

THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF USING GAMES IN TEACHING TOEIC READING SKILL FOR NON-MAJOR ENGLISH STUDENTS AT DONG THAP UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The aims of the study are to determine what kinds of games can be used in teaching and learning TOEIC reading skills and to investigate positive impacts of games in improving the reading skills and autonomy ability of students. The results suggest that the practical roles of the games benefit both teachers and students. For students, the activities help them not only improve their TOEIC reading skills but also encourage their motivation of self-study. For teachers, games help them improve their English teaching skills. Some suggestions for using games are made.

Keywords: Activity, Game, Impact, Reading Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Reading skill plays a very important role for non-major English students at Dong Thap University because it not only facilitates students in learning English but it also important for student's teaching career. According to Hermida. J "Reading is a process shaped partly by the text, partly by the reader's background, and partly by the situation the reading occurs in (Hunt, 2004, p. 137). Reading an academic text does not simply involve finding information on the text itself. Rather, it is a process of working with the text. When reading an academic text, the reader recreates the meaning of the text, together with the author. In other words, readers negotiate the meaning with the author by applying their prior knowledge to it (Maleki & Heerman, 1992). But this process is only possible if the reader uses a series of categories of analysis, some of which are specific to each academic discipline. Thus, working with a text and recreating its meaning entail both non disciplinespecific and specific strategies. The expert reader has incorporated these categories and applies them almost intuitively. But, first-year students ignore these categories of analysis. So, professors in each discipline need to teach both the general analytical tools and the disciplinespecific values and strategies that facilitate disciplinary reading and learning (Bean, 1996, p. 133).

There are many good ideas about English teaching. Among these, using games in the English class is the one which is most easily accepted by students and which is also a very useful and helpful aspect of communicative method. As is known to everyone, game is an activity providing entertainment or amusement; it's a competitive activity or sport in which players contend with each other according to a set of rules. "A game is an activity carried out by co-operating or competing decision-makers, seeking to achieve, within a set of rules, their objectives" (Rixon 1981). A game is an activity that both the teachers and students enjoy doing. It is student-centered and as appealing as playing in the playground. Using games in English class can get students relaxed and enjoying using the language. It may be argued that college students, unlike children, having grown up, do not need games to relax themselves. On the contrary, adults sometimes feel more nervous than children when they face new things, and they are more afraid of losing their face a the sense of face develops with their age. In this sense, they do need games or any other activity that help them relaxed and innocent like children to the new language without being afraid of making mistakes.

According to Stephen Krashen (1982), second language acquisition is influenced by affective factors either positively or negatively. One of the teacher's tasks is to create a situation where students' affective filter is lowered so that the comprehensible input could be taken in. The first aim of using games in class is just to create such a situation. In addition, games may help and encourage many learners to support their interest and work (Wright 2006). Games can increase motivation to learn the language as students, especially the weaker ones, feel a real sense of achievement when they manipulate a game (Hubbard 1987). Games can provide quite extensive knowledge input. Games can increase students' communication and co-operation with each other. And games can act as a testing mechanism through which they will expose areas of weakness and the need for remedial work. As Roger Gower, Diane Phillips and Steve Walter said, "Many conventional games can be adapted to foreign language teaching, as with any communicative activity the areas of languages produced may be predictable and therefore useful as a guided activity" (Roger Gower, Diane Phillips and Steve Walter, 1995: 110).

It means that game can help the teacher in teaching foreign language to the students. Meanwhile, John Haycraft says that, games are an agreeable way of getting a class to use its initiative in English. As they are gently competitive, they increase motivation (John Haycraft, 1997: 94). Besides, game is fun activity; game can motivate students in joining teaching-learning process. It can attract the students' attention. Teaching English using games is a good way. As stated by Scott and Ytreberg, "Playing with the language in this way is very common in first language development and is a very natural stage in the first stages of foreign language learning too" (Scott and Ytreberg, 1990: 5). Using game in teaching a language can help the students in developing their language especially in the first stage. It means that play is in the essential nature of child.

Using Games In Teaching TOEIC Reading Skill For Non-Major English Students At Dong Thap University

Pelmanism Describe

Skimming for gist in order to match pairs of cards

Preparation

Make a set of 10 pairs of cards for each group of three to four players. Alternatively, ask the learners to make the cards themselves. The pairs of cards can relate to each other in a range of ways, according to the language needs of the learners. Below are the examples of different types of matching pairs

Examples of text pairs

Word / definition

Quotation / author

Photo (from a magazine) of a person, object or scene / a written description of him/ her/ it

Photographs / matching dialogue

Cartoon / caption (cut from comics, etc.)

