

Using Educational Games and Songs in Teaching English Grammar¹

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ABSTRACT

Digital games and using songs play a significant role in the life of the new generation. Although there are many criticisms, many studies focus on the importance of digital games and using songs in improving the learner's vocabulary in the target language. Researchers have begun conducting several types of research on how using games in the class can foster vocabulary learning. This paper aims to investigate the impacts of digital games on children's vocabulary learning depending on a literature review.

Many studies focus on the impacts of digital games on different aspects of education. This conceptual paper aims to shed light on some games' and songs' benefits, and challenges which educators and children face in the use of digital games. The findings of this paper show that Games and songs are used not only for making children successful in EFL classes but more importantly, for motivating them and increasing the cooperation among children. Besides, the findings state that there are advantages as well as disadvantages in using games for learning English vocabulary. The research includes four sections, concluding remarks with references.

SECTION ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANT

Introductory Note

This section will include the Importance of the Study and its significance, the aims, limits, and definitions of the basic terms.

The Importance of the Study

The main problem is that many studies have emphasized that educational games have positive impacts in teaching English grammar, especially on children. Digital games and songs provide an actual learning environment in which students collaborate. Huyen and Nga (2003) emphasized the role of games and songs by giving children a chance to apply English grammar in its real usage in their class. Similarly, Kalaycioglu (2011) stressed the importance of digital games and songs, as these games and songs make the students the center of activities in the class. That is why games and songs can be altered in line with children's instructional goals, their age as well as their level.

Providing multimedia contexts is available by using games and songs so that children are engaged in learning vocabulary. Thus, they are encouraged to interact with other classmates and acquire more knowledge and information about English grammar. There are other benefits of games and songs in different instructional aspects. Digital games help young learners to learn vocabulary with more motivation than traditional teaching ways. In other ways, they will be motivated while learning English grammar. Children can develop their English by using these games in social contexts. The use of games and songs in the classroom gives children equal chances to engage in different activities. Particularly, the students, who have shyness and weakness in the English language can be converted into active elements in their participation and interaction by using games and songs. Digital games work as suitable means for learning vocabulary as it provides a meaningful context for learning vocabulary as well as adds entertainment to the classroom. Using games and songs in education makes the feeling of fear and anxiety diminish. Digital games can promote positive impacts on children. Therefore, scholars and teachers pay attention to the integration of games in the English teaching process. They assess the use of games and songs in activities related to different subjects and

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lessons. Teachers can use digital games and songs in many educational aspects including motivating children and offering supplementary and efficient tools. (Nga, 2003).

Aims

This research paper aims at answering the following questions:

1. To explore the prevailing intelligences and areas in EFL teaching and its complexities in teaching and learning the English language and the whole meaning and the details about the Importance of using educational games and songs in teaching English grammar.
2. To investigate how and why music can be used in a foreign language classroom to assist students attain a variety of learning goals, such as improved grammar.
3. To determine the existence of the positive relationship between multiple intelligences of learners and pedagogy through the usage of these educational games and songs.

Limits

The research paper was conducted for Iraqi schools for secondary pupils females in the second semester pupils in the morning studying. The current research paper is a modern one, written in 2022_2023.

Value

This research paper has a great value for both students and teachers. It measures the benefits behind the usage of the games and songs in teaching English grammar, as well as, the quantity of the impact behind using them on the students and the whole procedures about how the teacher can use them in the classroom and how the pupils will deal with this entertaining educational aid.

Definition of Basic Terms

The most important terms in this study are:

A. Educational Games

Educational games are those designed to teach people about a specific subject or a specific skill. They are made predominantly for kids and students of all ages, and can be used both inside the classroom and out. Educational games are a subset of serious gaming. (Nico, 2021).

B. Educational Songs

Educational songs are fields of practice in which educators are trained for careers as elementary or secondary music teachers, school or music conservatory ensemble directors. Music education is also a research area in which scholars do original research on ways of teaching and learning music. (Gray and Blakeley, 2022).

C. Teaching English

Teaching English is the practice and theory of learning and teaching English for the benefit of people whose first language is not English. (Harper, 2019).

D. Grammar

Grammar is the whole system and structure of a language or of languages in general, usually taken as consisting of syntax and morphology (including inflections) and sometimes also phonology and semantics. (Joseph, 2022).

SECTION TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RELATED PREVIOUS STUDIES

Introductory Notes

This section will cover all the information and give a clear description about Using Educational Games and Songs in Teaching English Grammar.

