

THE ROLE OF GAMES ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

In the technology-driven era, educational games have proved to enhance the value of instruction procedures in teaching fields. Although in the past the factors that increase students' adoption of learning games have been broadly studied, the effect of these factors on learners' performance and language acquisition are still needed to be thoroughly explored. This study aimed to enhance the communicative skills through the educational games of the 15 young learners of the education center "Express Study" and come up with the most adequate techniques to enhance speaking skills of young learners through games. The techniques for collecting data were observation, task, and documentation. The result of this study showed that implementing games into teaching setting could improve the communicative skills of young learners and boost their eagerness towards language learning. It could be seen from the results of the conducted questionnaires and teacher notes.

Keywords: Educational games, language acquisition, communicative skills, learners' performance, questionnaire, needs analysis, teacher notes, self-feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English have been becoming extremely popular as a source of communication around the world today. Since English has an international standard, it became the lingua franca global language of the globe. It is common knowledge that English has an impact on education beside other fields; therefore, throughout the history new language teaching methods and approaches have been developed or proposed by the distinguished scholars in order to provide better apprehension of how language is used within educational context. Some methods have been utilized until the new ones were emerged; some of them have been modified by the recent ones and some of them becoming more popular as a result of the requisite like communicative language teaching approach. Considering these reasons, using games in learning and teaching foreign languages to foster language acquisition have been efficacious. Due to this reason, the multitudes of teachers support the use of games in

English language teaching setting. Nonetheless, before embarking upon the effectiveness of educational games in the classroom, it will be beneficial to first define the term game. A well-known scholar Stevick (1982: 128) says that “games were merely enjoyable activities which I could bring in when I saw that my pupils were tired from hard work of learning and needed a change of pace”. As stated by Gibb (1978) in Rixon (1981:3) a game is a type of the activities conducted by collaborating or racing decision makers, searching to succeed in a set of rules, their purposes”. According to Hadfield (2004: 4) game is an activity including rules, an objective and fun. Games should be deemed as a vital part of the language syllabus, not as an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of term. In a number of cases they provide as much concentrated practice as a traditional drill and more precisely, they create an opportunity for real communication, notwithstanding within exaggeratedly defined bounds, and hence establish a bridge between the classroom and the real world. Jacobs and Kline Liu (1996) mention that a number of games can be played in small groups and they embrace many advantages. They are as follows:

- The team aspect of many games can inspire collaboration and develop team spirit.
- Although many games contain competition among children, this is not essentially the case.
- In significantly great number of games, everyone has a turn, inspiring everyone to take a turn, rather than allowing others to talk more and do other actions, and discouraging some people from not including others.

METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Certain types of methods were used during the research by the investigator. They are displayed below:

- Needs analysis and questionnaires;
- Notes kept by the researcher.

Before starting the study, the researcher distributed needs analysis questions to 12 young learners in the education centre “Express Study” with the intention of finding out the learners’ overall attitudes towards games or other types of activities such as cartoons, songs and stories.

Additionally, the investigator made a decision to keep a diary with the aim of noting the events which occurred during the study. As well as the other types of methods, the dairies also had an active role in exposing the weaknesses as well as the challenges of the young learners,

identifying the mistakes done by the researcher in designing the lesson properly and making self-feedback.

Results and Discussions

Analyzing the collected data as well as putting them in diagrams, charts and tables was the last step in the study. The collected data was organized in the following way:

1. The needs analysis questionnaires were carefully analyzed and summarized.
2. The diary kept by the researcher during the study was carefully analyzed and generalized after all.

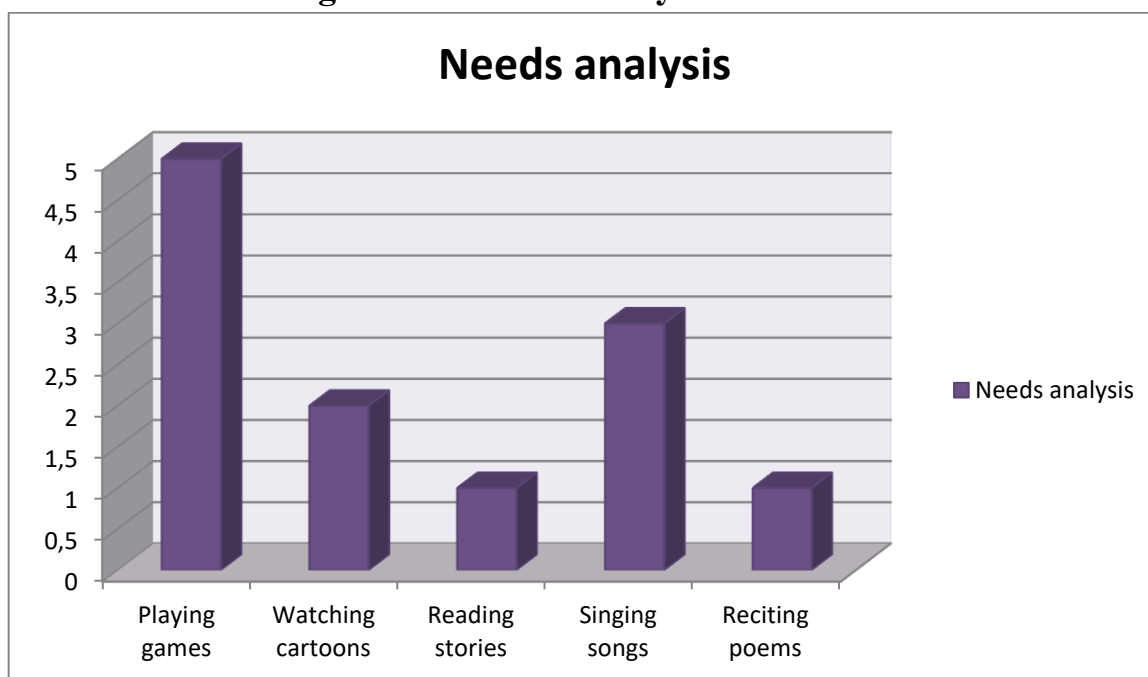
Each gathered data is processed in a diversity of ways to reach a conclusion and to make a vital decision about the current research paper to fulfill the main goal of the statistical study which is of a great value to identify the importance of games in teaching speaking to young learners.

