

Teaching Foreign Languages with the Games Sprachspiele

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1. Introduction

Since the subject is related to both language and learning terms, both terms were used in a wide range. In this research, our aim is not how to teach a foreign language. Our aims are to make language teaching easy, to tell the importance of language games which increase the productivity of teaching and comfort both students and teachers. Language teaching and learning need efforts and a long period. "Language acquisition is a complex and mysterious phenomenon." (Kuder, 2003:45). We shouldn't think that language game is a method. Language games can be used whatever methods used. The terms of game and learning can be thought as antonym terms, but every child has play instinct and children learn everything by playing by birth. If we move from that point, we can say that the basic of learning is to learn by playing.

Foreign language teaching involves creative thinking while it sometimes provides physical movement. Learning is permanent since the students can find the opportunity of practising the subjects they have learnt. It mustn't be thought only one kind of language game when we mention language games. Some activities like drama, puzzle, painting, filling the gaps, drawing the Picture can be included to these games. What the important is to attract the students' attention to the lessons. Foreign language teaching has to give the ağabeylities of writing, reading, comprehension and speaking to the students at the same time.

For that reason, foreign language lessons aim to gain these 4 main ağabeylities by affecting more than one sense organ of the students. Student can read the written sources of target language, write and introduce himself/herself with the help of these main ağabeylities. "The target of teaching foreign language is to read written literatur or to get usage from the world experiences and get the intellectual improvement." (Richards, 1996:3)

The main purpose of this research is to show to minimize the problems faced in teaching foreign language with the help of language games. Briefly;

How language games increase the motivation level,
What kind of language games are useful on improvement of the language abilities,
It aims to show how to carry the communication ability of language games to the class.

2. What is Language?

We can say that language which is the most important principal that separates people and animals from each other is a sound kind of our thinking. One of the clearest difference between animals and people is language. Aksan describes language like so: "One of the principals that makes man a man is its artistic side. That separates people from the other creatures. The raw material of all arts which are based on words is language that is also product as well." (Aksan, 1990:12). While animals sound same sounds continuously, people improve their language. "Language is a human instinct." (Wheeler, 1999:03).

Linguists describe language differently. While Coulmas defines language he says, "it is the most powerful tool while we Express our thoughts." (Coulmas, 1996:74). It is necessary to read different sights and different angle of views to understand what the language is. Followings are some different definitions. While Humboldt defines language as an activity, Herringer thinks that it is a part of social system. According to Martinet who is the one of the other linguists "Language is a communication tool or a communication material. De Saussure thinks language as signals system that expresses our thoughts." (Fischer, 1987:21).

Demirel thinks similar as Martinet about this subject: "Language is a communication tool between people." (Demirel, 1999:13). Language is not only a communication tool but also conducts the culture of its belonging society. "As it is known that language reflects its structure, the way of thinking and the culture of its belonging nation." (Aytaç, 1995:221).

The reflection of language's cultural features means the reflection of world sight of the nation where this language is spoken. "Language points a world sight with its certain construction." (Eco, 2004:20)

Language is handed as natural and artificial in the philosophy dictionary that had been prepared by Science Academy. "Language can be natural or artificial. Daily life language is natural language, people conduct their thoughts and communicate each other by using natural language." (Frolov, 1997:114).

Wittgenstein who found the basic principals of language games explains the functions of language so: "Language is used to ask, to order, to describe, to define, to tell our hopes, to lie, to tell stories, to make people laugh, to Express sense of humour, to tell funny things, to ask puzzles, to thank, to request, to great, to say, to give examples." (Wittgenstein, 1953: 23)

According to these descriptions, we conclude that language is a world sight, thought and also signals system. We have to emphasize that there is no meaning if we don't use the words that occur the language in our daily lives. It is possible to think there is a similarity between words and chess pieces which have different functions. While chess pieces do their tasks according to the rules of chess game, words do their tasks according to the grammar rules. In this study, students learn the words in the target language and the grammar structures without getting bored. This study converts the foreign language and learning into a game. In Tractatus' opinion, frontiers of our language is to determine the frontiers of our world.

