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THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE GAMES IN DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC ABILITIES

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1.INTRODUCTION

Almost everybody loves playing whether they are young or old. From early childhood playing is an enormous part of most children's lives and it plays a big part of their development as well. Children start playing as early as infancy but as they develop throughout their childhood they keep playing, and as they grow up and mature the nature of their play changes. When children enter middle childhood (6-12) their play starts to change into games which are

different from play in the sense that they are more organized and planned, and they usually include a variation of rules and a specific objective (Rixon, 1981: 3). When playing most games participants are almost forced into communicating with each other in order for the game to work.

The need for communication during games, and the informal setting games provide encourages students to be unafraid to talk, which practices their fluency, a valuable communication skill. The national curriculum for foreign languages in Iceland emphasizes the importance of learning languages and especially the importance of communication. Because of this fact it is vitally important for teachers to create a positive learning environment, and to try to spark interest amongst their students both in the foreign language and culture because that is important to a successful language learning process. Games help achieve these goals as they help satisfy the requirement of the national curriculum that language learning should be enjoyable for students (Erlend mál, 2007: 6).

2. Definition of Language Games

The term of “language games” refers to the models of primitive language that Invent to clarify the working of language in general. It refers to games those children which enable them to learn the language (Wittgenstein as cited in Shawver). So it can be said that language games not only function as time filling activities but also they can bring some educational values that enable the children to learn the language. While Mc Cabe (1992) defines a language games as a spoken routine for two or more players, meant to be repeated many times. This implies that such repetition will enable the children to communicate effectively since playing language games will help the children to develop language and thought. In the activities of language games, the children will develop their ability to say what they mean to say and to express them clearly.

From the definition above, it can be seen clearly that language games do not only provide supportive activities and practices that can motivate the students to interact and communicate, but games can also create opportunities for students to acquire the language in a meaningful way. In short, it can be said that language games are able to help students use and practice the target language in a relaxed way.

A language game (also called secret language, ludling, or argot) is a system of manipulating spoken words to render them incomprehensible to the untrained ear. Language games are used primarily by groups attempting to conceal their conversations from others. Some common examples are Pig Latin; the Gibberish family, prevalent in the United States and Sweden; and Verlan, spoken in France. A common difficulty with language games is that they are usually passed down orally; while written translations can be made, they are often imperfect, and thus spelling can vary widely. Some factions argue that words in these spoken tongues should simply be written the way they are pronounced, while others insist that the purity of language demands that the transformation remain visible when the words are imparted to paper.

3.Philosophical Investigations

In his work *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), Ludwig Wittgenstein regularly referred to the concept of language-games. Wittgenstein rejected the idea that language is somehow separate and corresponding to reality, and he argued that concepts do not need clarity for meaning. Wittgenstein used the term "language-game" to designate forms of language simpler than the entirety of a language itself, "consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (PI 7) and connected by family resemblance. The concept was intended "to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life," (PI 23) which gives language its meaning.

Wittgenstein develops this discussion of games into the key notion of a language-game. Wittgenstein introduces the term using simple examples, but intends it to be used for the many ways in which we use language. The central component of language games is that they are uses of language, and language is used in multifarious ways. For example, in one language-game, a word might be used to stand for (or refer to) an object, but in another the same word might be used for giving orders, or for asking questions, and so on. The famous example is the meaning of the word "game". We speak of various kinds of games: board games, betting games, sports, "war games". These are all different uses of the word "games". Wittgenstein also gives the example of "Water!", which can be used as an exclamation, an order, a request, or an answer to a question. The meaning of the word depends on the language-game within which it is being used. Another way Wittgenstein puts the point is that the word "water" has no meaning apart from its use within a language-game. One might use the word as an order to have someone else bring you a glass of water. But it can also be used to warn someone that the water has been poisoned. One might even use the word as code by members of a secret society.

