RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Enhancing English Language Skills among Secondary Level Students of Mahathma Jyothibhapule Telangana BC Residential Schools Through Language Games: A Study

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Mallaiah Odela

Abstract

Language games play important role in teaching English language. English language is compulsory for higher education and designated employment. Due to heavy demand for English, all educational institutions made it core subject across the globe. Since MJPTBCWR School students are different from other general schools regarding their background, demographic details and schema, they need more focus on language acquisition. In order to teach English language effectively, the English teachers who work with MJPTBCWR Schools need special attention. If the teaching in these schools is combined with creative and innovative language games, their teaching will bring fruitful results. The present paper tries to explain few innovative language games to be incorporated in regular teaching by analysing two units from IX Standard Textbook of Telangana for finding the scope to introduce language games.

Key words: English Language, games, word association, story chain and taboo.

There are number of methods and techniques evolved by the linguists for the effective English language teaching in ESL classroom. Keeping in view the ever-growing demand for English language in every aspect of life, learning English has been the primary objective of every student to get better employment and higher education opportunities. English is widely recognized language across the globe and to improve English language skills among the learners, teachers are trying to introduce novel and creative methodologies to teach English language time to time based on the skills and knowledge of the students. However, students' interest and active engagement play crucial role in learning English language. As it well quoted by Nunan, "Successful language learning involves active engagement and interaction with the language." (Nunan 2003, p. 25).

If students are not active during the class, they will not show any interest in learning the language. In such contexts language games are very useful to create interest among students and to enhance language skills among students. When compared to the students of general schools, MJPTBCWR School students are different in many aspects. Most of these students are first generation students. Their demographic details and background reveal that they require interesting class for the development of English language skills unlike chalk and talk method. Students learn more and effective acquisition takes place if language games are introduced in English classroom. According to Howard Gardner, the teaching must be different and innovative based on the differences prevailed among students. "Reading and writing are cultural inventions. They are not 'natural' skills. Therefore, different children may need different pathways to master them." (Gardner 2006, p. 81)

The present paper tries to explain about different language games to be introduced in secondary level class to enhance the language skills among students and to identify the areas to introduce language games in IX Class Textbook, "Our World Through English" published by SCERT, Telangana. To see the possibility of using the language games in

The reason behind selecting the MJPTBCWR School students and IX Class Textbook, "Our World Through English" published by SCERT, Telangana, is that the researcher has been associated with the MJPTBCWREIS for the past eight as teacher and administrator. His close observation of the students and experience in teaching IX Textbook for the students have made him chose those that level and that textbook.

With the incorporation of language games, the teachers can develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills among students without much effort. Language games generate interest among students and propel them towards playing. Though some games like riddles, grids and ladders are part of the syllabus, most of the time they are neglected in the classroom due to various reasons. Wittgenstein introduced the concept of 'language games' in his work "philosophical investigations" in 1953. He emphasized that the meaning of words is rooted in their usage within specific contexts or games "the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form life' Giving orders and obeying them, describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements- constructing an object from a description (a drawing)- reporting an event- speculating about an event.

By incorporating language games into teaching, there would be better acquision of language skills as proclaimed by Krashen, "Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language—natural communication—in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding." (Krashen 1982, p. 1)

However, if these language games are conducted seriously in a language classroom, it will bring substantial results in the performance of students in all language aspects apart from developing general intelligences among students. As Gardner advocated that "An intelligence is the ability to solve problems, or to create products, that are valued within one or more cultural settings."(Gardner1983). There are a lot of fun and effective games to enhance English language skills among secondary level students. Here are some that work well in classrooms or group settings:

1. Word Association
2. Story Chain / Pass the Story
3. Taboo
4. 20 Questions
5. Pictionary (with vocabulary words)
6. Charades (for verbs or idioms)
7. Synonym & Antonym Challenge
8. Grammar Auction

9. Word Ladder
10. Two Truths and a Lie
11. Sentence expansion

1. *Word Association*: This is very interesting game to conduct in the English classroom in which one student says a word, and the next student quickly says a word related to it. This game helps to improve vocabulary and quick thinking apart from listening and speaking abilities.

2. *Story Chain / Pass the Story*: This game creates lot of fun and creativity among students. One student begins with a sentence to tell a story and the story is developed by other students by contributing one sentence each. The beginner keeps a story in mind and starts it but at the end story will sometimes change based on the ideas of other students. This game develops, sequencing, grammar, speaking skills and creative thinking.

3. *Taboo*: This game is more creative and interesting in which one student describes a word without using a list of "taboo" words while others guess. This boosts descriptive language, creativity and vocabulary.

4. *20 Questions*: In this game one person thinks of a word, and others ask yes/no questions to guess it. This helps building speaking skills, listening skills, questioning and reasoning skills.

5. *Pictionary (with vocabulary words):* In this game one student draws a word on the blackboard, other students should guess and reveal when chance comes. This language game reinforces vocabulary with meanings and the ability of recall and retention.

6*. Charades (for verbs or idioms):* In this game one student act out a word or phrase without speaking. Generally, this is used to develop idioms and phrases. It builds vocabulary and comprehension.