3. What is Game?

German poet Friedrich von Schiller (1759 – 1805) says that human is whole human as long as he plays game. Game is a term which takes part in lives of many creatures. "Game behaviour is observed only in mammals and birds. It is thought that this behaviour is a part of learning period since it is common between the babies." (Ana Britannica: 377). It is necessary to place rules to make more enjoyable. Game is an activity which includes all kinds of activities and physical movement. Game is not an activity only for children. Every game has got a pedagogical feature. If a player doesn't obey the rules of the game or if he has no necessary qualifications and abilities, he gets out of the game. The rules of the game are not determined by the players, they are

determined by the game itself. Games are role models of the real life. The main purpose of the games are to have fun and enjoyment whatever their aims are. There are winners and losers in every game. A player can not win in every game. A loser of a game can win the next game by doing his best. What is important is to help children to Express themselves by improving their abilities. "Game is a way for children to Express themselves." (Abacıoğlu, 2002:30).

Games increase the imaginations. They provide the ability of evaluating the events with different angle of view. They provide new alternatives which make our lives enjoyable. Because of the games, we can predict the roles we'll get in our real lives in the future. Game is to try to get the highest point, to try to be winner, to finish the game, to have fun and to have a good time at the same time.

There are some limits in every game. Some of them; time, place, number of participants. We never play the games by worrying otherwise game becomes something different from a game and it loses its fun and enjoyment. Maybe it becomes a torture. If someone can't have fun in a game he should leave the game. Having fun is the most important factor that increases the motivation in a game. Not the result of the game, the game itself must give the enjoyment Game is an experience of learning. Every game must have a clear purpose. Rules must be explained to the students clearly. Every child has fun from the game and wants to play. Games are highly important for children to become sociable. Although every game has some differences, all of them have an educative and enjoyable features.

By the games in foreign language teaching, questions, orders, wishes, request etc. and some qualifications of language are used. While the pictures used in these lessons, games played, dances danced and songs sung improve the creativity of the students, some activities like puzzle and filling the gaps provide better understanding of the subjects.

3.1. Characteristics of a game

Game is an activity which starts together with the birth of people and goes on during their lives. In the case of using in foreign language teaching, it is useful not only for learning of the students, but also for physical and mental improvement it is thought that game is a free time activity most of the time but it mustn't be forgotten game is a

world where children live with pure senses. Children travel in this enjoyable world and they improve themselves according to the principals of the games they played. This improvement effects physical, psychological, social and mental level the most. Every game is different from each other so it is difficult to make a general definition of the game. On the other hand, every game coincide in one point: "People focus on the game by losing themselves. They motivate the game completely." (Barış, 2000:14).

Zulliger explains the importance of the game for children by giving this example in his book named "Treatment of the children with the games": "A piece of wood is a toy for us but for a child who plays with a piece of wood it is a baby she looks after." (Zulliger, 2000:18).

People start the game in their childhood and they go on playing in the following years. For example there is no difference between the beads children play and golf played by adults. The purpose of both is to get the round materials into the holes from different distances. In teaching there are 3 main areas that should be gained. One of them is "kognitif area". "Kognitif area is related to acquisition of knowledge and its practise." (Küçükahmet, 2003:16). Games used in foreign language teaching both infrom the students about the subjects and give the opportunity of practising. Three examples related to the subject had been given below. Examples had been prepared in English and in German. The first game's name is "a word a sentence game", the second game's name is "Make a sentence game", the third game's name is "Find a word game". Games are played as explained below.

3.1.1. A Word a Sentence Game

Teacher prepares a poster which is related to any subject or any term. After mentioning to the students about the context of given subject or given term, she/he wants the students to write short sentences by aiming to stick these sentences around the poster.

3.1.2. Making a Sentence Game

Teacher finds pictures related to the words she/he wants to teach. Then she/he sticks these pictures onto the small cards. Cards should be equal to the number of the students. One word can be given more than one student. After that, one card is given to each student. Students make a

sentence by using the word on the card taken. 5 or 10 minutes are given to the students. At the end of this time, teacher wants the students to read their sentences by activating the volunteer students. The game had been prepared for a class with 8 students. Teacher should increase the words and cards according to the number of the students in the class.

