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Language Games- The Great Medium to Learn English Language

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Abstract: ***The present study aims to explore the innumerable possibilities that language games create for learning a language as a supplementary material. Language games are ideal for teaching and enhancing vocabulary of ESL learners. Take something as simple as a riddle-in case the teacher asks a riddle in a second Language class, the learners are very interested in listening to it and answering it. The riddle brings enthusiasm to an otherwise silent class. In addition to it, the learners are learning the nuances of the language like figurative language unconsciously or sub –consciously. Another mind sport is quiz that can be used to teach elements of language like grammar and vocabulary and their usage. Games can also be designed to cater to the needs of the learners and enable them to enhance their language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. A story telling activity can eventually lead to enhancement of listening skill. The chain story building technique can be used to hone the speaking skill. Similarly, cross word puzzles can also be used to remember a few facts from a lesson just read. An activity like a write up on a topic like my favourite offline/online game can enhance the writing skills of the learners. Thus, it can be concluded that language games can be used as a supportive method for teaching and learning English in ELT classroom.***
Keywords: language, games, enhance, skills and learners

I. INTRODUCTION

The engineering undergraduates and Science stream undergraduates in India feel extremely taxed and stressed out to learn the English language. They are drained off the zeal of learning a language after attending lectures of their core subjects. In such an arrangement most of the time the last slots are given to English (ESL/EAP/EFL/ESP) lectures. At the end of the day the learners have neither the excitement nor inclination to enhance their language skills. Learners claim that English lectures are dull and boring. At such a critical juncture games come like a whiff of fresh air for the learners and teacher alike. Moreover, they bring life to an otherwise lifeless classroom. Thus, games can be used as a supportive medium to teach the language through literary or ESP/ELT texts.

As stated in the *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary of current English*(Hornby A.S.,1991 p.507) "game is a form of play or sport with rules." To build the connection between games and language the link between the two needs to be established. The history of origin of the word language dates back to 13th Century.

While tracing the etymology of the word game it was found on Oxford Languages and Google App the word game has its origin in German root gamen which means 'amusement, fun'. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary the roots of the word language can undoubtedly be traced a long time back. Online Etymology Dictionary mentions the word language has its roots in the 'late 13c., language "words, what is said, conversation, talk," from Old French language "speech, words, oratory; a tribe, people, nation", from Vulgar Latin linguaticum, from Latin lingua "tongue," also "speech, language,".'

The most apt of the given meanings could be "words, what is said, conversation, talk". The Britannica Encyclopedia's article on language calls "**Language**, a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release." In the light of above two arguments and current usage of language we can simply consider that language to be the medium of expression.

In the foreword of their book *Teaching English* Andrew Goodwyn and Jane Branson (Goodwyn and Branson,1988)say that English is still considered one of the most important school subjects that is why "teachers can find the responsibility of teaching it both exciting and challenging."

In accordance with the views of Goodwyn and Branson, teaching English is indeed quite challenging. Teaching English to second language learners in a country like India is a very tough task because of innumerable factors like impractical syllabus, untrained and over -burdened teachers, never ending system of assessment and unwilling learners.

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In such distressing conditions games come to the rescue of English teachers and provide them a platform to teach English the fun-filled way. They break the monotony of the class-room and the learners become enthusiastic to learn the language.

Most of the families in lettered homes have board games like scrabble. It is an ideal game to train learners to brain storm and form new words. The same technique was used on white board. Learners enjoyed playing scrabble on white board and were completely involved in the activity. The sellers define Scrabble to be a classic game which can be frequently used by all the language learners for practicing or learning spellings and vocabulary. Scrabble on board was a hit in the classroom and each member of the four teams in the class was trying hard to score points over the opponents.

Video recordings of Xbox or PS5 games can be used to teach syntax (the study of the structure of a sentence in a language) in English Language. Take for instance a PS5 game –MARVELSPIDER-MAN REMASTERED BY Insomniac Games, USA which has a dialogue **'Mr.Frisk says Hi!'.** After showing the video recording of the game. The teacher can pick up the above- mentioned statement to teach syntax to learners. The rules of syntax that can be taught are as follows:-

1) Each new sentence begins with a capital letter.
2) Each new sentence ends with a punctuation (a period, a question mark, or an exclamation mark).In the case of an above stated sentence it is an exclamation mark.
3) A sentence most of the time follows the -Subject + Verb + Object pattern.
4) A sentence conveys a complete idea. That is why it is also called an independent clause.