7. *Synonym & Antonym Challenge*: This is very frequently used language game I almost all English classrooms where teacher gives a word and challenge students to list as many

synonyms or antonyms as they can. This helps build vocabulary and the ability of retention among students. This is also very useful for the summative examinations.

8. *Grammar Auction*: This language game helps to develop confidence among students and it makes them self-reliant. In this game students "bid" on sentences they think are grammatically correct. This game is a kind of a fun twist on grammar practice.

9. *Word Ladder*: To develop spontaneity and vocabulary among students, this language game could be of great help. Students are asked individually to change one letter at a time to form new words in this game. Ex, *CAT > COT > DOT > DOG*. This language game sharpens spontaneity, quick-thinking, spelling and vocabulary.

10. *Two Truths and a Lie*: This is more fun creating language game and useful to conduct the class when students are not in mood. In which one student says three statements; others guess the false one. This game creates fun and entertainment apart from wonderful listening and speaking skills.

11. *Sentence expansion*: This language game has different names at different places like build-a-sentence game, growing sentences game, sentence building game and sentence expansion or sentence stretching. It's a language-building exercise where students start with a single word (often a noun) and gradually add words to build a longer, meaningful sentence. It helps develop grammar, vocabulary, and creative thinking. By providing plenty of games, students automatically involve in classroom transaction and try to learn language skills effectively. "Tasks should involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language." (Nunan 1989, p. 5)

These language games make students conscious and help the teaching and learning more conscious rather than conventional chalk

and talk method and eventually enhances conscious levels of students as it was emphasized by Krashen & Terrell, "Learning is a conscious process that results in 'knowing about' language. Acquisition is a subconscious process that results in 'knowing how' to use language." (Krashen & Terrell 1983, p. 26)

The above language games not only help the students develop basic skills of language, but also better communication skills as students require communication skills for interaction in real world contexts. "Students acquire conversational fluency in a second language much more quickly than academic proficiency." (Cummins J 2000, p. 67)

In order to incorporate language games into IX Class English classroom, the teacher must have the knowledge of prescribed IX Class Textbook, "Our World Through English" published by SCERT, Telangana. An effort has been made to understand the construction of textbook and the analysis of the components provided under each unit. There are eight units namely; 1. *Humour, 2. Games and Sports, 3. School Life, 4. Environment, 5. Disasters, 6. Freedom 7. Theatre, 8. Travel and Tourism.* Each unit has various language components to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills spirally. The arrangement of all language components is done by keeping in view the level of English efficiency of IX Class students. Two units are selected for the analysis as almost all units follow the same structure and the details are given in the following table.

Table 1: The Analysis of 1st & 2nd Units of IX Standard Textbook, SCERT, Telangana

Unit	Language Item	Tasks	Topic
1.Humor	Face sheet	Picture	Oral Discourse: Speech
	A. Reading	Prose	The Snake and the Mirror
	Vocabulary	Glossary	The Snake and the Mirror
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	The Snake and the Mirror
	Vocabulary Building	MCQ's	The Snake and the Mirror
	Grammar	Fill in the blanks	Past tense & Phrasal Verbs
	Writing	Essay & Poster	Essay & Poster
	Study skills	narration	Short Narration
	Listening	Activity	Short story
	B. Reading	Poetry	The Duck and the Kangaroo
	Vocabulary	Glossary	The Duck and the Kangaroo
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	The Duck and the Kangaroo
	C. Reading	Short story	Little Bobby
	Vocabulary	Glossary	Little Bobby
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	Little Bobby
	Project work	Data Collection	Consolidation
	Face sheet	Picture	Oral Discourse: Speech
	A. Reading	Prose	True Height
	Vocabulary	Glossary	True Height
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	True Height

Mallaiah Odela

2. Games and Sports	Vocabulary Building	Fill in the boxes	Synonyms & Collocations
	Grammar	Fill in the boxes	Clauses
	Editing	Grammar Correction	True Height
	Writing	Biographical Sketch	Biographical Sketch
	Study skills	Self-introduction	Self-introduction
	Listening	Activity	Commentary
	Oral activity	Conversation	Conversation
	B. Reading	poetry	What is a Player
	Vocabulary	Glossary	What is a Player
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	What is a Player
	C. Reading	Interview	VVS Laxman
	Vocabulary	Glossary	VVS Laxman
	Reading Comprehension	Comprehensive questions	VVS Laxman
	Writing	Read & Reflection	VVS Laxman
	Project work	Data Collection	Sports Persons

(Source: IX Standard Textbook, SCERT, Telangana)

From the analysis of 'IX Standard Textbook of Telangana State', it can be understood that there are plenty of opportunities to incorporate language games into mainstream teaching of the syllabus. Like completing A. Reading, we can conduct *word association* game and *story chain* game and after completing the explanation of glossary, *Synonyms Antonyms Challenge* and *Word Ladder* games can be conducted. In this way there are abundant chances of conducting language games after the discussion of every language component. The analysis reveals that each unit in the textbook starts with a face sheet, followed by questions on brainstorming. These questions help as pre-reading tasks. These are attended by contextual questions associated to the picture. The main excerpt of the lesson is then given for reading, along with a glossary. Students are motivated to engage with the text through questions based on the excerpts which ensures comprehension at different levels. After the glossary and as part of skimming, comprehension questions are given in the form of true/false exercises. It is followed by long-answer questions that require scanning for details and descriptions. Each unit has a compulsory discourse of describing picture, or preparing a notice or poster followed by questions and has a potential to run a language game.

