

Teaching English Through Games

1st Sukirmiyadi

Department of Civil Engineering,
Engineering Faculty,
Universitas Pembangunan
Nasional "Veteran"
Jawa Timur, Indonesia
ahmadsukirmiyadi@yahoo.com

Abstract— There are many kinds of teaching techniques and methods to apply. However, the teaching of foreign language is not such an easy thing to do. It is the fact that many of the Indonesian learners are not capable of speaking English very well although they have been learning it for more than 10 (ten) years. This might be caused by several factors. One of them is dealing with the teaching technique or method used by the teacher. In accordance with the teaching technique, it was said that there were 3 (three) interesting activities which could make the learners pleased and joyful for language learning activities: Pictures, Stories and Games. Among these three teaching techniques, the writer would rather choose 'Games' to be presented in this paper because playing Games is not only enjoyable, fun and joyful but also communicative, [3]. In line with this statement, this study is aimed at describing about the concept of Game(s) and how to play Games in foreign language teaching and learning. Based on the several researches, it was said that Playing Games could make both the teacher and the learners/students pleased, joyful and fun during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the students would not feel that they were learning a new language instead of playing Games. Due to the fact that this activity could not only make the foreign language learners be encouraged and but also well motivated because they were amused and fun.

Key words --- Teaching English; Teaching Technique; Foreign Language; Games; Language Games

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been widely acknowledged that English is an International language which is spoken by almost all of the nations all over the world. The importance of English is officially accepted not only in formal educational institutions but also in the fields of International relations such as diplomacy, trades, industries, science and technology. This fact makes English very important to learn. With this prominent position of English language, it seems that as a developing country Indonesia is also demanded for its mastery. To achieve the target of English mastery and the learner's competence, within the late one decade, this language has been introduced since the learners are still studying at the Elementary Schools until University level. Unfortunately, the teaching of English has not satisfied the demand and fulfilled as what it is expected. Many of the learners are neither capable of writing nor speaking well in English although they have been learning it for more than 10 (ten) years. This might be caused by several factors, such as the teacher's competence of English, teaching method or technique used by the teacher or the learners themselves.

Besides, the teaching materials used in Indonesia are focussing in grammar and reading not speaking. On the contrary, the objective of language teaching is communicative competence [1]. Therefore, the teaching materials and method should be concentrated on Speaking skill instead of the three other skills: Listening, Reading and Writing [2].

In line with the teaching method in accordance with foreign language learning, it was said that there were several teaching methods, especially in foreign language teaching: Grammar-translation Method, Direct Method, Reading Method and Audio-lingual Method, [3]. However to achieve the learning target, a teacher has to be very creative and capable of finding and choosing a teaching technique and media to attract and make his students enjoy learning. If the teaching technique and media being used have corresponded with the material to teach and the learner's need, it will make the teacher easy to transfer the material and with a pleasure the students will also be capable of accepting it without any burden. In efforts to achieve the target of teaching and learning process, there are quite a lot of media and teaching techniques which can be used depending on the teacher's creativity in presenting the material to teach to his students. However, there are several media and teaching techniques which are very popular in English language teaching, such as flow chart, role-play, story-telling, student-centered learning, discussion, games and songs [4].

In accordance with playing games as one of the teaching techniques in a foreign language teaching and learning, actually this technique has already been introduced for the first time by [5]. It was said that there were four popular teaching techniques which could be applied to make a class become a communicative activity because the learners could interact and communicate one another very well. Those activities were playing Games, situational practices, self-directed dialogue and Role-Play. Meanwhile, [6] noted that the three interesting activities that could make the young children/learners pleased and joyful for language classroom activities were dealing with Pictures, Stories and Games. Among those techniques and activities stated above, the writer is only discussing one of them, it is 'Playing Games'. The writer prefers choosing Games as a teaching technique in this paper because besides communicative playing Games is also enjoyable, fun and joyful. This fun and joyful situation will make the learner's attention be concentrated on the games they are playing, so that it is often very hard to see the difference between

learning/studying and playing because in this activity, there is a pleasant, informal and often relaxed atmosphere, favourable to the learners to learn a new language.