3.1.3. Finding a Word Game

Teacher prepares sentences as number of students. She/he reflects these sentences on the wall with the help of a projection by eliminating only a word from these sentences. If there is no projection, teacher writes these sentences on the board. Teacher writes the missing words on cards and separates the cards to the students. Then, teacher starts to read the sentences in order or mixed. The student who has the missing word of the sentence which is read by teacher stands up and says she/he has the missing word. And then, this student reads the missing word and writes it onto the board.

4. Why is the game important in teaching language?

If foreign language learning is done only by classical learning methods students can never catch the desired level in the teacher centered lessons. There are some factors that affect the duration of learning foreign language. These are:

Age.

Social position of person.

Ability, motivation, approach.

Personal qualifications, learning habits and approaches.

The effects of the language games on the items given above increase their importance. What the important is to decrease the disadvantages of the factors mentioned above. It has been tried to explain what all these items mean in learning foreign language and how language games affect learning duration.

4.1. Age

People learn language both fast and understand its phonetic structure better in the case of beginning language education in their early ages. Researches done show that it is necessary to learn the basic sounds of the foreign language and words for a student who will learn foreign language at least by the age 9." (Başaran, 1998:220-221) There is no a linear correlation between learning and age. The ability of learning a second language decreases by age. And there is also a disadvantage like that; people speak foreign language with the sounds of their own native language by the increasing age. In this case, there are some terms for people about the ability of learning a foreign language. For example the age of learning native language, the age of learning second language and critical age. The ability of learning second language is the least in the critical age. The grammar of the target language can be learnt better together with the increasing age. A sufficient vocabulary is needed to understand the grammar: "Foreign language learners firstly need a sufficient vocabulary knowledge to understand the grammar structures better." (Hickey, 2002:83)

Language games can be used to come over the motivation problems and comprehension problems faced in the older ages. As a result, age is important in learning a foreign language and it is suitable to begin language education in the earlier ages.

4.2. Person's Social Position

There are different reasons of wishing to learn a second language. While some people learn foreign language only for oral communication with the others, some learn to be successful in the examinations and little of them want to learn foreign language in detail. The reasons of learning a foreign language for people change according to their professions and their social positions.

4.3. Ability, Motivation, Approach

This item is related to the second item above. The reason why a person wants to learn a foreign language is very important. If it brings success in job and increases the level of the social position, foreign language can be learned much faster. People take part in this group have

high motivation level. "Second language learners have different motivation levels in learning foreign language." (Mitchell, 2004:78). It is more true to say like that; since a person has a high motivation level, he learns foreign language faster. Since he learns foreign language faster, his motivation level is high. Students usually study foreign language to get good marks from the examinations. Since they have no a certain target, their knowledge about the language is not enough. If they are explained the advantages of knowing a foreign language especially in their jobs by their teachers, motivation of the students can be increased. "Students are motivated about learning second language for the useful purposes like to get a job or to pass the exams." (Jordan, 2004:197)

4.4. Personal qualifications, learning habits and approaches

Researches show that, aǵabeylitiy of learning a second language changes from person to person: "It is observed that some of the students in the same class learn much faster than the others." (Lightbown, 2000:50). These differences have been emphasized in another resource like that; "Children are very talented in language acquisition but the experiences show that language learning speed between the children is different." (Yang, 2002:128).

The differences mentioned above depend on different reasons. In some resources it is said "language acquisition is correlated to mental ability." (White, 2003:3). "While a person can be over the medium in speaking and comprehension, he can be medium or under the medium level in location relationships, abstract thinking and numbers." (Tan, 1989:68). As a result, it can be said that everyone's language learning speed changes according to their interest, ability and intelligence level.

