Advantages of Using Language Games in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Sudan Basic Schools

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the advantages of utlizing language games in teaching English as a foreign languages in Sudan Basic Schools. The problem of the study was that, the researcher believes that the problem of the present study stems from students' low output in English language tests, lack of motivation and weak participation in class. This problem was documented through the researcher's long experience in teaching English as a foreign language and exam results, data analysis and consultation of other English teachers as well. Hence, it is so important to carry out such a study in English in order to improve students' achievement through using suggested language games.The study adopted a quasi-empirical method. The sample of the study consisted of (30) English teachers in East Gezira Locality. The population of the study was all English teachers in the second period in the academic year 2017 / 2018. A questionnaire was constructed to the teachers to collect data. The study used SPSS program to analyze the data. The results revealed that teaching language games are useful to EFL Learners. Language games can help students in building a good relationship with the new language.Based on these result the researcher recommended that curricula designers should include sufficient language games in the syllabus. Teachers should change their role from instructors who dominate the class into educators whose role is to help, guide and support the students to acquire the foreign language.

Key words: Investigate; advantages;games;foreign language; output.

1. Introduction

The idea of using games in teaching does not seem to be widely accepted and implemented although its profitability has been proposed and justified as early in the seventieth century.

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There has been a misconception that all learning should be serious in nature. In fact, using games is an important tool that allows language teachers to add colours to their classrooms by providing challenge and entertainment. They are particularly valuable for beginners as a source of cognition that helps them adopt sounds and rhythms and comprehend the foreign language.

El Shamy in [1] defines a game as a "competitive activity played according to rules within a given context, where players meet a challenge to achieve an objective and win".

Language games comprise many factors such as rules, competition, relaxation and learning in particular. Rules have to be clear, few and well-explained so as no difficulty is faced. They are designed in different levels as well as topics that suit different students" levels what make them enjoy all together and gain the best results.

Using games in the process of language teaching-learning is not restricted for any language level; it helps all students to feel comfortable and more confident in acquiring a new language. However, this technique is much more applicable and beneficent with beginners – of interest in the present research-.

According to [2] "in addition to the personal challenge, younger students also enjoy competing with their peers, and introducing a game element is a way of livening up any material". It is often difficult to maintain their attention for too long as they cannot remember new words and expressions of a language they deal with for the first time and which is not their mother tongue. It is true that children like things to be repeated but they do not need only to keep repeating the desired part of the target language. Instead, a short and a simple game can be repeated more than once. Incorporating games, then, in the language teaching-learning process helps building a good relationship with the new language. They do not just relax from serious learning but they reinforce the new vocabulary as well. Although a game in a class of beginners could be a disaster but it succeeds in making a good classroom atmosphere. By time, they realize that language is more than just long lists of words and sets of rules. Prabhu in [3] offers two main reasons why teachers should use games in teaching second language. The first reason is based on spontaneous interaction that games can generate amongst the children, 'creating opportunities for the deployment of their emerging internal systems'. A second major reason for using games is the supportive environment that is created. Interaction between learners is less threatening than interaction with the teacher. Game-like activities provide choices for the classroom. 'They allow teachers to add variety and flexibility to the teaching menus' [4], Sometimes educators feel weighed down by assigned curricula and need to come up with new ideas and interesting activities. Another advantage, in language classes, learners feel stressful because they think that they have to master the target language that is unknown to them. Besides, learners become too anxious about being criticized and punished by their teachers when they make a mistake (Sugar, 2002). Games are advantageous at this point because they reduce anxiety, increase positive feelings and improve self-confidence because learners are not afraid of punishment or criticism while practicing the target language freely [5]. According to [6] the benefit of using games in learning classrooms can be summed up in nine main points which are the following:

1. Games are learner-centered (the student is always in focus).

2. Games promote a communicative competence.

3. Games create a meaningful context for language use.

4. Games increase learning motivation

5. Games reduce learning anxiety.

6. Games integrate many various linguistic skills.

7. Games encourage creativity and spontaneous usage of the language.

8. Games construct a cooperative learning environment.

9. Games foster participatory attitudes of the students.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The researcher believes that the problem of the present study stems from students' low output in English language tests, lack of motivation and weak participation in class. This problem was documented through the researcher's long experience in teaching English as a foreign language and exam results, data analysis and consultation of other English teachers as well. Hence, it is so important to carry out such a study in English in order to improve students' achievement through using suggested language games.

1.2. Significance of the study

The significance of this study will be of great value to English language teachers to give games more attention, much and considerable time for exercises .It also considered of great important to curricula to choose best ways to improve using games through enhances curricula with game activities.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1-Explore whether using language games have a significant influence on the students' performance or not.

2-Explore the role of using language games in teaching a foreign language.

3-Show the importance of using language games among the English language teachers.

1.4. Questions of the Study

The study will attempt to answers to the following questions:

1-Do using   language games is useful in teaching foreign languages.

2-Is it is it important for teachers to use language games in the classroom?

1.5. Hypotheses of the Study

This study has the following as its hypotheses:

1- Using   language games is not useful in teaching foreign languages   .