Referring to the introduction stated above, this study aims at providing a solution dealing with the teaching technique by describing what the concept of Game(s) is and how to play Games in foreign language teaching and learning process. Several kinds of Games presented on this paper are Structure Games, Vocabulary Games, Pronunciation Games, Listening -and-Do games, Miming and Role-Play, and Discussion Games. It is expected that by playing Games as one of the teaching techniques in English language teaching and learning, the learners will feel pleased and relaxed. Besides, through this teaching technique also, it is expected that in general the English language teaching and learning could run very well and smoothly because the learners would feel pleased and entertained during the learning process. Furthermore, feeling amused and entertained, it is expected to be capable of encouraging and motivating them to learn English more seriously and attentively.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

There are 3 (three) concepts of meaning dealing with Games. The first is lexical meaning which is defined based on the dictionary and the one which is regarded with the foreign language teaching. The second is related to the materials selected to teach called Language Games and the third is kinds of Games.

A. *The Meaning of Game(s)*

According to Webster's Desk dictionary [7], there are several definitions in accordance with the term 'Game(s)' (Noun): (a) A form of playing for amusement, esp. as a pastime of children; (b) A competitive activity involving a skill, chance, or endurance played according to the rules; (c) A single occasion of such an activity; (d) The number of points required to win; (e) A particular manner or style of playing in competition. Meanwhile Game(s) in accordance with foreign language teaching, it is defined as a form of play especially with rules as one of the teaching methods to make the learners enjoy learning, [8]. The relationship between Games and teaching speaking as a foreign language is that playing Games could motivate and encourage the learners to try to speak the target language pleasantly. Based on those two definitions either taken from the dictionary or in accordance with foreign language teaching, they have the similar meaning and all of them have the same target, that is an activity or a kind of play which requires an interaction between one person and another which can make them pleasant and enjoyable.

B. *Language Games*

In teaching foreign language by employing games as a teaching method, it cannot be separated from what it is called Language Games. Language Games are games which are used by the language teachers to teach either the second or foreign language in efforts to encourage and motivate the learners to learn the foreign language pleasantly without

any burden [9]. Games are preferable as a teaching method when the teacher finds his students (the learners) tired of drilling or of doing some exercises. Therefore, games should not be given in all situations. This will even make the learners get bored. As a teacher, s/he should know when to play games and what kind of language games considered to be good to play. Below are several criteria of good language games:

- (a) It requires a little or no advanced preparation
- (b) It is easy to play but it provides the learners with intellectual challenge
- (c) It can entertain all students but it cannot cause the class to be out of control
- (d) It does not require time consuming correction of written responses.

Moreover, games can be grouped in accordance with the size of class for which we think is the best adjusted with the level. Some of games are preferable only with a small group while the others can be successfully played in a class of more than 50 students. As a guideline (for a teacher), here are several classifications in choosing games adjusted with the number of students/learners:

- (a) Large class (about 40 to 80 students)
- (b) Medium-size class (20 to 40 students)
- (c) Small group (8 to 18 students)
- (d) Very small group (2 to 8 students)

In line with the explanation above, it is expected that by using those classifications a teacher can choose or select which language games seem to be appropriate and suitable to play in accordance with the number of students. In addition, each game to play should be adjusted with the level of the learners especially dealing with their English speaking proficiency for which the game best suited. Below are the levels and their symbols:

- (a) Elementary Level : A
- (b) Intermediate Level : B
- (c) Advanced Level : C

The division in accordance with the learner's level's competence is useful and important in efforts to decide which games to choose to play. Here are several suggestions in order to obtain the best result in playing games:

- (1) Before introducing one game to the class, ask the students/learners whether they would enjoy the kind of activity or game which the teacher will present
- (2) Choose a game which can collect the students as many as possible to participate in it. If you have a large class, ask some of your students to do scoring, while the others are to take part in the game. Meanwhile in a small class, you should make sure that every student has an active role in each game being played.
- (3) Be sure that the games you select and choose are suitable and appropriate with your student's capability.
- (4) Don't play a game at the beginning of the class hour. Play the game when the students seems to be tired and bored of other class activity.
- (5) Give the directions dealing with the rules of Games very clearly so that every student can understand easily how to play. Make a few trial games at first when it is necessary.