Reasons for Using Games and Songs

According to Kuśnierek, A. (2016), there are cognitive and affective reasons for using music and games in the classroom. Affective reasons are connected with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which gives an explanation why some learners learn and others do not. According to Saricoban and Metin (2000) songs and games can improve the four skill areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The crucial thing is that students need to develop a positive attitude towards learning.

According to Krashen, "for effective learning the effective filter must be weak. A weak affective filter means that a positive attitude to learning is present." Music and games can create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and thus can lower the affective filter. The belief that songs and games help and improve the atmosphere in the classroom and help develop language skills.

Furthermore there are eight reasons for the use of songs and games in teaching English grammar, which they are:

1. To present a topic, new vocabulary or a language point.
2. To practice lexis.
3. As a material for extensive and intensive listening.
4. To focus on frequent learner errors in a more indirect way.
5. For stimulating discussions about feelings and attitudes.
6. Provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere.
7. To bring variety and fun to learning.
8. To encourage the use of imagination and creativity during foreign language lessons. (Metin, 2000).

Using songs can lead to automatic recognition and use of language patterns. The automatic process in general is fast, unstoppable, and occurs without the expense of attention. Songs can help automatize the language improvement process.

Essentially, the students should be placed in an environment in which it is possible to use the target language in a communicative way. (Beglari and Hunt, 2000).

Advantages of Using Games and Songs in Teaching English

Teachers often express mixed opinions on using music and games in teaching English grammar. Few teachers consider that using music for teaching English can make the learning environment a little overwhelmed and there is a possibility that complex lyrics would add difficulty and confusion rather than helping learners to understand language. (Kumar, 2020).

However, the other group of teachers holds an opinion of the positive impact of music and games in class only for children with musical intelligence. According to these teachers, music is only useful in classrooms for a particular group of musically exceptional learners. There is no doubt that students with superior musical cognitivism will be able to memorize and remember new words faster than those who do not have exceptional musical intelligence, but it cannot be assumed that there will be zero benefits of using music and games in the classroom for learners without any musical intelligence. (Ajmal, 2020).

Suggestions for Using Music and Games in Teaching English

Hong (2002) gives some suggestions to teachers about using games and songs for teaching young learners by claiming that:

- a. When giving instructions to beginners, a few words in the mother tongue would be the quickest way to make everything clear. More English exposure is needed at a later stage.

- b. Games and songs are best set up by demonstration rather than by lengthy explanation.
- c. It is very important not to play a game for too long. Students will begin to lose interest in listening to the songs also. It is best to stop a game at its peak.

Teaching young learners is a very demanding issue that needs consideration. The teacher should come up with the most suitable activities and tasks to teach young learners. As such, games are one of the best ways to direct young learners' energy not only to grammar learning, but also to many skills and areas of the language. However, it should be taken into consideration that as they are young learners, teaching them through games and songs requires special effort from the teacher. Hence, two factors, namely, deciding which game to use and deciding the time to use games need to be explained. (.Prensky, 2001).

Songs and Games as a Solution to Educational Problems

As the aforementioned, songs and games bring a lot of benefits to the teaching of a foreign language, expands the horizons of students, helps to increase vocabulary, and has a positive effect on group dynamics. When English is not your first language, teaching it is difficult. On the other hand, as a person who also had to learn English as a foreign language, I understand what difficulties students may encounter when studying it, and I find it an interesting task. Teaching English to EFL children would often result in the lesson plan collapsing for various reasons. In such cases, it was necessary to improvise.

Often, songs and games came to the rescue. In the process of working with children, songs and games became an effective and convenient educational tool. (Saricoban and Martin, 2001).

Songs and games perform a socio-psychological function, strengthening the group's dynamics. In this case, when meeting new students, it is better to know which songs and games they have familiarity with and use that as a foundation.

During the stage of students' establishing a relationship with a new foreign teacher, the use of music and songs helps to promote good relations among the teacher and students rapidly. At this stage the simpler and shorter the songs and games are the more comfortable that the students feel. (Bekiri, 2003).

Challenges for Using Games and Songs in Teaching English

There have been numerous attempts to integrate games into second language pedagogy, but to date few have reported on the successful implementation of games within actual teaching contexts. Similarly, discussions regarding the logistics of using games in classrooms, assessment criteria or teacher roles in such contexts are often missing. There are a number of practical and pedagogical obstacles in the way of incorporating gaming into instructed language learning. Among those issues are: what kind of games to choose or to create, how to find the opportunities for language learning within game play, and how to integrate game play and its associated activities into the curriculum. (Farber, 2020: 4).