Wittgenstein does not limit the application of his concept of language games to word-meaning. He also applies it to sentence-meaning. For example, the sentence "Moses did not exist" can mean various things. Wittgenstein argues that independently of use the sentence does not yet 'say' anything. It is 'meaningless' in the sense of not being significant for a particular purpose. It only acquires significance if we fix it within some context of use. Thus, it fails to say anything because the sentence as such does not yet determine some particular use. The sentence is only meaningful when it is used to say something. For instance, it can be used so as to say that no person or historical figure fits the set of descriptions attributed to the person that goes by the name of "Moses". But it can also mean that the leader of the Israelites was not called Moses. Or that there cannot have been anyone who accomplished all that the

Bible relates of Moses, etc. What the sentence means thus depends on its context of use.

The term 'language-game' is used to refer to:

1-Fictional examples of language use that is simpler than our own everyday language. (e.g. PI 2)

2-Simple uses of language in which children are first taught language (training in language).

3-Specific regions of our language with their own grammars and relations to other language-games.

4-All of a natural language seen as comprising a family of language-games.

These meanings are not separated from each other by sharp boundaries, but blend into one another (as suggested by the idea of family resemblance). The concept is based on the following analogy: The rules of language are analogous to the rules of games; thus saying something in a language is analogous to making a move in a game. The analogy between a language and a game demonstrates that words have meaning depending on the uses made of them in the various and multiform activities of human life. (The concept is not meant to suggest that there is anything trivial about language, or that language is "just a game".)

4.Educational games

Are games unequivocally planned with instructive purposes, or which have accidental or auxiliary instructive worth? A wide range of games might be utilized in an instructive climate, anyway Educational games will be games that are intended to assist individuals with finding out about specific subjects, grow ideas, fortify turn of events, comprehend a verifiable occasion or culture, or help them in learning an ability as they play. Game sorts incorporate board, card, and computer games. As instructors, governments, and guardians

understand the mental need and advantages that gaming has on learning; this instructive device has become standard. Games are intuitive play that shows us objectives, rules, transformation, critical thinking, association; all spoke to as a story. They fulfill our key need to learn by giving satisfaction, energetic inclusion, structure, inspiration, personality delight, adrenaline, inventiveness, social collaboration and feeling in the game itself while the learning takes place<en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_game>

5. How Games Can Really Help Learn a Language

There is an old Chinese saying that portrays the magnificence of learning dialects through games: "tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I'll understand." The best language games are intended to include you in various methods of utilizing the language.

These games offer a unique learning air, so it truly comes down to you—the game player—to profit by playing the game. You can decide to play when the time works best for you and appreciate the time you spend learning your objective language. Best of all, while you're caught up in the game, you're really learning. So as opposed to focus on standard learning, you just spotlight on doing great in the game (which additionally requires key intuition, incidentally, which can additionally improve your capability).

Games likewise give an incredible individual approach to get familiar with the language with no dread of committing errors with the language out in the open. You can refine your aptitudes with articulation, spelling, punctuation and linguistic structure all at your recreation. In the game-orientated setting, you draw in with the language in a few different ways by composing, tuning in, talking and comprehension—which all assistance creates discourse familiarity.

Besides, learning through games really rouses you to learn a greater amount of the language! At the point when you love playing the game in your available time, that component of agreeable intensity functions as an impetus to make

you practice the language all the more much of the time. To advance in the game includes learning a greater amount of the language, so as you arrive at more significant levels in the game, you likewise arrive at higher expertise levels in your objective language.

5.1.The Benefits of Learning a Language through Games

Research was conducted in 2003 by the language acquisition experts, Asian EFL Journal. The research considered the effectiveness of game-based education methods on students when learning a new language. The students commented that they enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere the games provided, as well as the competitiveness and motivation that games brought to the learning environment.

It was further observed by the teachers that the students actually seemed to learn at an increased pace and retain the information gained through playing games compared to learning through rote methods. The research confirmed that games are a highly effective tool to language acquisition.