A list of difficult words was given to the learners and the teacher explained to the learners the meaning and usage of difficult words. Some of the words were as follows:-

a) extemporaneous /ɛkˌstɛmpəˈreɪnɪəs/-- composed, performed, or uttered on the spur of the moment
b) connoisseur /ˌkɒnəˈsəː/- an expert or judge in matters of taste
c) rendezvous/ˈrɒndɪvuːˌˈrɒndeɪvuː/ · an agreement between two or more persons to meet at a certain time and place. ·
d) placid/ˈplasɪd/-calm and peaceful
e) cliché/ˈkliːʃeɪ/-a phrase or opinion that is overused and betrays a lack of original thought.

After the teacher explained the meaning and usage of these words a sand clock was used to give time to each student to create or frame the sentences using the above mentioned words. The students found this method exciting and learnt the meaning and usage of the words quickly.

Riddles are also a great resource to teach nuances of the language. riddles can be used to teach figurative usage of language. A pun is a "play on words that are either identical in sound("homonyms") or similar in sound, but are sharply diverse in meaning"(Abrams,1991,pg139). For example:

How long a person live?
Depends on the liver.

Now there are two meanings of liver in Collins dictionary. The first meaning is "a large organ in your body which processes your blood and helps to clean unwanted substances out of it." And the second meaning is "a person who lives in a specified way". Hence riddles can be exemplified to teach pun or creative usage of language to the learners. A riddle also brings a lot of entertainment to the classroom.

"Any teacher seeking ideas about how languages are learned will find a surfeit of theories" (Hedge,2000,p-10).A good teacher will find surfeit of ideas, methods and theories to use from in a language classroom. Intelligent teacher will use a methodology that best suits his students. One strategy which is an instant hit with second language learners and draws in maximum participation is using quizzes to teach language and grammar to second language learners. Suppose the teacher has to teach tag questions to the learners. He/she can design a quiz to teach tag questions. Some sample questions can be of a quiz of tag questions could be :-

1) She is dancing, _____?
a) isn't she
b) is not he
c) are not he

2) Let us go to watch a movie, _____?
a) shall we
b) shall not we
c) will we

3) They will design the project, _____?
a) won't they
b) shall it
c) am not

Similarly, quizzes can be designed to teach the usage of any language item or component of grammar.

Quizzes can also be used to teach correct pronunciation and meaning of the words. For instance:-

1-Cache means-

a)hiding place especially for concealing and preserving provisions or implements

to catch

to deliver

The teacher can explain that according to Merriam Webster Dictionary cache /kæʃ/ means a hiding place especially for concealing and preserving provisions or implements. Thus, by discussing the pronunciation and meaning of the given word the teacher can not only enrich the vocabulary of the students but also make the students pronunciation conscious too. To quote Mukalel, "English Language Teaching today has assumed dimensions that go for beyond the grip of an ordinary classroom" (Mukalel,1998).An excellent teacher will now how to design learning materials and discourse for his students.

Story of a video game like Call of Duty- Modern Warfare2 can be narrated to enhance the listening skills of the learners. Soldiers Price and Soap on a mission to take on terrorist Makarov and rogue General Shepherd, *Modern Warfare 2* is loaded with explosive beats that are supported by the crisp narrative that is full of twists and turns that leaves the listeners awestruck. They enjoy the story as much as the game play experience.

Unarguably, stories are a great medium to enhance the reading skills of the students. Take for example of the story the interesting One-Armed Judo Champion by David Cooper.

"Sometimes your biggest weakness can become your biggest strength. Take, for example, the story of one 10-year-old boy who decided to study judo despite the fact that he had lost his left arm in a devastating car accident."

His Judo teacher transformed his weakness into his biggest strength.

One-Armed Judo Champion can be used to teach reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, and extensive reading. It can also be used to generate discussion in the class over issues like is it true that weakness can be transformed into strength, or not? Hence the text of a story can also be used to enhance the speaking skill of the learners.

Brain Quest-written by Liane Onish uses a write –up on 'Big Birthdays'- about the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington followed by the crossword puzzle. The cross word puzzle helped the learners recapitulate the main facts from the lesson.

The chain story building technique can be used to hone the speaking skill of the learners.

As stated by Study.com a website for second language learners while "many English as a second language (ESL) classes focus on individual effort, there is a lot to be said for student collaboration. Chain stories, in which students each add a different segment or part to a story, is one great way to encourage learning through cooperation."

One great beginning for a chain story could be:

The night was dark. You could hear thunder muttering and see lighting flash. Suddenly, it started to rain. And the door of the Villa screeched open…...

An activity like a write up on a topic like my favourite offline/online game can enhance the writing skills of the learners. In addition to it learners will enjoy the task and it would not become a kind of classroom drudgery. An audio-visual clipping of a game like Arkham City can be shown to the learners and similarly they can be asked to give their feedback about the scene from the Arkham City.This exercise would eventually lead to the improvement in the writing skills of the learners.