- (6) Show the game by yourself and you (as a teacher) should stand in front of the class as you act as the leader referee.
- (7) Be discipline to the rules of the games and don't let any student break the rules that have been established.
- (8) Keep the games under well controlled so that the games are not only amusing the students but also teaching them.
- (9) In team games, try to leave an equal number of more proficient/smart students and less proficient ones in each team, so that all teams will be balanced. This is not only preventing embarrassment of the weaker students but also making the contest/play be more exciting.
- (10) Stop playing the Games before the students are ready to be quiet and don't play the games too often which might cause the learners get bored and lose its novelty.

C. Kinds of Games

It was said that there were 10 (Ten) kinds of Games which could be used as Language Games: (a) Structure Games; (b) Vocabulary Games; (c) Pronunciation Games; (d) Listening-and-Do Games; (e) Mining and Role-Play; (f) Discussion Games; (g) Spelling Games; (h) Number Games; (i) Read-and-Do Games; and (j) Games and Writing, [9]. These kinds of Games dealing with 'How to Teach and Play Games' are discussed in the following part of Discussion.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, there are 2 (Two) problems to discuss: the General Steps of Presenting / Playing Games and How to Teach and Play Games.

A. The General Steps of Presenting and Playing Games

In accordance with the Language Learning Activities, here are several steps or pointers how to present and play Games covering: Teacher's preparation, Teams, keeping score, original Games and learner's participation.

1) Teacher's Preparation

Teacher's preparation takes an important role in playing Games as the sources of any classroom game or activity depends much on the teacher's preparation. Therefore, a teacher should have a good knowledge of organization (how to organize), skills, techniques and rules of Games. Besides, he should also have an equipment ready to use and know that the activity/games to play is suitable with the ability and experience of the players/learners.

2) Teams or Groups

It is suggested that the team or group division should not be done so often as it will make the students confused and waste the time. It is still considered to be good for a student belongs to the same group or team the whole year so that he will be fully responsible to his group to perform as well as possible. However, for some reason because of the student's absence that might cause the group fall below strength, allowance/reward can be made in the point scoring.

Moreover, to make the balance of each group and the other and have competitive spirit, the teacher should see that the students of each team have the same proficiency.

3) Keeping Scores

To encourage and motivate the students/learners to play the Games seriously that makes all groups or teams get involved enthusiastically, it is essential for a teacher to keep scores for many competitive games. Being scored, it will establish some enthusiasm and spirit of all of the members of groups to be the winner.

4) Original Games

It is essential for a teacher to create a successful innovation in teaching and playing Games. To achieve his teaching target, he should have a good background knowledge and experiences dealing with teaching and learning process. Here are several suggestions for such creative undertakings of Language Games which can be used to provide some outlines to make the language teaching through Games become more effective and innovative.

- (a) The Games should be fast moving in efforts not to make the students get bored
- (b) They should contain an element or surprise of competition
- (c) They should be capable of encouraging and motivating great responses from all of the members of students or groups
- (d) They should be simple enough in order not to take a long time to explain and to do scoring
- (e) They should contain some supplement material of regular class lessons and have a definite learning objective
- (f) Avoid a drop out games which takes a long time for elimination. If this happens, the students out will get tired and bored of watching the others
- (g) They should provide sufficient motion to heighten and sustain interest of the students.

5) Learner's Participation

In line with the other language learning activities, one of the problems dealing with employing games as a teaching technique is how to get all of the learners involved and take a full part in that activity, such as the shier and less advanced learners/students. Here are several suggestions which might be essential to consider:

- (a) Providing a few minute's silent preparation time to think or even to make a note is sometimes necessary for oral games. E.g: Guessing Games will go more quickly.
- (b) The teacher can help his students by putting a kind of 'reminder' words or phrases on the board, such as questions begun by: To be / verb helper (is-am-are-do-does-did), question words (what-who-where, etc) and other vocabularies and clues required.

- (c) Let one of the students or several of them in turn lead the activity while the teacher sits somewhere in class near those who most require help. He can help his students who do not know what and how to say by whispering or writing down a word or several words on a slip of paper and pass it to them to give an idea.
- (d) If the teacher asks his students a question for 'Hands Up', don't just call on the same person to respond and answer. Give some kind of clue or hint to help the shier and slower learners to speak.
- (e) Find only Games which can involve all of the students, either group or pair ctivity as much as possible.
- (f) The students should be encouraged to have mutual help within the class or within the team or group.