Riddle / solution

Question / answer

Action / purpose

Procedure

Step 1: Invite the learners to form groups of three or four. Give each group a set of cards, and help them become familiar with the pairs. A simple way to do this is to invite them to muddle all the cards face up and then see how quickly they can pair them together.

Step 2: Ask the learners to shuffle the cards and lay them face down so that the pictures and/or writing on the cards cannot be seen. It doesn't matter if the players see the cards being put down and if they try to remember where the pairs were placed.

Step 3: The first players in all the pairs then pick up two of the cards. If they think their cards match, they make some appropriate comments to the others, before picking them up. For example (if playing with word/ definition cards):

Player 1: (pointing to the back of a card) Magazine! (turns over the picture... if it is a picture of a magazine then they leave it turned over) (pointing to the back of another card) A sort of thin book with a paper cover. It has photographs and articles. You can buy it every week or every month. (Turn over the card... of the picture and the text make a pair, the player leaves them turned over)

Step 4: If the others agree that the cards are a pair, the players keep them and takes another turn. When two cards are picked up which do not match, they must be shown to the other players and repalced in exactly the same position from which they were taken. Then the next player has a turn.

Step 5: This continues until all the cards have been paired ofd. The player with the most pairs is the winner.

Purpose

The game is useful for students to practice and review vocabulary because they have to find out the card which has correct meaning or picture describing it. With teachers, they can use this game to engage student's participation and make the classroom become more interesting. Teacher can flexibly in choosing topics and language objectives for students to practice.

Memorise and Draw Describe

Skimming a description of an image, scanning it for detail, then memorising it in order to draw the most accurate replica possible

Preparation

You will need a picture or a map and a written description of it (See an example below). Display the description on the wall so that learners can go and consult it. Keep the picture or a map hidden from sight until the end of the game.

Procedures

Step 1: Invite the learners to leave their desks and read the description posted on the wall,

skimming at first, for the general idea, then scanning for detail and memorising the essential points of the description.

Step 2: Ask the learners to return to their desks and draw a picture of what has been described. Let them return to re-read the description as often as they need.

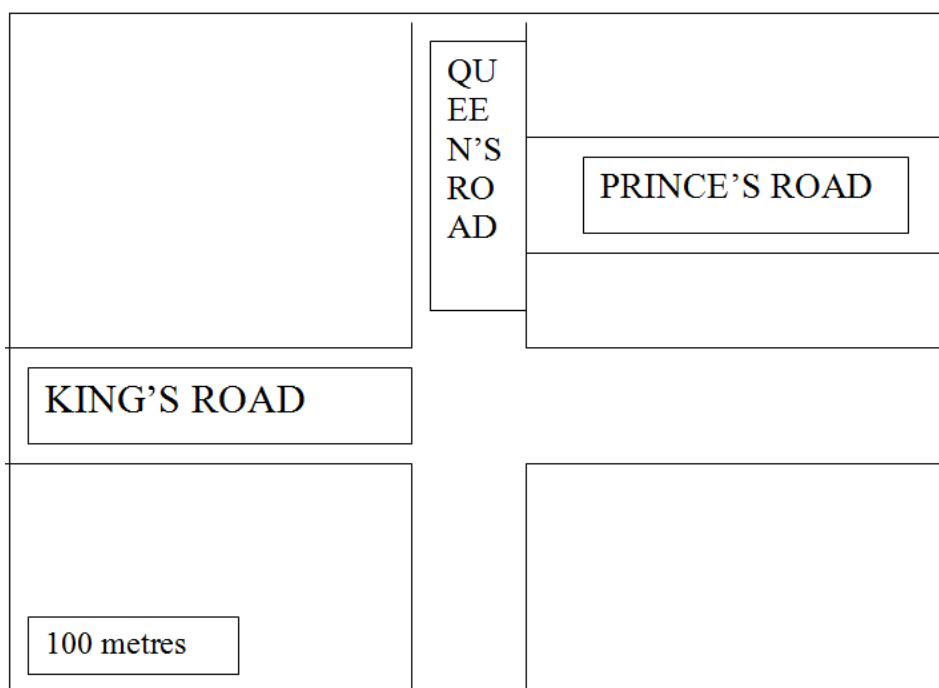
Step 3: Display all the pictures and discuss which relate well to the text and which less well.

Step 4: Finally, show the original picture or map upon which the description was based. Ask the learners whose picture or map is the most accurate replica.