A. Data collected from the young learners with the help of the needs analysis questionnaires.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher decided to make a needs analysis questionnaire in order to reveal the young learner's interests, wishes and overall attitude. The solo mission was to ask the children about their views and keep in mind the interests and needs of the learners. The main point in the needs analysis was to find out if the games could be used during the game as well as provide a valuable learning experience in which the children practice and revise language. Bearing this in mind, the researcher welcomed the young learners with the question to select their favorite ones from the options such as games, cartoons, songs, stories which they would find intriguing and enjoyable during the study. To this question, 85% of the young learners responded that they would love to play various games during the lessons and considered them very interesting and exciting. Other point was they whether they would prefer working in groups, in pairs or individually. As stated by them, 90% of the children showed their eagerness to play in groups. The held needs assessment proved that a considerably great number of children are very active and dynamic as well as anxious to collaborate with a whole group. This needs analysis showed that games, songs and cartoons are very interesting for the young learners.

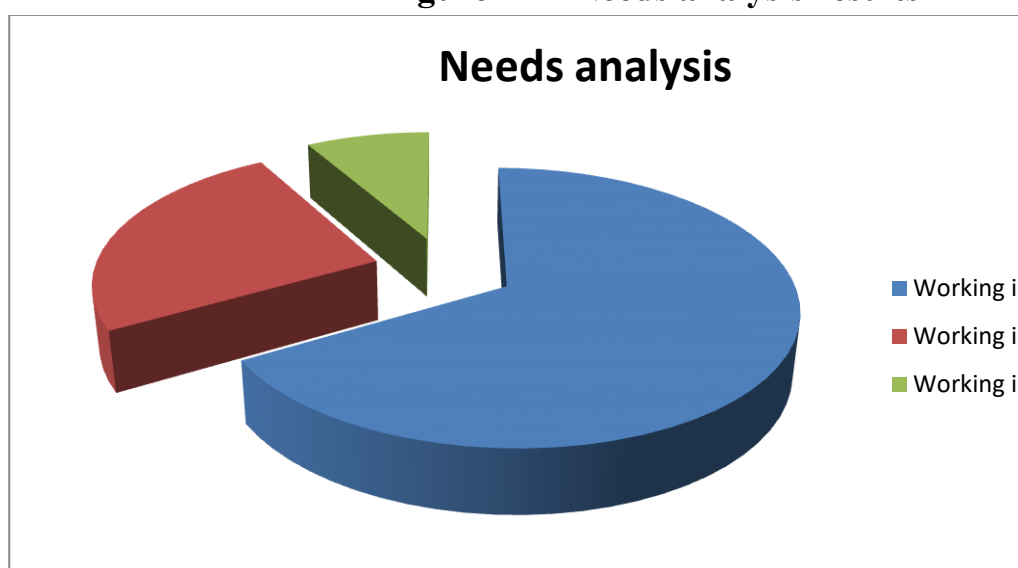
The visual result of needs analysis questionnaire is presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Figure 1 → Needs analysis results



According to the questions of the needs analysis, the young learners were required to answer the questions designed to find out their overall attitudes to make the use of games, cartoons, songs, stories and poems. As it is illustrated above, a number of pupils voted to play games to acquire the foreign language; however, some pupils also gave their votes to sing English songs in the classroom. As it is obvious from the diagram that few children found it interesting to read stories and recite poems in the classroom.