2**-** It is not important for teachers to use language games in the classroom?

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Design

This is a quasi- empirical and analytical study its aim is to investigate the advantages of using language games on EFL learners' output of English Language in the Sudan Basic schools in Gezira State - East Gezira Locality of the academic school year 2017 – 2018.

2.2. Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all English Language teachers in East Gezira Locality in the second period of the academic year 2017 – 2018.

2.3. Samples of the Study

The sample of the study consists of (30) English teachers who have been chosen randomly.

2.4. Instruments of the study

The data of this study has been obtained by using a questionnaire.

The questionnaire is structured into two parts, part one which includes:

Participants' personal information such as age, gender, academic qualification, and participants' experience in English language teaching.

Part two includes:

The findings related to teachers' point view on advantages of using language games in teaching English as a foreign Language in Sudan basic schools. The questionnaire includes (10) statements. The items required

respondents to answer the statements with the degree varying from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

2.5. Validity of the questionnaire

In order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire it was shown to a jury of two university professors and tow EFL teachers. They all agreed on the content and the structure. The final form of the questionnaire was drawn out after taking their comments, opinions and advices into consideration.

2.6. Reliability of Teachers' Questionnaire

In order to examine the reliability of the study tool, Cronbach Alpha was used. The coefficient alpha of the tool had a good reliability (.76) (see table (1).

Table 1: The Cronbach's Alpha for the study tool

	No. Items	ofCronbach's Alpha	No. of Cases
– Study tool	**10**	**.758**	**30**

2.7. Population of Teachers' Questionnaire

The population of this questionnaire was all teachers of English Language in East Gezira Locality. The sample comprises (30) English Language teachers.

2.8. Procedure of the Questionnaire Distribution

The questionnaire was distributed randomly by hand to (30) English Language teachers from different schools in East Gezira Locality. Luckily, most of the teachers who took part in the questionnaire expressed a real sense of enthusiasm in answering all the items and this was a real pleasure to the researcher. All the teachers who participated in the questionnaire were thanked by the researcher for their collaboration. The questionnaire's data will be analyzed statistically to measure the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

3. Data Analysis

Statistics was processed with IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive methods for Socio-demographic data (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Pearson Chi-square to test the frequency distribution of two categorical variables, using odds ratio (for 2 x 2 contingency tables) in addition to t-test and Person correlation coefficient tests. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3.1. Scoring

No anxiety (0-16), Mild anxiety (17-20), moderate anxiety (21-26), severe anxiety (27-29) and very severe anxiety (30-50)

Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Uncertain*	*Strongly disagree*	*Disagree*
5	4	3	2	1

3.2. Results related to the teachers' questionnaire

The results of the teachers' questionnaire presented into two parts .Part one includes: the participants' personal information such as, age, gender, academic qualification, the participants' experience in English language teaching. Part two includes the responses of participants to the statements of the questionnaire.

(1) Participants' personal information

As mentioned above the personal information includes: age, gender, academic qualification, and the participants' experience in English language teaching. The following table will present the results of these factors.

Table 2: Participants' personal information (n=30)

Variable s	No.	Percent
Age group (years)		
60 – 50	4	13.3
49 – 40	9	30.0
39 – 30	8	26.7
29 – 20	9	30.0
Gender		
Male	13	43.3
Female	17	56.7
Academic qualification		
Intermediate diploma	2	6.7
BA	17	56.7
Higher diploma	3	10.0
MA	8	26.7
Teaching Experience		
More than ten years	22	73.3
Ten years	5	16.7
One year	3	10.0

Thirty participants recruited in the current study. Regarding the age of the participants, 56.7% of the participants their age ranges from 50 to 60 years old, while 43.3% exceeded fifty years of age. The majority of the participants are female (56.7%), 43.3% males. Concerning the academic qualifications, the majority of them are bachelor's degree holders (56.7%), 36.7% hold a postgraduate degree, whereas 6.7% hold intermediate diploma.Regarding the participants qualifications we find that most of them have more than ten years of teaching experience (73.3%), 16.7% with ten years teaching experience and 10.0% with only one year experience in teaching.

(2)The responses of participants to the statements of the questionnaire.

Table 3: The responses of participants to the statements of the questionnaire (N=30)

	Mean	SD	Rank
1- Language games reduce anxiety and stress in the classroom, which helps learners remember things faster and better.	4.63	.72	*2*
2- Language games construct a cooperative learning environment.	4.57	.73	*3*
3- Language games are fun and amusing. The acquisition of input is therefore more likely. .	4.40	.72	*5*
4- Language games allow language practice in various skills at the same time (speaking, writing, listening and reading).	4.57	.73	*3*
5- Language games make students focus on the use of language, rather than on the language forms, so that they unconsciously apply grammar and vocabulary.	4.33	.71	*6*
6- Language games bring the foreign language to life by creating a meaningful, real-life context for using the foreign language	4.23	.68	*9*
7- Language games positively influence the teacher-student relationship.	4.33	.71	*6*
8- Games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class.	4.53	.73	*4*
9- Language games promote a communicative competence.	4.70	.60	*1*
10- Language games encourage shy students to participate.	4.30	.60	*7*
OVERALL MEAN	4.69	.10	