*** Notes:** The text can be an objective description of a person, place or object, so that an accurate replica of the original might be expected, or the description might be subjective, in which case the learner can respond subjectively.

CAN YOU DRAW IT?

There is a road across the middle of the map. The road is called King's Road.
There is a crossroads half way along King's Road. The other road is called Queen's Road.
"Prince's Road" is about 100 metres up Queen's Road on the right.
John's house is about 200 metres on the left on Prince's Road.



Purpose

The game is useful for students to practice speaking, listening skill and improve vocabulary source as well because they have to listen the instructions from their friends and draw what they hear. With teachers, they can use this game to engage student's participation and make the classroom become more interesting. Teacher can introduce further variety and increase the demands on the learners by asking them to make the map or picture in front of the class. Then,

other students can make questions about the contents of the picture or map. This will help students improve their problem-solving skills and confidence.

Pass The Message **Describe**

Reading a short text seen for a very brief time and writing it down as accurately as possible from memory.

Preparation

Write a short message on a slip of paper, for example one of the following:

1. Please phone me this evening
2. Don't forget to empty the washing machine, feed the cat and lock the door.
3. I will be waiting for you just outside the swing doors of the swimming pool at a quarter to nine.

Procedure

Step 1: Show the message to someone sitting at the front and to one side of the class. Let this learner see the sentence for the five seconds, then take this from them and keep it.

Step 2: Ask that learner to write the sentence as they remember it on a piece of paper, and to show it to their neighbor for five seconds.

Step 3: Carry on with your normal lesson as the message is passed from learner to learner, each learner writing down the message they remember. The message, usually much changed, should eventually reach the last learner.

Step 4: When the passage has been passed through all learners, ask the last one to read out what they have written down. There will probably be cries of astonishment

Step 5: Then read out the message as it began

Step 6: Now ask the learners, in turn, to read out the message they passed on

Step 7: If you want to get some intensive language work out of this game, particularly for advanced students, discuss why each of the changes might have occurred. Are they changing which don't change the sense significantly? Are the changes due simply to grammar mistake? Making a detailed analysis of these changes can be a very subtle and informative activity

Purpose

This game is useful for practice writing and review grammar and vocabulary. For teachers, it is better if they can keep control of the process of the game and ask students to make as much as message as they can. Students can also practice this game at home by writing down some message and remember in order to improve their vocabulary and use of grammatical structures.

Playing Cards

Describe

In this game, students will choose a topic given and they will make a short story or presentation, depending on the topics of the lesson.

Preparation

You will need about 4-5 cards for a group, each card will present one topic and there are some hints or suggestions that help students make a story or presentation.

Procedure

Step 1: In this game, students should form groups of four. Each suit will represent a topic.

For example:

Diamonds: Earning money

Hearts: Love and relationships

Spades: An unforgettable memory

Clubs: Best teacher

Step 2: Each student in a group will choose a card. Then, each student will write 4-5 questions about that topic to ask the other people in the group.

Purpose

The game is not only benefits for students in practice reading skill but it also provide opportunities for them to review the vocabulary they have been learned. In order to increase the effective use of this game, the teacher should state at the very beginning of the activity that students are not allowed to prepare yes-no questions, because by saying yes or no students get little practice in spoken language production. Rather, students ask open-ended questions to each other so that they reply in complete sentences.

SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

Suggestions

Here are some suggestions for English language teachers while teaching reading:

- Try to involve each student in every reading activity; In fact, some students are too shy and lazy to read because they think their reading competence are not good. Teachers can use games to involve them so that they can feel more confidence in reading.
- Reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student reading time.
- Giving positive comments on a student's results, this will help students feel more confident and enthusiastic.
- Monitor around classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in groups or pairs.
- Give students variety of reading sources like reading websites or documents that help them practice and improve reading strategies.

CONCLUSION

Wright, A., Betteridge, D. and Buckby, M stated that: "Language learning is hard work...Effort is required at every moment and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and encourage many learners to sustain their interest and work. Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is useful and meaningful. The learners *want* to take part and in order to do so must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give information. The need for meaningfulness in language learning has been accepted for some years". Reading is one of the indispensable things in studying English. It is one of the language skills students have to learn in their learning process. Teaching reading is also a very important part of second language learning, especially with English major students. Therefore, it is necessary that language teachers pay great attention to teaching reading. Besides, using games in teaching reading will help learners to experience language rather than merely study it. Especially, games can provide

intense and meaningful practice of language and they must be regarded as important activity to teaching and not merely a way of passing the time.

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