

Action Games in TESL

By Joe C. Guerrero

The following action game was designed on the elementary school level to teach (1) the phonological [t] in final position, (2) correct verb forms for present and past action, and (3) the use of do with the negative.

Select action verbs like the following: dance, hop, skip, jump, walk, clap, kick, touch, etc. Be certain that all are regular verbs and end in voiceless consonants so the final consonant sound in the past tense will be [t].

To start the game assign children to do one of each of these actions. Each child will in turn say what he is doing as he does it. "I'm dancing." "I'm hopping." etc. After he has said it, let all the class tell what that child is doing. "He's dancing." "John's dancing." Follow the same procedure with all, giving each student's name and action.

When everyone has had a turn doing the action and saying what he is doing, tell them to stop and have someone ask a question about the past action. "Did you hop?" might be asked of the child who was dancing. He should answer, "No, I didn't. I didn't hop. I danced." The class should repeat, "He didn't hop. He danced." Continue in a similar manner with each of the children until all of the actions have been covered. As the students speak, listen for [t] at the end of the past verbs and watch for the simple verb with the negative didn't.

Repeat Drills

If the class learns the drills correctly rather quickly make the game more difficult. Tell the class what someone is doing, naming a wrong action. i.e. "John clapped his hands." (John was dancing) Have half the class ask the question, "Did John clap his hands?" The others should answer, "No, John didn't clap his hands. He danced." etc. Again listen for the sound [t] on the appropriate word and no sound [t] on the verb with didn't.

Have each child do any action. Use the

same drills and procedures. You won't know what a child's action is so ask about any action and he will tell you what it was with the correct response. If asked, "Did you skip?" the child would reply "Yes, I skipped." if he had done this action. If he hadn't he would say, "No, I didn't skip. I _____ (naming the correct action.) Again watch for the sounds of the past in the verbs. If a child replies in the present instead of the past (don't for didn't or dance for danced) or substitutes the sound of [d] for [t] correct him by repeating the correct form, and then ask the question again.

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Another variation is to have the children question each other. One child performs an action and says what he is doing. i.e. "I'm dancing." He then stops the action and asks, "What did I do?" Another child will answer, "You danced, what did I do?" This would give an opportunity for all the students to participate at the same time. The teacher could walk around the room listening to various conversations, helping where necessary.

Children might perform any action and then stop and ask another child a question like "Did I hop?" The answer would be either, "Yes, you hopped." (if the child performed the action), or "No, you didn't hop. You _____ (naming the action)" (if the child did something else).

Continue with these games until responses are given quickly and acceptably.

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Teaching [d] in Final Position

After this lesson has been mastered verbs which end with [d] in the past may be substituted. i.e. dodge, nod, play, etc. This will demonstrate the contrast between the [t] and [d] in final position. Later the game may be played mixing the two different word lists.

Developing Reading and Writing Skills With [t] and [d]

Cut two strips of heavy paper for each sentence denoting one of these action verbs. i.e. I danced. I skipped. I clapped, etc. Divide the class into two groups and place one strip on each group's table. One child from Group I and one from Group II stands at the back of the room. When the sentence is read aloud the two children run and search for that sentence on their group's table. The first one to show the correct sentence to the class is the winner. One point is given to the group after the child reads the sentence and the class repeats it. This is a good review for students who are learning to read in English and frequently pronounce all printed "d"s in final position [d].

Have the students write the sentences as you say them. i.e. "I danced." "I didn't dance." etc. Collect and correct the papers. If a child makes many mistakes after the majority have mastered the sentences, have him come to you for individual help.

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