No single method or approach such as Grammar Translation Method, Structure Approach, Audio-Lingual approach, Language Teaching Communicative, Information and communications technology (ICT) etc. can work. Each class and situation demands the teacher to innovate new methods, ideas and techniques to teach English as a Second Language.

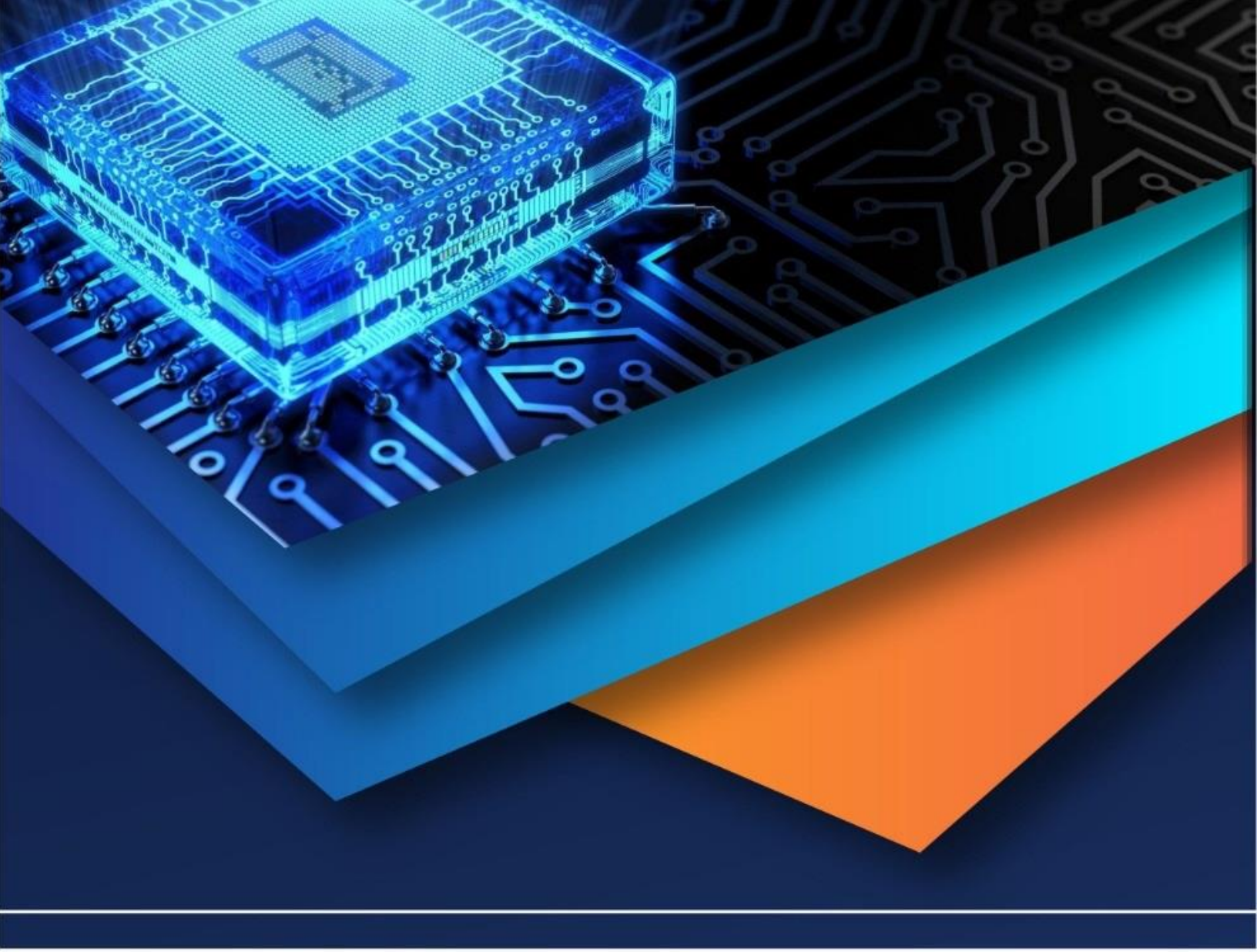
Natalie Hess says,"experience in any classroom helps us to develop our technique, work in the large multilevel class truly forces us to invent and develop new ways of organizing material."(Hess, 2001 p.5)

As a result, it can be concluded that a good teacher needs to use his/her knowledge and skills to cater to the needs of his English Language learners and experiment and invent new ways which are suitable to fulfil the language learning needs of his learners and captivating the interest of the learners. Thus, it can be said that language games are tertiary (third to the literary and language texts) in importance and can be used as supportive material for teaching and learning English language.

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