Why use games in teaching English?

Título: Why use games in teaching English? **Target:** Maestros lengua extranjera inglés. **Asignatura:** Methodology.
Autor: María Concepción García Espada, Maestra de lengua extranjera inglés e infantil.

Games help pupils to learning English in an enjoyable way. Playing games in the classroom develops the ability to co-operate without being aggressive. Most of the games can be adapted to the level of pupils. The games let the use of the language in a creative way. Another reason to use games is that provides practise of specific language patterns, vocabulary and pronunciation without the children realize they are doing it.

CONNECTION BETWEEN GAMES AND CHILDREN

The easy way to learn for children is playing, they enjoy a lot playing so the teachers must to approach it to develop the learning using games.

How to select games

We should not forget that a game in English language should have the following characteristic:

- easy to understand
- easy to play, but requiring some intellectual challenge for the students
- should be possible to do in the period of time we have
- should be funny, without problems between the students
- should be easy to evaluate

HOW TO ORGANISE GAMES

We can organise games dividing them between linguistic games and communicative games.

And then we can make a new organization depending on the game we are going to play. For example:

- warmers games
- guessing games
- problem solving
- memory games
- card games
- board games

And the level of the students can be a new organization.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN GAMES

We make a different between the teacher's role in linguistic games and communicative games.

In the first one, the teacher is who leds the games. Encourage pupils, makes the game dynamic. Also the arbitrator, this means a bit of control.

In the communicative games the teacher doesn't control the game, what is more if he takes part a lot of time, he would been doing the opposite of his work because objective of these games is to be play between pupils, let them to practise the language.

Even the mistake must be connected at the end.

HOW TO USE GAMES

The games could be used as complementary activity. However the games could be included in the curriculum. As a way to get the objectives of the curriculum and not only as a funny part. Through the learning of a new language we can use the game in five stages:

A. Presentation and practise:

- Presentation.
- Show activities to controlled practise.
- Give the students the opportunity to use the learning contents in a new communicative context.

B. Short and frequency activities:

They are used to improve some language skill through the frequent practise (for instance to practise pronunciation).

C. Revision:

It is a simple way to test linguistic contents using the games frequently as the teacher thinks is necesary.

D. Seeing mistakes:

A game could be an easy way to the teacher evaluates at least orally the student's competencial level. Students could work in groups.

E. General language practise:

The communicative games could be used to improve the general ability of student's communication and make them to be more trusted in their possibility. This kind of game let the language in a free and creative way.

CREATE AND ADAPT GAMES

Some aspects to create a game:

- Decide what linguistic area we are going to focus, this let us to include the game in planning of the course.

- Decide if we are going to make a game about linguistic o communicative games.

- Think about if we are going to play the game in groups or couples, the rules…

The techniques that we can use to adapt games are very easy. We talk about them in the techniques point.

REASONS TO ADAPT GAMES:

- If the game is not proper to the level of the class, the teacher should have to change the rules in order to adapt it to the necessity of the class.

- When we see that the game doesn't work we have to adapt the activity to the circumstance.

TECHNIQUES TO USE GAMES

Individual learners develop and use these techniques in different ways and at different times, students generally start using just a new strategies, such as looking at pictures and using memory... It is important to see what a child already knows and does use, so that you can build that knowledge and extend it.

- Memory: students use their memory of story and specific language to help them "approximate" or "role-play" reading. Teachers use this technique as the first step to beginners students.

- Pictures clues: most children will be attracted by illustrations. Students will use pictures and memory to construct the story, and to predict and confirm individual words in the text. Also even upper students should be encouraged to create mental images, to visualize as they read texts with fewer illustrations.

- Context clues: teachers should use in class the surrounding ideas and works of a sentence and sense of language to figure out words, to predict the missing word and to understand text.

- Structural analysis: students can use their increased awareness of the structure of words to help figure out new words, they also can learn about "compound words".

- Visual clues: students can learn to use the configuration of words (length, shape...) to recognize words, so is useful if the teacher use picture when the students are learning new vocabulary. Students can eventually learn to recognize many words, especially exciting content words like "elephant"..., visual clues is a very useful and a good techniques to help students to learn and practise vocabulary and also they are motivate with the different activity that they are using.

CLASSIFICATION OF GAMES

- Warmers.

- Guessing games.

- Memory games.

- Card games: this kind of games can be used to for relaxation. Consist in three groups, for example: family, animals… where the students have to link these groups playing: for example each group of students has to complete their group of pigs and dogs.

- Board games: not only are useful for relaxation and for language work, but he making of students present a real challenge.

- Problem solving

- Communicate games: these games put the emphasis in the message that the students need to give. For example: a description or follow numbers of structure. The success of the game is evaluating more for the communicative results (this mean the function) than the form.

- Linguistic games: These games teach the correct production of some types of linguistic structure as a test that the student have understood correctly the structure given. For example: drills when the objective is the correct repetition of some structure.