B. How to Play Games

In accordance with the kinds of Games which have been stated previously, there are 10 (Ten) kinds of games which could be used as Language Games to teach: Structure Games, Vocabulary Games, Pronunciation Games, Listening-and-Do Games, Miming and Role-Play, Discussion Games, Spelling Games, Number Games, Read-and-Do Games and Games & Writing, [10].

1) Structure Games

Structure Games are games which provide the use of particular patterns of Syntax in communication practice.

Example : What is it? Is it ?
 Level : Elementary – Intermediate – Advanced
 Age : Any
 Group Size : Whole Class – Groups – Pairs
 Use : To practice 'Yes/No' and other questions, to brush up the learner's vocabulary
 Somebody thinks of an object or a person that the class knows very well, while the other students ask questions, putting up their hands and waiting to be called on. The questions might be like: 'Is it a bag in front of you?; Is it a lamp above us; Is it a door?; Is it a railwa station?; Are you wearing it? Is it a man who is wearing a black jacket?; Is it a woman who came here a few minutes ago?'; etc. The student who can guess correctly will get a score or point [11].

After such a game has been played by the whole class successfully, it can be played in groups or pairs. The student who has thought of an object or something are questioned by members of another team, and points are scored in accordance with the number of questions asked. E.g: One point for a guess fater completing 5 (five) questions only. There should be a frequent change from one team to another to keep the whole class active. However, the number of 'Yes-No' questions can be prolonged up to twenty questions if the answer or guess is quite difficult to guess or answer. The team will become the winner if they can guess or answer after asking 20 questions, otherwise they will be the loser.

2) Vocabulary Games

Vocabulary games are games in which the learner's attention is focussed mainly on vocabulary (new words).
 Example : 'Look at What we Bought'.

Level : Elementary - Intermediate
 Age : Any
 Group Size : Whole class or Groups
 Use : to Brush up the Vocabulary of Shopping
 I/We went to Bandung (Jogja/Australia/London or somewhere else) last year. There I/We bought many things, such as (wrist watch/camera/belt/shirt/tie/shoes/computer,etc). But those goods/objects are not mentioned instead of being mimed. It is suggested that the mimes should not be hurried or superficial but properly thought out and then performed in such a way that everybody has a good chance of guessing what they represent [12].
 The answers/words (wrist watch/camera/belt/shirt/tie/shoes/computer,etc) made by the learners correctly are then written on the board and each player/learner repeats the sentence.
 Other objects for miming are such as: piano, guitar, television, running, swimming, football player, etc.

3) Pronunciation Games

Pronunciation Games are games which are used to teach Pronunciation drills by taking the form of games or contents given as meaningful as possible [13].

Example : The Same or Different
 Level : Elementary - Intermediate
 Age : Any (except young children)
 Group Size : Whole class or Groups
 This game can be played with sounds, words or sentences. The teacher might say 2 (two) sentences and then the students/learners should answer or decide whether they are the same or different. Here is the example:
 Teacher : 'We began to think' and 'We began to sink'. Are they the same or diffirent? You, John!
 John : 'The same sir'
 Teacher : Listen once again. 'We began to think' and 'We began to sink'.
 Jon : Different sir.
 Teacher: Correct. Now, I'd like to look at your bag and I'd like to look at your back. Anybody can answer?; Hands Up; Who knows?
 Marry : Different sir; etc.
 Teacher : Good, that's right.

To make it more various and challenging, the games do not simply have to decide whether the teacher's utterences are the same or different but the students have to describe them. The presentation can be oral or both oral and visual and the responses can be oral or written. If the response is written, the students should write with 'A or B' or with the words themselves. E.g: 'You must leave there' and 'You must live there'. Let's call 'leave' which means 'go away' is 'A' and 'live' which means 'live in one place' is 'B'. Then the teacher says: 'You must leave there ', one student should answer 'B'; etc. If the teacher thinks that there is a very smart student, s/he can ask her/him to substitute the tacher's position but must be well supervised.