Thus far, we've already seen numerous benefits of playing language games, so here's a brief summary:

- 1-Time effective
- 2-A welcome break from the usual method of education
- 3-Fun and enjoyable
- 4-Provides meaningful context for language use
- 5-Increases learning motivation
- 6-Promotes communicative competence
- 7-Reduces anxiety of making errors

8-Integrates numerous linguistic skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing

9-Encourages players to use the language

10-Creates positive attitudes towards learning

6. Vocabulary learning and retention

A vocabulary, also known as a wordstock or word-stock, is a set of familiar words within a person's language. A vocabulary, usually developed with age, serves as a useful and fundamental tool for communication and acquiring knowledge. Acquiring an extensive vocabulary is one of the largest challenges in learning a second language.

Nation (2001), states that words have different learning burdens. This concept refers to “the amount of effort required to learn [them]” (p. 44) which is determined by the learner’s first language, i.e. the learning burden will be lighter for learners whose mother tongue is similar to the L2 and heavier for those whose languages completely differ to the L2. Thornbury (2002) points out that some words have a lighter learning burden than others. For example, cognate words, i.e. words which are orthographically and/or phonologically similar to its equivalents in another language, belong to this group (Tonzar, Lotto & Job, 2009). Nevertheless, learners must watch out for „false friends“, i.e. words which share a similar form, but not a similar meaning. Thornbury (2002) puts forward that there are different aspects which make some words more difficult to learn than others: “pronunciation, spelling, length and complexity, grammar, meaning, range, connotation and idiomaticity” (pp. 27-28).

Nation (2001) points out what is involved in knowing a word. It is important to know its form (e.g. recognising the word when it is heard, knowing how it is written and spelled), meaning (e.g. recognising the word’s meaning) and use (e.g. where, when and how often would we expect to find it). However, as

Thornbury (2002: 16) states “word knowledge is incremental and takes time.” He mentions that a proficient speaker may not know all the aspects of a specific word. In addition, a learner may know a word receptively, but not productively. Nation (2013: 47) explains that “receptive vocabulary use involves perceiving the form of a word while listening or reading and retrieving its meaning” whereas “productive vocabulary use involves wanting to express a meaning through speaking or writing and retrieving and producing the appropriate spoken or written word form.” Thornbury (2002) states that students’ receptive knowledge is larger than their productive knowledge and that the former usually precedes the latter.

There are varied and contradictory views on the most productive way of learning vocabulary. Nation (2013) points out that vocabulary acquisition is more effective when the interference of synonyms, antonyms or words that belong to the same lexical set does not take place. Words with a similar form or meaning are more challenging to learn together as learners find it difficult to differentiate them. However, Ur (1996) puts forward that people try to group words depending on their meaning or try to associate them. She suggests that these strategies can be used when teaching vocabulary.

In this line, Papathanasiou (2009) conducted research to discern whether it is more effective to present together vocabulary which is semantically related or unrelated. The participants differed in terms of age and language proficiency.

The results obtained showed that adults (beginner level) did better when the words were unrelated and children (intermediate level) obtained similar results in both strategies. She therefore concluded that at beginner level, it may be more effective to present together vocabulary which is not related. This study has taken into account the language proficiency variable, but seems to neglect an important variable which is age. It does not mention whether the age difference has any effect on the results obtained.

Thornbury (2002: 17) explains that words are stored in our mental lexicon, understood as: an overlapping system in which words are stored as „double entries“ – one entry containing information about meaning and the other about form. These individual word entries are then linked to words that share similar characteristics, whether of meaning (...) or of form (...) – or both (...).

World knowledge (general knowledge) and memory (personal experiences) are also linked to this system. Consequently, it is improbable that two people will share the same word knowledge (Thornbury, 2002). For example, if a traveller has visited Norway and has actually seen a fiord, he/she may have a richer knowledge of this word than someone who has not had this same experience. A clear advantage for the person who has visited the fiord, as opposed to another who may have only read about it, is that he/she will have a more elaborated mental representation which may help to retain the word. In addition, if the traveller had a bad experience while visiting the fiord, this word may have a negative connotation for him/her. On the contrary, a rewarding and pleasant experience will create a positive connotation. This example reinforces Thornbury (2002)‘s claim that it is difficult to find two people who have an identical word knowledge.