3.3. Questions of the Study

1- <u>**Do using language games is useful in teaching English as a foreign language?**</u>

Regarding the first research question, " <u>Do using language games is useful in teaching English as a foreign language</u>," the results of Table 2 showed that the teachers strongly agreed that language games are useful in several aspects:

- It is considered as an anti-stress and anxiety factor in the classroom, helping learners remember things faster and better. It is also fun and entertaining, so getting inputs is more likely and is a welcome break out of the usual routine of language.
- Enhancing skills, allowing learners to practice language in various skills at the same time (speaking, writing, listening and reading). And make them focus on the use of language, not on language forms, so that they apply unconsciously to the rules and vocabulary. In addition, it enhances linguistic knowledge of the linguistic user of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, as well as social knowledge on how and when to use speech appropriately.
- Building collaborative learning through the use of small groups to promote student learning and interdependence, so that they work together to accomplish tasks
- Language games bring foreign language to life by creating meaningful, real-life context to use foreign language
- As a psycho-social factor as language games encourage shy students to participate in the class room.

2- <u>**Is it important for teachers to use language games in the classroom?**</u>

Regarding the second research question, " Is it important for teachers to use language games in the classroom?" the results of Table 2 showed that the teachers strongly agreed that language games are important to be used by the teachers because they positively influence the teacher-student relationship and help the teacher to produce contexts in which the language is helpful and meaningful.

3.4. Testing hypotheses

❖ **Testing hypothesis one:**

H_0: <u>Using language games is not useful in teaching English as a foreign language</u>

H_1: <u>Using language games is useful in teaching English as a foreign language</u>

Regarding the answer of question one research which stated that using language games is not useful in teaching English as a foreign language, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that (Using language games is not useful in teaching English as a foreign language)

❖ **Testing hypothesis two:**

H$_0$: It is not important for teachers to use language games in the classroom

H$_1$: It is important for teachers to use language games in the classroom

The study sample strongly agreed that language games are useful as an anti-stress and anxiety, funny and entertaining, help to gain more input, enhance the skills of students, enhance language knowledge, build collaborative learning and psychologically and socially help students participate in the class room. So it is important for teachers because the ultimate goal is to teach students in a good and effective way. Furthermore, it is improving students' relationships with teachers to provide essential supports for learning, whereas positive relationships can also help a student develop socially. So, because of all that we mentioned, therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that (It is important for teachers to use language games in the classroom)

3.5. Conclusion and recommendations

From the obtained results it is clear that teachers involved in this study *strongly agreed* that teaching language games are useful to EFL Learners because of their positive impact on students' output in English language and they can also help in building a good relationship with the new language. Based on the above, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

Curricula designers, educators, and experts should include sufficient language games in the syllabus in order to encourage and motivate the students in learning the foreign language. Teachers should change their role from instructors who dominate the class into educators whose role is to help, guide and support the students to acquire the foreign language.

Acknowledgements

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Appendices

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear colleague,

This questionnaire designed for research paper purpose entitled

"*Advantages of Using Language games in teaching English as a foreign languages in Sudan Basic Schools*"

You will be offering a significant contribution to the research intention by completing this questionnaire. I assure to you that your responses will be highly confidential and will not be disclosed to any third party. Your individual opinions will only be used for the purpose of this research and the results will be a viable to you if you ask them.

Part one:

1-Personal Information:

Please, insert (√) in the appropriate space given:-

A) Age: a) 60 – 50　(　) b) 49 - 40　(　)　c) 39 -30　(　)　d) 29 - 20 (　)

B) Gender: Male　(　)　　　　　　　　　Female　(　)

2. The academic Qualification:

Intermediate Diploma (　) BA (　) higher diploma (　) MA (　) PHD (　)

3-Teaching Experience:

a)more than ten years　(　) b)ten years　(　)　c)five years　(　)　d) two years　(　)　e)one year　(　)
f)less than one year　(　)

Part Two: Teachers' point of view on the advantages of using language games in teaching English as a

foreign language in Sudan Basic Schools:

Table 4

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Strongly disagree	disagree
1- Language games reduce anxiety and stress in the classroom, which helps learners remember things faster and better.					
2- Language games construct a cooperative learning environment.					
3- Language games are fun and amusing. The acquisition of input is therefore more likely. .					
4- Language games allow language practice in various skills at the same time (speaking, writing, listening and reading).					
5- Language games make students focus on the use of language, rather than on the language forms, so that they unconsciously apply grammar and vocabulary.					
6- Language games bring the foreign language to life by creating a meaningful, real-life context for using the foreign language					
7 Language games positively influence the teacher-student relationship.					
8- Language games are a welcome break from the usual routine of the language class.					
9- Language games promote a communicative competence.					
10- Language games encourage shy students to participate.					

Thank you for your cooperation