Songs may both be used for the presentation or the practice phase of the grammar lesson. They may encourage extensive and intensive listening, and inspire creativity and use of imagination in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. While selecting a song the teacher should take the age, interests of the learners and the language being used in the song into consideration. To enhance learner commitment, it is also beneficial to allow learners to take part in the selection of the songs. (Graham, 1993).

The Importance of Using Songs and Games in Construction New Grammatical Words

When students are learning a topic related to morning or daily routine, they may have difficulty memorizing a large number of words and expressions. Having a large educational load, students may experience pressure or boredom. To better remember words from the topics related to morning or daily routine, a very well-suited song is *Get out of bed*. These songs and games can be performed very slowly at first, performing the actions corresponding to the words of the song. (Mahali, 2016).

Research has shown that games are essential for healthy development in early childhood and beyond. Play lets children practice what they know, and also what they don't. It allows them to experiment through trial and error, find solutions to problems, work out the best strategies, and build new confidence and skills. (Speh,2011).

Examples for Using Games and Songs in Teaching English

1_ For primary students, the best songs would be those that are either familiar to the children or those, though maybe not familiar, which have an international nature, such as (Old MacDonald). Since there is not a strict teaching procedure, the teacher can mainly concentrate on what to teach rather than on how to teach.

2_ For instance, while teaching them individual letter sounds or spelling the words, the traditional camp song 'Bingo', or while teaching them counting 'Johnny Works with One Hammer' will be useful. For teenagers or adults in the intermediate or advanced level, it is better to use more meaningful or popular songs, which not only review or introduce grammar points but also reflect cultural aspects.

3_ The game can be a listening game to allow the students to repeatedly hear a new grammatical structure in use, or it can be a speaking game to allow practice of the grammar once it has been absorbed through listening beforehand. There are degrees of difficulty with speaking games from basic repetition in a fun context to more creative sentence creation for revision or more advanced practice once the basics have been mastered.

4_ The teacher should lead the children through this progression so that the game at hand is always well within the grasp of the students. This makes games fun rather than laborious. (Murphey, 1999).

RELATED PREVIOUS STUDIES

1. There are previous studies discussing Using Games and Songs in Teaching English Grammar. One of these studies conducted by Cameron (2001) stated in using songs in teaching English grammar that songs and music can be proven to be an effective listening activity that has multiple benefits to offer. Particularly in the case of young and elementary learners, music has been used widely to teach important concepts in a fun way by second language teachers. Teachers are generally supportive of the use of music in foreign language (FL) classrooms. Teachers rarely include music into their classes, despite a generally positive opinion regarding the use of music in the foreign language classroom among students .
2. Another study conducted by Koh and Kin (2011) shows that games as an influential innovative means to enhance children's English learning in the knowledge age. Nowadays, scholars and teachers have recognized the use of games as it helps in facilitating English language learning. So, they have started investigating better ways to integrate games into the classroom. They assess the use of games in activities related to different subjects and lessons. Teachers can use digital games in many educational aspects including children's motivating and offering supplementary and efficient tools.
3. The last study conducted by Al_ noori (2023) shows using the songs and games in the teaching process makes the pupils become more interactive and active during the lesson.

SECTION THREE

Introductory Note

This section includes Experimental Design, questionnaire and 8 Items for the questionnaire design and the experience of the Iraqi teacher.

Experimental Design

The researcher checks previous studies before writing the questionnaire items. According to the information the questionnaire items were designed. The questionnaire designed online by using google forms and published online for the students in social media apps especially, Telegram. The questionnaire items are a collection of questions designed to investigate the students' preferences and opinions about Using Songs and Games in Teaching English.

Questionnaire

The researcher has designed a questionnaire which consists of 8 items including the gender (males). 8 items see Appendix A:

Choose your gender:

- Male

Grade:

- First grade
- Second grade
- Third grade
- Fourth grade
- Fifth grade
- Sixth grade

City

- Baghdad
- Others

Choose your preferred answer carefully:

1_ My teacher uses songs and games in my English classes on many occasions.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

2_ As a pupil, Songs and games stimulate you to learn real English.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

3_ The teacher uses songs and games to introduce the theme.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

4_ The teacher uses authentic English songs and games.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

5_ The teacher uses different activities when using songs and games .