4) Listen – and - Do Games

Listen – and - Do Games are games which are used by the teachers to teach a new language. In playing games, the learners/students have to listen at first and try to understand what the teacher will say and then they carry out

some action in accordance with what they have listened and understood to.

Example : True and False
 Level : Elementary - Intermediate – Advanced
 Age : Any, children up to Adults
 Group Size : Whole class or Groups
 Use : to understand oral statements

There are 2 (two) chairs/seats labelled with ‘True and False’ and put the two chairs in front of the class and a member of each team is ready to sit on either one or the other. Alternatively, the members of each team are numbered and the leader of team calls any number to come in front. Oral statements are made which are obviously ‘True or False’. E.g: It’s raining heavily (when the sun is shining brightly); Anton is not absent today (when everybody in class knows that he is not in because he has been sick for several days); Bogor is located in East Java (Bogor is in West Java); Maradona is a badminton player from Indonesia; The capital city of England is Texas; etc. If the learner thinks that the statement is ‘True’, s/he has to hurry up to the front to take a seat on the ‘True’ chair and if s/he thinks that the statement is ‘False’ then s/he sits on the ‘False’ chair. If the student sits down on the right chair then s/he will get a score or point for his or her team. The other students follow from each team as the next statement is made

It is essential that the teacher prepare a list of varied and interesting statements which are adjusted with the learner’s age, interests, and linguistic achievement of class/learners. If necessary, the statements can be repeated. They can be short, long or even difficult ones.

Variant: One student from each group goes outside while each of the group gets a story ready. Those staying outside then come back to the class room and be back to their own groups and are told a story. Then, they visit the other groups and tell it to them.

5) *Miming and Role – Play*

Role – Play is a kind of game for students in which they have to act out or take parts in one play, (E.g: acting as a doctor, a teacher, reporter, etc.) that has been assigned in efforts to use and practice the target language they are learning. Therefore, Role-Play is an aspect of simulation. The whole activity and situation are simulated in the class room and the participants adopt rules that belong to it. Role – Play can also help to bring the language to life and to give the learners some experience of its use as a means of communication practice. This game prominently includes some element of miming and role – playing has proved to be fun and enjoyable and is successful at different age and proficiency levels.

Example : What are you/they doing?
 Level : Elementary - Intermediate – Advanced
 Age : Any
 Group Size : Whole class, Groups or Pairs
 Use : To encourage the learners to practice speaking as a real practice of our daily life.

Many simple actions which cannot be performed in the class room can be shown in pictures or mimed, E.g: walking, washing one’s face, swimming, eating, etc. The learners/students and their teams take turns to perform an

action and others guess what it is. After a correct guess has been made, the class or team can repeat it together.

Groups/teams can separately prepare a number of mimed action (one and another should be different) in which all members of the group take part. Meanwhile, the other groups then say what they are thinking and doing. E.g: There is an accident in the street (somebody walking suddenly stops and looks shocked, then hurries forward to help that person holding his head, is brushed aside by a doctor, etc.

Variant: Each group chooses a word, e.g: ‘Coat’. Every member of group thinks of finding a word beginning with ‘C’, then beginning with ‘O’; ‘A’; and ‘T’. S/he then finds a mime to demonstrate what the word is. When everybody is ready, each group performs for the other groups who have to guess the words presented by the names and from the initial letters discover the original word. Here is a possible sequence for the word ‘COAT’:

- (1) C: cake – cool – clean – comb
- (2) O: open – oil – old – orange
- (3) A: apple – agree – absent – arms
- (4) T: turn on – tie – table – temperature

6) *Discussion Games*

Actually several games presented previously have involved discussion games, such as in the Role-Play games. However in this part, it will be presented a group of games in which discussion plays a dominant role. Most of these games provide themselves to group or pair activity.

Example : Finding a Way
 Level : Intermediate – Advanced
 Age : Any
 Group Size : Whole class, Groups or Pairs
 Use : To encourage the learners to practice speaking in accordance with how to find the way, routes, etc., using: must, need, have/has to and certain other prepositional phrases.