Thornbury (2002) also states that researchers make a clear distinction between short-term store, working memory and long-term memory. He then moves on to explain these three different systems. The short term-store can only retain information for a few seconds. However, learning vocabulary entails more than retaining words in one‘‘s brain for a short period. Words then enter the working memory where different cognitive operations take place. They stay in this system around twenty seconds before entering the long-term memory, but sometimes they are forgotten rapidly. In order to avoid this, some principles need to occur, among them: ‘‘repetition, retrieval, spacing, pacing, use, cognitive depth, personal organising, imaging, mnemonics, motivation, attention and affective depth’’ (Thornbury, 2002: 24).

Regarding cognitive depth, Thornbury (2002) mentions that the more mental operations the learner applies to words, the better these will be remembered. He also states that the word is remembered more successfully if the mental operations are demanding. Other authors also tackle this issue. Hedge (2000: 121) states that cognitive psychologists have suggested that “input becomes intake if there is a depth of processing.” She moves on to explain that the word will be better remembered if the learner conducts apart from a basic analysis, a more challenging one and relates it to his/her existing knowledge.

It should be taken into account that some words can be recalled and used immediately whereas others are difficult to remember (Hedge, 2000). In addition, some words can be partially remembered. For example, speakers may experience the „tip of the tongue effect“, i.e. “recalling something of the word but not its precise form” (Hedge, 2000: 116). According to Thornbury (2002), forgetting may take place when other learning interferes, i.e. some old words are forgotten when new words are learnt, and when words are not revised sufficiently. If students lose concentration during the process of storing the word, forgetting can be rapid. However, it will occur more slowly if the word is already in the mental lexicon, but has not been used or seen frequently (Hedge, 2000).

6.1. The Importance of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is central to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Wilkins (1972) wrote that “. . . while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (pp. 111–112). This point reflects my experience with different languages; even without grammar, with some useful words and expressions, I can often manage to communicate. Lewis (1993) went further to argue, “lexis is the core or heart of language” (p. 89). Particularly as students develop greater fluency and expression in English, it is significant for them to acquire more productive vocabulary knowledge and to develop their own personal vocabulary learning strategies. Students

often instinctively recognize the importance of vocabulary to their language learning.

As Schmitt (2010) noted, “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books” (p. 4). Teaching vocabulary helps students understand and communicate with others in English. Voltaire purportedly said, “Language is very difficult to put into words.” I believe English language students generally would concur, yet learning vocabulary also helps students master English for their purposes.

6.2. English Proficiency and Vocabulary Learning

We know that ELLs move along a continuum of English proficiency, with overlapping stages of language acquisition (Ellis, 1982). This means that teachers can use instructional strategies that scaffold students’ incomplete knowledge of the language system to a greater or lesser extent depending on their degree of English proficiency.

ELLs face various types of linguistic demands when learning second-language words. At the most emergent stages of English proficiency, the task of orally segmenting words in a sentence poses challenges, as this task is tied to knowledge about phonological, syntactic, and lexical features in the language. The silences and pauses we think we hear between words in a language are not actually there in reality.

In natural language, the speech signal is a continuous stream of sound. There are no pauses. As proficient English speakers, we “hear” pauses because we apply our knowledge of phonology, grammar, and words to appropriately segment the utterance. You have probably experienced this phenomenon when listening to someone speaking in a language you do not speak and been left with the impression that words in that language are very, very long!

To acquire word meanings incidentally from mere exposure to a language, learners need to be able to perceive individual words. The ability to do this

develops in close relation to phonological and grammatical knowledge. Also, to acquire word meanings from context, as often occurs in first-language acquisition, learners need to be able to exploit the grammatical and semantic cues surrounding the unfamiliar word.