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

6_Using songs and games is very flexible.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

7_ The teacher enjoys using songs and games in my English classes as a warm up activity.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

8_ The teacher uses educational songs and games that suit your level, needs, and interest.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Neutral

The Experience of the Iraqi Teacher Through Using Educational Games and Songs in Teaching English

First, the Iraqi teacher when he enters, he and the students notice how different this room is compared with all the other classrooms we have been in so far.

Everything is bright and colorful. 'First, you will all get to pick new English names. It will be fun,' she says. Besides, she tells them, they will need new identities (ones they can play with) to go along with this new experience. She shows the class a poster with different English names printed in color in the Roman alphabet. (Larsen-Freeman, 1998).

Next, the teacher greets the students, using their new names and asks them a few yes/no questions in English about their new occupation. Next the teacher announces to the class that they will be beginning a new adventure. She distributes a 20-page handout. The handout contains a lengthy dialogue entitled 'To want to is to be able to,' which the teacher translates into Arabic. Partly in Arabic, partly in English, and partly through pantomime, the teacher outlines the story in the dialogue. (Schmitt and Rodgers, 2019).

Then, the teacher puts on some music from Mozart's Violin Concerto in A. After a couple of minutes, in a quiet voice she begins to read the text. Her reading appears to be molded by the music as she varies her intonation and keeps rhythm with the music. **Finally**, after the song, the teacher has the students stand up and get in a circle. She takes out a medium-sized soft ball. She throws the ball to one student and, while she is throwing it, she asks him what his name is in English. He catches the ball as he says, 'My name is Richard.' She indicates that he is to throw the ball to another student while posing a question to him. Richard asks, 'What do you do?' The teacher corrects in a very soft voice saying 'What do you do?' The student replies, 'I am a conductor.' **The game** continues on in this manner with the students posing questions to one another as they throw the ball. (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011).

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS ANALYSIS**Introductory Notes**

In this section, the researcher will analyze the results of the questionnaire.

The Statistical Results for the Questionnaire

The participants were quite active with the researcher, and the majority of the kids were very interactive and completed the questionnaire correctly. The total number of participants according to their gender was 222. The analysis of the data collected from the student will be presented as the table below:

| The Questions | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
|----------------------|-------|----------|---------|
| The first question | 57.1% | 19% | 23.8% |
| The second question | 42.9% | 28.6% | 28.6% |
| The third question | 54.8% | 16.7% | 28.6% |
| The fourth question | 42.9% | 28.6% | 28.6% |
| The fifth question | 47.6% | 26.2% | 26.2% |
| The sixth question | 50.8% | 34.9% | 14.3% |
| The seventh question | 50.9% | 32.7% | 16.4% |
| The eighth question | 28.9% | 33.3% | 37.7% |

From the results above, it's noticeably that the pupils have proved that songs and games are valuable and efficient in the students' way of learning. Today parents are becoming more and more conscious that students need to work in a relaxed environment. In this respect, it will be very helpful for parents who can afford materials for his students because songs and games are not just for fun and nice times; they develop the students' intelligence.

CONCLUSION

This research had arrived to some results, recommendations, and concluding remarks, can be listed as follow:

It is clear that the promotion of the English language can be improved in most secondary schools. There are English clubs in which songs and games are performed. Such activities provide meaningful and enjoyable language practice and they encourage the learners to explore the wonderful world of English language through songs and games. Basically, games are one of the fundamental learning activities and not only in studying foreign languages.

To sum up, Classes for adults which contain games and competitions, elements of team guessing are so refreshing and best to practice skills of communicating. Besides, songs and games give students a lot of positive emotions and this is also a basic tool in studies. Moreover it encourages their participation.

We must admit in this respect that well-chosen songs and games are really invaluable as they give the students the opportunities to practice language skills. Today it is shown that songs and games in English Language Teaching are highly motivating and play a paramount role as they can be used to give practice in all language skills and be used to practice many types of real life communication.

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Appendix A

The model below as it will be shown in table is the questionnaire that it will be given to the pupils in order to choose the best option according their attitudes and preferences:

| | | | |
|--|-------|----------|---------|
| 1_ My teacher uses songs and games in my English classes on many occasions. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 2_ As a pupil, Songs and games stimulate you to learn real English. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 3_ The teacher uses songs and games to introduce the theme. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 4_ The teacher uses authentic English songs and games. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 5_ The teacher uses different activities when using songs and games . | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 6_ Using songs and games is very flexible. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 7_ The teacher enjoys using songs and games in my English classes as a warmup activity. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
| 8_ The teacher uses educational songs and games that suit your level, needs, and interest. | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |