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NEW VISTAS IN ELT:  
EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR EMPLOYMENT  

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Role of Commutainment Games in an ESL Classroom  

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Abstract  

Communication plays an important role in everyone’s life. Man, being a social animal, cannot live without communicating or being communicated to. An effective communicator is the one who communicates his/her message in a very clear and effective manner and tastes success in his/her intention of communicating the message to the receiver of the message. Those who have fairly good communication skills possess these...
five Cs: Confidence, Commitment, Conviction, Courage and Clarity. Such persons demonstrate their ability to speak; they express their views confidently, courageously and clearly; their desire to speak English well exhibit their conviction and commitment; their utterances reveal their clarity of thought and clarity of expression.

The fact that even students pursuing their studies at the university level do not have adequate English communication skills in spite of having learnt the language for more than a decade makes ELT professionals raise a number of questions related to the gap between the training imparted by teachers/trainers and skills learned, or proficiency demonstrated by students. A lot of changes have taken place in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The traditional way of teaching the language took into consideration only the intellectual aspect. Language is not merely an intellectual matter. A human is a bundle of emotions and therefore, this aspect also should be taken into consideration while teaching a language to learners. There is a need to entertain the learner to enhance learning. Communication plus entertainment gives you the word, Commutainment. This paper will show how commutainment is the one thing that can improve the students’ learning the second language, English very well.

Keywords: Communication Skills, English Language Teaching, Commutainment, Entertainment

Commutainment Activities
‘Commutainment’ is a portmanteau word which combines ‘communication’ and ‘entertainment’. It refines the meaning further as “communication through entertainment”. Commutaining implies facilitating communication through entertainment. Commutainment activities can be interchanged with the terms communication games and language games. Such activities, if properly planned, prepared, practiced and executed, can provide fun, pleasure and entertainment and can be used to improve the communication/language skills of learners. The different ways of improving the students through Commutainment Games are:
• Communication games which are participatory in nature can create plenty of opportunities for learners to interact with one another.
• Communication games improve students’ fluency in the target language and enable them to develop their spontaneity and creativity. Communication games help teachers to teach the target language in a meaningful manner and the use the language in the proper context.
• Communication games are very useful in building up relationships within the group. The members of the group come closer to one another. Linguistically disadvantaged students are encouraged by the advantaged ones to speak freely.

Types of Commutainment Activities

There are different types of Commutainment Activities that an ELT teacher can use in the English as a Second Language (ESL) class room. I used the following activities in the class to develop students’ communication skills. They are

- Role-plays
- Language Jokes
- Funny Anecdotes
- Problem-Solving Games
- Grammatical Puzzles

Merits of Language Games in an ESL Class room

English Language Learning is an intricate process. Efforts are required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest, work and also facilitate the ELT teacher to develop the skills of the learners. Games also help the ELT teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part in these games; in order to do so, they must understand what others are saying or have written and they must speak or write, in order to express their own point of view or give information.

The need for meaningful teaching in English Language Learning has been accepted some years ago. A useful interpretation of ‘meaningful teaching’ is that the learners respond to the content in a definite way. If they are amused, angered, intrigued or surprised the content
is clearly meaningful to them. Thus the meaning of the language the learners listen to, read, speak and write will be more vividly experienced and, therefore, better remembered through Commutainment Games and activities. It is accepted widely that Commutainment Games can provide intense and meaningful practice of the English language and the learners must be regarded as central to a teacher's repertoire in this method.

There is a common agreement that all learning should be serious and solemn in nature and if one is having fun with much amusement and laughter, then it is not really learning. This is a misconception. It is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time. One of the best ways of doing this is through games. In an ELT class room a language teacher can do wonders through Commutainment Games.

There are many advantages of using Commutainment Games in the ELT classroom. They are

- These games can break the usual routine of the language class.
- They are motivating and challenging to the learners.
- Commutainment Games help the learners to make and sustain the effort of learning the language.
- These Games provide language practice in the various skills - (LSRW)
  Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
- They encourage the Learners to interact and communicate to the teacher easily.
- They create a meaningful context for language use in the ESL class room environment.

Various Occasions for Using Commutainment Games in an ESL Classroom

Games are often used as short warm-up activities or when there is some time left at the end of a lesson. Yet, as Lee, an educationalist observes, a game should not be regarded as a marginal activity filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do” (1979:3). Games ought to be at the heart of teaching foreign languages. Commutainment games can be used at all stages of the lesson, provided that they are suitable and carefully chosen.

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Games also lend themselves well to revision exercises and help the learners to recall the material in a pleasant and entertaining way. All authors referred to in this article agree that even if games resulted only in noise and entertained students, they are still worth paying attention to and implementing in the classroom since they motivate learners, promote communicative competence, and generate fluency.

**Reasons for Using Commutainment Games in an ESL Classroom**

- Commutainment Games are filled with fun and the learners like to play them. Through games they experiment, discover, and interact with others and with their environment.
- These games add variation to a lesson and increase motivation by providing a plausible incentive to use the target language. For many learners between four and twelve years old, especially the youngest, language learning will not be the key motivational factor. Games can provide this stimulus.
- The game context makes the foreign language immediately familiar to the learners. It brings the target language into the life situation.
- The game makes the reasons for speaking possible even to the hesitant learner.
- Through Commutainment Games, the learners can learn English as they learn their mother tongue without being aware of learning; thus without any stress, they will be able to learn a lot.
- Even introvert learners can participate positively.