The bases of game is a street map of a certain place, like a village, town, part of a city, and other certain places either real or imaginary. There should be clearly marked the names of some of the streets and certain buildings or other important places, such as railway station, bus station, bank, hotel, post office, etc. There are the two types of problems how to present themselves for solution:

- (1) How to get from one place to another
- (2) Where you come from or to if you follow a particular route.

Here are the kinds of language required to talk about this problem:

- (a) How do/can you get from the railway station to the air port?
- (b) What’s the best way of getting from the bus station to the nearest hotel?
- (c) Can you tell me the way to the Zoo from your office?; etc.

Here are the examples of reply which might be used:

- (a) First, you (must) go along Pahlawan Street, then take the first turning on the left, etc.
- (b) From here, Go straight ahead until you find the traffic lights, take the second on the right, etc.

- (c) Go along Jalan Raya Darmo until you see the Mosque, Al-Fallah on the left and traffic light. The zoo is on the right side after about a hundred meter away.

However, the language can also be like this: If there is a discussion of the route: ‘Need/Must/Should/Could I go along Jalan Embong Malang?’ The Reply might be: ‘No, you do not/needn’t/ shouldn’t/couldn’t go that way. You should go along Jalan Basuki Rachmad and then.....; etc. Or: Yes, you may/can go along Jalan Panglima Sudirman and when you see Karapan Sapi statue, turn right. Not far from there, it might be about a hundred meters, Hyatt Hotel is on the left side.

IV. CONCLUSION

There are many kinds of different teaching and learning methods or techniques to apply in foreign language teaching. One of them is Playing Games. Games are enjoyable and agreeable because it can bring both the teacher and his students into more agreeable and intimate relationship due to the fact that it can create relaxation, fun and excellent entertainment. For this reason, playing games can make the students learn the foreign language in a relaxation also without a feeling that they are being forced to accept the materials given by their teacher. Therefore, this teaching technique is quite effective and efficient to apply especially when the students/learners are becoming tired and bored of some exercises of drilling presented in class. Besides, this teaching and learning technique seems to be quite effective and efficient to apply not only for young learners or beginners of Elementary level but also for adults of Advanced level. Being entertained, unconsciously the learners do not feel that they are learning a new language because it is fun and joyful. This activity not only could encourage and but also motivate the learners very well to learn the foreign language being learned without a feeling that they are being forced to accept the materials given by their teacher. Moreover, feeling amused and entertained, it was expected that playing games could make the students be capable of learning and practicing the new language being learned very well more seriously and attentively. Finally, by applying this teaching technique, English language teaching and learning could run very well and smoothly

because the learners would feel pleased and entertained during the learning process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authour would like to thank to the Dean, the chief of Civil Engineering Department and The Committee of ICSS who have already reviewed my paper to make it better.

REFERENCES

- [1] Sukirmiyadi, “Teaching English to Young Learners through Indonesian-Translated Songs,” *IOP Publ. Conf*, no. Series 953, 2017.
- [2] P. Ur, *A Course in Language Teaching (Practice and Theory)*. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- [3] W. R. Lee, *Language Teaching Games and Contests*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- [4] Paulston, C. Bratt, N. Bruder, and Marry., *Teaching English as a Second Language: Techniques and Procedures*. Cambridge: Winthrop Publishers, Inc, 1976.
- [5] Chastain and Kenneth, *Developing Second Language Skills: Theory & Practice*. Virginia: University of Virginia Charlottesville, 1976.
- [6] Rivers and M. Wilga, *Teaching Foreign – Language Skills*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- [7] K. Suyanto, *Teaching English to Young Learners*. Malang: Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Malang, 1999.
- [8] Dobson and M. Julia, *Effective Techniques for English Conversation Groups*. Washington, D.C: English Language Programs Division Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Information Agency, 1997.
- [9] Webster, *Webster’s Desk Dictionary of the English Language*. Portland House Press Ltd, 1983.
- [10] N.N, *English Language Instructor Course (Teaching Methodology)*. Texas: Defense Language Institute, English Language Centre, 1988.
- [11] S. Phillips, *Young Learners*. London: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- [12] M. Sinaga, *Teaching English to Children (as opposed to adults)*. Malang: IKIP Malang, 1997.
- [13] Sukirmiyadi, *Teaching Speaking through Games*. Surabaya: Muhammadiyah University, 1988.