A learner needs to know the meaning of the words that surround the unfamiliar word as well as how the words relate to one another. This can only happen in conjunction with ELLs' development of English proficiency. The development of English proficiency takes time, but can be expedited with direct and systematic second-language vocabulary instruction. Hence, we will not spend much effort reviewing research on learners' incidental acquisition of second-language vocabulary aside from acknowledging that it happens when learners have access to the second language (thankfully!) and that we can help move this natural process along by providing students with access to rich and varied communicative experiences that involve native speakers of the language students are acquiring (August & Shanahan, 2006).

6.3. Daily word ladders

Daily words ladders is one of so many games that are designed for the purpose of learning something whether learn how to behave ,how to speak and a lot for natural and sometimes for unnatural children in an effective manner and at about short time than when teach them depending on the usual ways (the syllabus at schools) .

This game that put by Timothy Rasinski consists of about 100 ladders and each one is relating to a subject that has a direct connection with the daily life , each ladder begin with a word of such an aspect and the child has to guess the second word with the help of many cues that are provided by the game itself such as giving the meaning of the next word and the what the child has to change of the first word's letters. When the child discover the correct word he should spell it, write it on the next stage ,and so on until he moves from the

bottom to the top of the ladders by discovering nine words in addition to the first one at the bottom .

These 100 ladders ,each one of them help the children to know some vocabulary and new words about their daily life such as things in the doghouse ,about seasons , arts , gardening , bird song , love life, giving thanks, feelings and so a lot , not only vocabulary there are so many benefits get from such a game such as building students' decoding, phonics, spelling ,developing their four skills(reading , writing, listening and also speaking as they try to use some words in their daily speaking) and also building a kind of interesting for children towards the English language .

The main thing that should be mentioned here about this game is the difference from other games in that its practice requires some focus on many aspects such as the meaning , the kind of the vocabulary to which the words that the child wants to guess , the spelling , the changing in some letters that resulting in changing the previous word to suit the next stage , the names of objects and also pronounce them and write them correctly, unlike other games that don't need such amount of focus at the same time which means daily word ladders will help the children to improve such many linguistic abilities as well as motivate their caring and interesting towards English language .

We can say that this book (word ladders) can be used at home by parents to teach their children and also at school by the teachers to teach their pupils such important aspects of language along with the daily school lessons and subjects to provide good results in short time and in an effective manner.

7. The analysis section

Daily word ladders is one of so many games that are designed for learning languages in an interesting manner and get rid from the boring and usual ways as some people describe the school manner in teaching languages.

In this game I took a sample of forty natural children between 6 and 12 years old to practice on this game with some help of their parents during a period of time that nearly about three months with daily practice for this game and then I gave the families the questionnaire that I prepared to answer its questions depending on what they noticed on their children and their linguistic and mental developments after practicing this ladders game, their answers were vary from one to another but in fact the final results indicate some developing and benefits that got and showed how such a game can be important in learning a language.

The questionnaire of the study

| The question | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 1-Does the child's vocabulary increase in their daily objects such as seasons, love life and feelings? | 10 | 12 | 12 | 4 | 2 |
| 2-Does their pronunciation develop as they pronounce the words while they are changed such as in (All Wet) figure? | 8 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| 3-Do they like to use the new words in their daily interaction as the words in (Restful | 6 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 3 |

| | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|---|---|
| Vacation) figure? | | | | | |
| 4-Are their mental processes developed (remember, notice ,recognize) through the language game ? | 14 | 12 | 8 | 2 | 4 |
| 5-Does the language game effect positively on their linguistic ability in their native language ? | 8 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 4 |
| 6-Does the language game develop their knowledge about their daily life and the objects in their surrounding environment as they know the names of things around them (Transportation ,Fancy Footwear, Sweet Things) ? | 9 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 5 |
| 7- Does the game develop their progress in their school subjects? | 6 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 5 |
| 8-Does the game develop their spelling in the English language when they spell each word on the ladders? | 9 | 12 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| 9-Does the game effect on their reading and writing positively as they should read and write each word they correctly guess on the next slash of | 8 | 11 | 10 | 3 | 8 |

| | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|---|
| the ladder? | | | | | |
| 10- Do they notice that there are some little changes in the words that can make some different meaning as in (few changes into new)? | 5 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 7 |
| 11- Is it good way to help children to learn languages through games than through subjects at school due to little time and more motivation? | 7 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 5 |
| 12- Is there any caring of children towards the English language after practicing such a game especially if they win and get some gifts for each good practice? | 12 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 1 |