Language games on certain items like pictures enhances the language aquation in an effective manner. Pictures and visual aids help scaffold students' learning within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, providing visual cues along with text allows learners to process complex information with guided support. (Vygotsky 1978)

According to Arthur Hughes (2003, p.142), "Successful choice of texts depends ultimately on experience, judgement and a certain amount of common sense.

Language games involving grids and visuals encourage integrated skills learning. Gardner's model supports the idea that integrating reading with visual-spatial elements leads to deeper understanding, especially in

Mallaiah Odela

primary learners. (Gardner 1983). Here are some examples of pictures that are provided in the textbook to conduct language games.
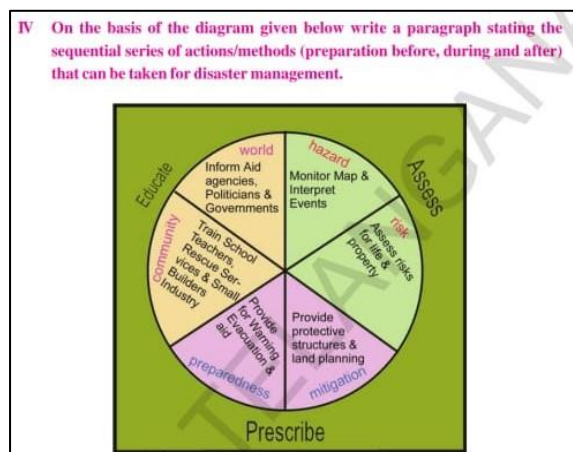

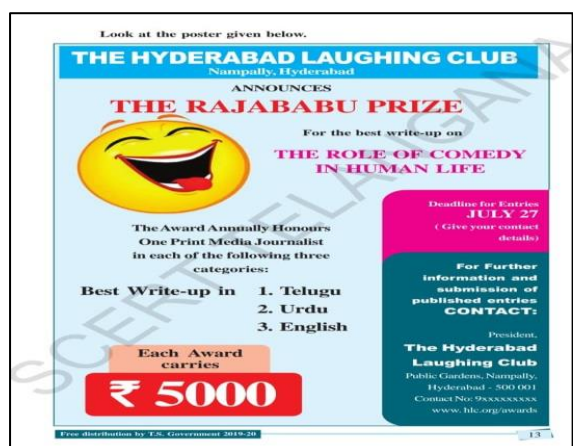Fig 1: A Picture Activity from Pg no.97 for a Paragraph

Fig 2: A Picture from Pg no.13 for a Poster Preparation

From the analysis, it can be understood that each unt consists at least two to three discourses and each excerpt consists vocabulary-based questions, such as mind maps, information transfer, contextual vocabulary, and usage. For instance, on Page 10 & 11 of the prescribed textbook, two components depict simple past, and past perfect of grammar (e.g., *I brushed my teeth. I took my breakfast. After I had brushed my teeth, I took my breakfast.*), followed by exercises on usage to strengthen retention. Additionally, each unit ends with project work. An effort was also made to bring into line the exercises with the excerpts.

For example, sentences from the story were used to teach the past tense. Each unit aims to club all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—along with vocabulary and grammar and these skills will be enriched by language games.
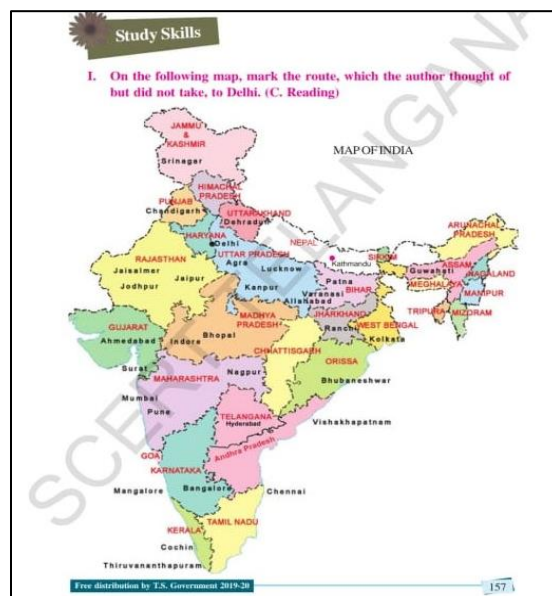

Fig 3: A Picture of India map from Pg no.13 for a Route

However, to conduct these language games, the teacher must have expertise. And sufficient knowledge in language games is also required for teacher. Sometimes teacher has to run after the syllabus and could not find the time to conduct these games due to some unavoidable constraints. But conducting language games in English classroom will definitely an effective result among students.

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