

# THE USE OF GAMES

## in ESL Teaching

by Miriam Fujimoto

There is a decided trend in the direction of games as an instructional aid in second language teaching. Students favor game-type activities, and recognizing this fact, teachers incorporate more and more games in their planning.

The introduction to *Language Games and Songs for Core English* states: "Language games and songs have an important part in any elementary ESL program. Both provide an opportunity for the controlled repetition which must precede fluency; and they offer, to the younger child especially, a natural incentive to master a skill by practicing it at play."

Along with textbooks, pictures, charts, and audiovisual materials, games do have their place in the promotion of learning.

Generally speaking, instructional games are selected teaching techniques to which an element of play has been added. Through this element of play, important skills and information can be communicated in a game setting which the student finds enjoyable. Often what the student cannot achieve in a formal learning situation, he can grasp in an informal game experience.

Looking through game books in all subject areas, one begins to notice that there are more similarities than differences. Many games are alike and have either been modified or adapted to teach a particular subject, skill, or grade level. One very nice thing is that often there is much room left for the teacher and students to make changes which make the game situational for them.

In the broad range from very simple to difficult, games help give practice in a particular skill while keeping the class lively and interesting. Fe R. Dacanay, in *Techniques and Procedures in Second Language Teaching*, suggests that "a game

should be played briskly to keep the interest high. Once it drags, as when the pupils are not given a time limit to give their answers, the interest wanes and the purpose of the game is not accomplished. Also, the game should stop before the pupils get tired of it so that they will look forward to playing it again."

As with any other teaching procedure or material, it becomes the teacher's responsibility to judge a game's worth as an instructional tool. It is most important that

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**Miriam Fujimoto, a teacher in Hawaii Elementary Schools, began her game collection and wrote this paper for a TESL workshop at CCH.**

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both teacher and student keep in mind at all times the purpose of the game. In other words, what is it supposed to teach? Of course, it is a fun activity, but first and foremost, it is and should be a learning experience. If the game's focus is directed toward a particular objective, then it is indeed a valuable instructional tool.

Following Mary Finocchiaro's advice, I have started "on the road to collecting and adapting games" for my classes. Corresponding to the four basic aspects of language skill, I have color-coded my collection -- Listening - yellow, Speaking - green, Reading - pink, Writing - blue, and References - white. This is just a beginning, but I think it will become a worthwhile project that I can use and share with others. Hopefully, I will be able to build it into a resource file for the students to use themselves and be encouraged to modify some old games and create new ones. Then they will really be actively participating in their own learning.

A lesson plan using games to teach verb tenses follows on the next two pages.

# Teaching Verb Inflections With Games

## (A Lesson Plan)

by Miriam Fujimoto

The following is a lesson plan incorporating an adapted game for ESL learning.

**OBJECTIVE:** The student will select the proper verb inflection, *-s*, *-ed*, or *-ing* for regular verbs and use each form correctly in a sentence.

### PRESENTATION:

1. Show mechanical toys performing a specific action. e.g. robot walking, pig talking, ballerina dancing, bear jumping

T: What is the robot doing?

S: It's walking.

T: Yes, it's walking. (The robot is doing this action now, and John correctly said, "It's walking.")

T: When I saw the robot yesterday, it was also walking. What was it doing yesterday, Ann?

S: It was walking.

T: So, what did the robot do yesterday?

S: It walked.

T: Yes, yesterday it walked. The robot also did this last week. What did it do last week, Paul?

S: It walked last week.

T: Very good. Notice that when the action has already happened or has been performed in the past, we use the *-ed* ending. We say, "It walked." Now, if the robot does this sometimes what would you say, Mary?

S: Sometimes the robot walks.

T: In fact, the robot does this quite often. What does the robot do, Jim?

S: The robot often walks.

T: Very good. I suppose if I wound it up every day the robot would do this everyday. Then, what would you say, Nina?

S: The robot walks everyday.

T: Oh, very good. Notice that the words *often*, *sometimes*, and *everyday* are signals for you to use the *-s* inflection. This ending indicates that the action can occur at any time.

Proceed in a similar fashion with the other mechanical toys.

*(Extension: The toys provide concrete examples for the student to see the actual performance of the action. However,*

*transparencies, comic strips, or pictures will also provide the necessary visual stimuli for student responses.)*

2. Have the students perform actions, ask leading questions, and elicit responses from each other. The teacher gives an example so that the students can imitate her model.

T: Now watch me. (Teacher claps her hands.) What am I doing?

S: You are clapping your hands.

T: (Stops clapping). What was I just doing?

S: You were clapping your hands.

T: Good, Ted. And what did I just do, Joe?

S: You clapped your hands.

T: Your teacher often claps her hands. What does she do?

S: She claps her hands.

T: Now each of you will come to the front of the room and do some action as I did. First, I will whisper an action that I want you to perform. Then you will act out the action for the rest of the class to guess. You will then ask questions about what you did and the others will answer you. Try to ask as many questions as you can so that we can practice using all the inflections, both past and present. This means you are really going to have to think about your questions, doesn't it? All right, who would like to be our first actor or actress?

Students come up to perform such actions as 1) jumping rope, 2) combing their hair, 3) brushing their teeth, 4) playing the piano, and 5) skipping across the room. When a student completes his performance and questioning period, he calls on the next student to perform.

*(Extension: If the students can read, the actions may be written on slips of paper and placed in a box for the student to pick. Then, too, students may enjoy thinking up their own actions to perform. The caution to be observed here, is that the student selects only regular verbs since irregular verbs are inflected differently in the past tense. (e.g. run - ran) (These may be taught at a later time)*

The teacher says sentences using the different verbs. If a student has that verb on his card, he covers it with a marker. If the student does not have the verb that is used in the sentence on his card, he does not cover anything.

The student who covers his verbs in a line in any direction, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, calls out "VERB-O". The teacher then asks the student to check his verbs against the teacher's list. The student does this by saying the verb and using it correctly in a sentence. He is then declared the winner and a new game can be started. Students may wish to trade cards for the next games.

3. For further practice, have the students play "VERB-O".

Materials for each child - 1 playing card, markers.

Procedure: Each child is given a playing card with twenty-five squares. The center square is marked "Free," while the other squares are filled with verbs. The first column will have verbs without any inflection; the second column verbs with the -s inflection; the third column verbs with the -ed inflection; the fourth column verbs with the *be & ing (present)* inflection; and the fifth column verbs with the *be & ing (past)* inflection. A sample card is shown below.

<b>V</b> <i>verb</i>	<b>E</b> <i>-s</i>	<b>R</b> <i>-ed</i>	<b>B</b> <i>be + ing</i> (present)	<b>O</b> <i>be + ing</i> (past)
jump	kicks	bumped	is smiling	was hopping
crawl	skips	hopped	are playing	were laughing
play	talks	FREE	is crawling	was adding
laugh	bats	kicked	is jumping	were kicking
smile	crawls	smiled	are talking	was batting

*(Extension: Rather than having the verbs already written on each card, the students may be asked to write the verbs in the squares themselves. This would constitute a learning activity for writing the inflected verb correctly. The student would also be responsible for his own choices and therefore the composition of "his card".)*

*This method would offer a more controlled situation where the teacher could vary the verbs to be practiced, and use verbs that may need working on at that particular time. In this case, blank "cards" are printed on a ditto sheet and each time a new game is played, the student is told which verbs he is allowed to use.)*