**Ways of Choosing Commutainment Games for the Learners**

- A game must be more than just fun.
- A game should involve "friendly" competition.
- A game should keep all of the learners involved with much interest.
- A game should encourage students to focus on the use of language, rather than on the language itself.
- A game should give a chance for the learners to learn, practice, or review specific language material.
Reimbursement of Commutainment Games

Affective
- lowers affective filter
- encourages creative and spontaneous use of the language
- promotes communicative competence
- motivates the learners
- provides fun and interest

Cognitive
- reinforces
- reviews and extends
- focuses on grammar communicatively

Class Dynamics
- student centered activities
- The teacher acts only as facilitator
- builds class cohesion
- fosters whole class participation
- promotes a healthy competition

Adaptability
- easily adjusted for age, level, and interests
- utilizes all four skills- LSRW
- requires minimum preparation after development

Examples for Commutainment Games in the English Language

A) Expanding & summarizing sentences
Take a sentence from the course book and summarize it by removing words, for example,

herbivorous animals like cows, buffaloes and elephants depend directly on plants.
up the summarized sentence and the missing words (jumbled up) and ask the learners to complete the sentence with the removed words. Then give the learners a complete sentence and ask them to summarize it by crossing out the words that are not necessary.

B) One becomes 2
Write up a sentence: It happened a week ago. Ask the learners to add two words to make a new sentence, but to keep the order of the original words / sentences. They can make two sentences rather than one they want. For example: It happened more than a week ago. Or - It happened. They knew it was a week ago.

C) Disappearing sentences
Write up a paragraph on the board. Explain that you want Ps to remove words and reduce the paragraph to one word. They can remove 1, 2 or 3 consecutive words. Each time the paragraph should make sense and be grammatically correct, although the meaning can change.

D) Quiz Buzz
In any shape or form the quiz can be conducted. It can be written by the teacher and be about language or written by the students practicing a language point. I quite often use quiz to practice the passive form.

E) 3 from 6 - Grammar Quiz
Prepare a set of six questions on a grammar area that needs reviewing. Put the learners in groups. Read out the questions and get the Ps to choose three they want to answer. Read again and ask them to answer them. Tell the group how many they got right, 2 out of 3. See which groups can get the most correct.
Example: I'm reading a book. What's the tense?
What's the past participle of sing?
I seed you yesterday. Right or wrong?
What the difference is between lend and borrow?
What does put off mean?
What's the missing word? How old .............you?
**F) Mind Reading**

Ask each learner to draw something, for example, a boy kicking football, but omitting the ball. Exchange their drawing with a partner and complete each other’s drawing without communicating.

Next, give a topic. Ask them to write a sentence on the topic and then tear off the last two or three words. Exchange sentences with their partner and then try to complete their partner's sentence.

**G) Grammar Puzzle**

Ask the learners to write a sentence of about 8 - 12 words. Then tear the sentence up so each word is on one piece of paper. Mix up the pieces of paper, pass to a partner and get them to put the words in the correct order. To make it slightly harder you could ask them to write an extra word that doesn't fit into their sentence.

**H) Come and Sit Next to Me**

Sit in a circle, but with an empty seat next to you (to the left). Point to one of the learners and say "Come and sit next to me as your hair is longer than mine". They sit next to you leaving an empty chair. Person to the right must invite someone else in the circle to come and sit next to them by making a sentence using a comparative adjective (can also be done: using statements such as "if you've eaten pizza."

**I) Alphabet Poem**

Give each pair of students a letter or letters of the alphabet. For each letter they must write 2 nouns, a verb, an adjective and an **adverb** (or a variation of these). Pass on these words to another pair of students who must write a sentence using all those words. The sentence needn't make too much sense! The end result is a collective poem which is organized according to the alphabet.

**J) Real Time**

Arrange a circle of 12 chairs. Put a coat (or something) over the back of one chart, to show the position of 12. Ask two of them to sit in a chair. The shorter of the two is the hour hand and the longer shows the minutes. Ask one of them on the outside to say a time i.e. half past eight and the two hands go and sit in the right place. Repeat but also use phrases such as just after, a few minutes before, tea time, break time,
coffee time, closing time, time to wake up, bed time and so on.

II) Dictation

Perhaps this is worth reminding them. The ones my students enjoy the most are running dictation and the whistle gap dictation. They find dictoglosses challenging and absorbing, but I would recommend doing one a term at most. The word order dictation is as follows:

Dictate jumbled sentences. Ask the learners to work in pairs and rewrite the sentence in the jumble.

Example: name what your is?

Conclusion

The English language plays an important role in the career advancement of millions of people in the Indian sub-continent. It is an inevitable tool for those who aim at establishing a wide contact in the global village and climbing up the ladder of success. It is the responsibility of teachers of English to teach the language effectively. English as a second language can be taught and learnt in an interesting and at the same time effective manner through various Commutainment Activities. An ELT teacher who does not laugh and allow their students to laugh in the English class cannot be a successful teacher of the English Language.

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