Figure 2 → Needs analysis results



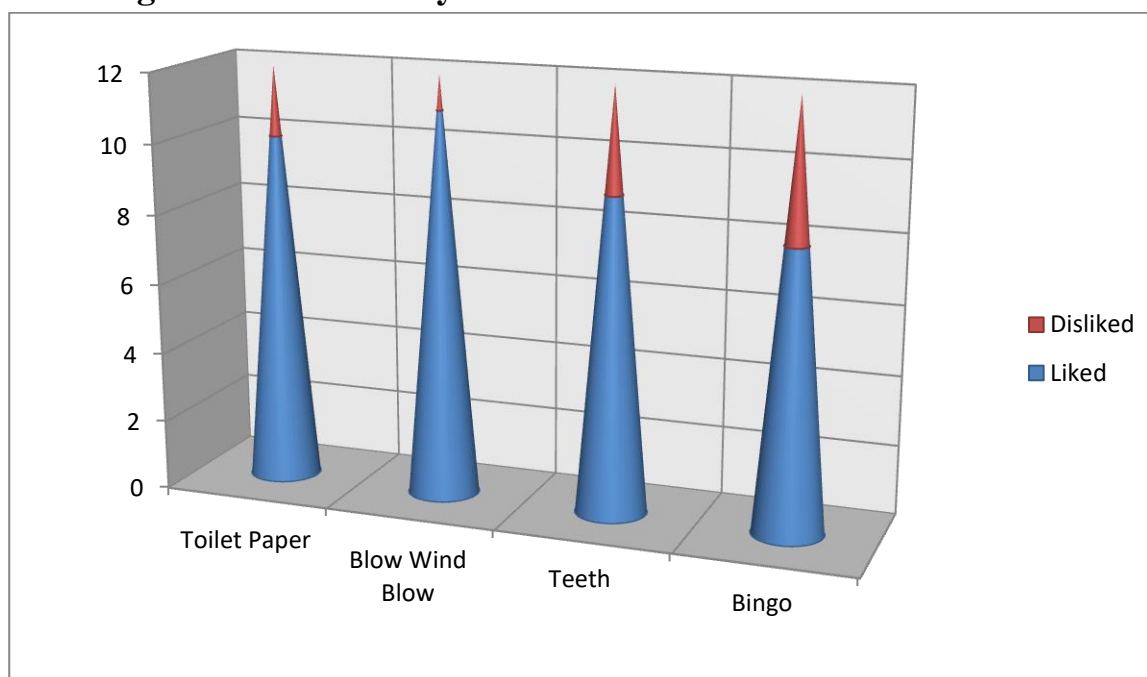
In the following diagram, it is faced to the young learners with several questions to be familiar with their view points on working in the classroom. The diagram above illuminates that significantly great number of pupils have showed their willingness working in groups.

E. Data collected from the diary kept by the researcher

With the aim of keeping everything in mind, the researcher kept a diary and adjusted to note down about the conducted lesson, how well it was welcomed, the expectations and occurrences. The purpose of writing a diary was to reveal what sort of games would be effective and intriguing for the young learners. The diary which was kept by the researcher exposed that the subjects really liked playing a variety of interactive games during the class. What was the most amazing thing that the children were used to welcome the researcher with a question aimed to find out what kind of game was going to be carried out by the researcher. Subsequently, the researcher was certain that games were real motivators and facilitators and could help young learners to make progress in absorbing a language. Initially, the teacher was very worried about if the subjects get bored of playing games every lesson. Nonetheless, everything welcomed really cordially by the participants and went on well. Indeed, the researcher attempted to find and even create very meaningful and entertaining games what would not be rejected by the young learners. The children especially liked the games such as “Blow Wind Blow”, “Toilet paper”, “Teeth” and “Bingo”. The children loved the game “Blow wind blow” so much ever, because this game was involved a good understanding of English as well as quick movements. Additionally, the group also loved the game “Teeth”, because the young learners were really amused and fascinated. However, there were some games which did not go too well. For instance, pupils found it slightly challenging to make a role play at the beginning. But the direction and suggestions given by the researcher inspired the children to have really interesting ideas. As well as role plays, partner finding game with the aid of a shoe was also unsuccessful, because it was marginally complicated to understand the rule of the activity for the young learners.

The results of some games are displayed in Figure 6

Figure 6 The Diary Results



The diagram displayed above demonstrates that the game “Blow Wind Blow” was really fancied by the young learners; more precisely, only one pupil found the game faintly uninteresting. Furthermore, the children were also inclined to play the game called “Toilet paper” as it brought gales of laughter among them. In actual fact, ten pupils out of 12 were stated that the game was incredibly fascinating and amusing. In addition to these desired games, other games such as “Teeth” and “Bingo” were also welcomed warmly by the young learners.

CONCLUSION

In sum, using games in the classroom could undoubtedly improve the speaking skills of young learners. It is apparent by the needs analysis and questionnaire results and teacher’s notes. The suggestions in this research were for school, it can motivate the teacher to use games as a useful tool to reinforce speaking skill in the learning process, (2) for teachers, it can increase the percentage of students’ mastery in communicative skills as much as 96%. However, there were some students who had not been successful in sharpening their oral communication skills. Thus, it is suggested for the teacher to motivate the students and come up with the most productive techniques in imposing games into language classroom in each learning step in order to achieve the learners’ mastery level until 100%.

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