

GAMES IN TESL

2. *by Kathy Oshima*

Games are natural for children and helpful in their growth. Games can be especially useful to increase children's interest in routine drills and exercises. This is because children love competition and challenge. Games are always fun for children and most don't realize that they're actually mastering a skill when it is presented in the form of a game.

Using games for teaching English as a second language is a very good way to get the children involved so as not to bore them. Teaching some games may present a problem, in that the game itself may be within the children's command of English, while explanations and instructions may be too complex for them. In such cases, a recommended solution is to teach the game to a few of the quicker students and have them model it for the class. It may be even better, if feasible, to have older children from a more advanced class, or native-English speaking children, learn the game and demonstrate it.

Once a game has been learned, it can be adapted as the children progress. When the children learn new vocabulary and even new structures, these can often be added to a favorite game. A game, therefore, can be used effectively just as it is written, and when desirable can be regarded as a kind of skeleton or outline which can be expanded by the addition of new language items.

Many games require no materials at all. If a game does need props, improvise or use items that are easily accessible. Games that need picture cards, word cards, letter cards, etc. are pretty much stock-in-trade for any primary grade teacher, word and picture cards for new vocabulary can be made, as the need arises, on pieces of poster board.

When a game requires that each of the children have a set of picture cards, make the cards yourself using simple line drawings reproduced on any available equipment. Another approach is to let the children make their own picture cards as they learn

new words that can be drawn. They can cut pictures out of magazines or color duplicated outlines; either of these would then have to be pasted on thin cardboard. This kind of arts-and-crafts activity can be a game in itself to the children.

Many drills can be incorporated into a physical education activity. Children love to be out-of-doors playing rather than in a classroom working on a drill pattern.

In using a game, a TESL teacher must be cautious in that she must know what the aim of the game is. If the aim is learning sounds, the children's pronunciation should be emphasized although the game may also contain new words or structures.

Language games have an important place in any elementary TESL program. They provide an opportunity for the controlled repetition which must precede fluency; and they offer, especially to the younger child, a natural incentive to master a skill by practicing it at play.

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