The percentages of the questionnaire's results

| Item | Mean | Median | Std. Deviation | Variance | percentage % |
|------|--------|--------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| 1. | 2.4000 | 2 | 1.12774 | 1.272 | 95 |
| 2. | 2.8000 | 3 | 1.32433 | 1.754 | 87.5 |
| 3. | 2.8500 | 3 | 1.18862 | 1.413 | 92.5 |
| 4. | 2.2500 | 2 | 1.27601 | 1.628 | 90 |
| 5. | 2.7250 | 3 | 1.28078 | 1.640 | 90 |
| 6. | 2.7750 | 3 | 1.31046 | 1.717 | 87.5 |
| 7. | 2.9250 | 3 | 1.26871 | 1.610 | 87.5 |
| 8. | 2.7500 | 2 | 1.44559 | 2.090 | 80 |
| 9. | 2.8000 | 3 | 1.39963 | 1.959 | 80 |
| 10. | 3.1250 | 3 | 1.30458 | 1.702 | 82.5 |
| 11. | 2.9250 | 3 | 1.32795 | 1.763 | 87.5 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 12. | 2.3750 | 2 | 1.16987 | 1.369 | 97.5 |
| Total | 2.725 | 2.666 | 1.285 | 1.659 | 88.125 |

The results

In this questionnaire of my term paper's subject, which is The Language Game, we can find that, the results indicate some kind of knowledge to the persons who care about the good ways for learning language especially its vocabulary as natural and interesting ways.

This knowledge or the information that we can get when we notice these results in brief put us in the face of the fact that children can learn a lot and interest at the same time, the aspects that they be good at are the increasing of their vocabulary and lexis as they practice the names of daily objects in the language game as well as their pronunciation be better as they spell while discover the correct answer and by time it is developed, another aspect is developed, as the results state, they try to use some simple words that they knew from the game in their communication and daily interaction.

The children, while try to discover, guess and make conclusion to get the right words along the ladder, train their mental process such as remembering, recognizing and notice side so that their brain began to be stronger as a result of using such games, and that means they will be better at school subjects.

In English language, the children will become good as from the results is indicated that they developed their spelling step by step and from the better to the best, also the development of their writing and reading along with the spelling are become better as effected by the language game.

Some families indicate that this way is good for learning another language and even the first one, while others indicate the vice versa in other words they stated that children learn language through subjects and syllabus at school as a good manner instead of games and songs. At the final question in this questionnaire I asked the families about whether there is any interesting and

caring of children towards the English language and the answers was of course as I expected that there is a positive direction of a large number of the sample towards the English language after playing the language game .

The conclusion

Language game is considered as an interesting way for learning the language or something about the language.

In this game that is practiced by a sample of children from primary schools whose ages between six and twelve we can find that they learn in a natural way or in the way that they prefer as the interest in games during this age , some children try to practice it in most of their day's and alone which indicate how they like it , most of the children develop their skills of writing , reading ,listening and speaking, also they improve their pronunciation ,spelling their experience about their daily life and the surrounding environment as they know the names of so many objects and some of their characters .

Their progress at school is another point that is noticed to be developed and improved while their families indicate that they began to be better in some of their subjects and their mental processes in that their remembering and recognizing seem to increase.

In this case and depending on this simple study and its results , children acquire more by such manners and what they get seems to be continues during their life , so school subjects I advise all teachers to accompany with some games to motive and improve them for effective and interesting learning beyond the boring one

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