacher is required to be a skilful manipulator using questions, commands, and other uses to elicit the correct sentence from the learners.

During the practice section students are given more of an opportunity to use the language in less control situation, but the teacher is always on the lookout for grammatical and structural errors that can form the basis of subsequent lesson organizing review and this becomes a primary task for the teacher. Teacher is essential to the success of the method, since the text book is only able to describe activity for the teacher to carry out in the class.

Limitations of Games in Language Teaching

Grammar teaching through games was interesting and made students active but they were too noisy and they disturbed neighbouring classes. Students actively participated in games but this activity made them to change their place often. Games always create some kind of competition between two groups. Those competitions create some kind of argument

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between them instead of playing games they started to fight each other so it breaks the unity and friendliness. The researchers took more time to explain the games than explaining grammar and its function. So teaching grammar through games needs more time because there are a lot of rules to learn. These were a few disadvantages of the method.

Conclusion

Stern points out, "The learner of a second language should be able to use it as efficiently as they use their first language" (Sharma 30). This should be our goal, but it will take a lot of effort on the part of the teachers and students to achieve this goal. This research is based on the notion that although game means fun, it also has its educational value. And for this reason it is introduced in the language classes. Through games the students can realize their own as well as their classmate's progress in learning language. This type of activity can be the perfect way for practice and learning a language, as it has included a variety of language sentences that student would later use in everyday situation. Consequently, a language game can be used for presentation, as a warm-up activity, for practicing and learning grammar, for improving language skills or simply as a break from drilling and finally a reward.

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