5. The Game and the Learning

Schools can be successful as long as they are enjoyable places for children to play. It is also important how to teach a foreign language as the purpose of learning a foreign language. Not only the purpose, the ways that go to the purpose are very important. Game and learning are

two terms that are not generally used together. This case is unfortunately so at schools too. According to Wittgenstein "What exactly the reality is the usage of the language in the games." He says life is in the games, life takes place in the games. "Language in the games which are used in teaching language is the simple form of the language." (Wittgenstein, 1984:5). Here, he wants to emphasize that it is necessary to make language simple in language games so children and second language learners can use and understand it easily. Daily speaking language is simple and hot. Generally short sentences are used in daily speaking. Wittgenstein says "If I'll speak about language I use daily language." (Wittgenstein, 1984:120). By saying this, he emphasizes the importance of daily speaking language. When we move from that point we can conclude that, "a word is known as long as it can be used." (Gerd, 1975:133). It is useful to emphasize what the meaning of language for children is as we tell the importance of language games. Even educators sometimes can ignore the importance of language improvement for children on their longlife personalities and on their Professional and private lives. It is wished to give to the lessons more serious atmosphere by taking the term game out of the children lives.

Researches done conflict the idea that game is not suitable for learning. Researches show that educative games are very useful activities in learning. Cancelling the fear of foreign language and stres of the children are another advantages of these games. When language is used as a tool of game, it will have a different place when it is compared to the other subjects for children. So foreign language lessons can be attractive lessons for children. Teachers should take care personal differences. That is the most important point in foreign language teaching. Nobody has the same personal qualifications like the others. Learning habits, learning speed and comprehension levels differ from person to person. "The forms of getting knowledge, comprehension, remembrance and expressions for children are their learning types. And that is private as their fingerprints." (Sürücü, 2003:140).

Does every game has an educational side? Can every game be brought into the classroom? These lunds of questions can come to our minds. As every activity is not a game, even every game surely can't be educational. Educators should pay attention to that fact. The explanation of the word game according to Duden: "Activity that has no a certain purpose for people's happiness, excitement and enjoyment of them." (Duden, 1993:68)

The term game has a similar explanation in another resource: "Aimless activity which is done to have fun." (Wahrig, 2000:1178). It is understood from the definition of the game that every activity is not an educational game. Some criterions can be determined about what kind of activities are useful in learning language. For example:

Games should be helpful in learning of a subject.

Students must find the game interesting.

Games should be related to the actual events.

They should consist of environmental and locational principals.

They should consist of extractions from real lives.

They should give game excitement to the students.

They should be motivated games.

They should be educational.

The principals mentioned above can be increased but games that have this kind of principals should be brought to the classrooms. What the important is to make students love the foreign language by using this kind of games. Loving of the students to the foreign language depends on the features of the games. Bechmann makes this subject clear like that: "Movement and rhythm, information, luck and chance, speed, thought and order, observation and memory, enjoyment, role play, chat." (URL 24: 2007)

5.1. The effects of the game on learning

"Most of the time, the terms game and play had been thought as they are antonym terms. So many foreign language teachers are against to the language games." (Flegg, 1993:67). Games increase the students' motivation as long as they make the lessons enjoyable. This case helps to teacher by easing the learning duration. Games not only increase the motivation but also catalyse the group dynamics. The best example is physical education lessons in the schools. The games played in physical education lessons increase the creativity, collective study ability, sense of responsibility and self-confident.

Foreign language lessons are usually boring for the students. That is because the target language is abstract for them. When we want students just to think and solve the structures that are written on the board, they try to do somethings unconsciously and by accident.

Thinking is also an abstract term. Students can't think on a subject that is not learnt by them completely and they can't produce a new thought. Both thought and physical items should be cared to get the best productivity in foreign language teaching. So, students can completely focus on learning. It is not too easy for a teacher to provide that kind of motivation. Students' all attentions can be attracted on the lesson by using the games which can be used in foreign language teaching. Because students can Express themselves with these games and they can use their bodies. Students can find the opportunity of discovering their own learning way in these kinds of games since more than one method is used.

According to the knowledge given up to here, we can say that games used in foreign language teaching should have these principals with a few items.

Games should support the motivation.

Having principal of caring communication.

Games should keep the students' participation in maximum level.

6. Foreign Language teaching with the Games

It is aimed to teach foreign words and gramer structure easily. permanent, more enjoyable to the children with the usage of games in foreign language teaching. For instance, "araba (türkish)" is "car" in English and "Auto" in German. If educator writes this word on the board like that: "araba: car / Auto", students writes that on his notebook, but he can't learn it. Games which are used in foreign language teaching are the general name of different kinds of activities. For instance pictures, puzzles, music and physical activities can be used. So, students' all energies can be focused on the lessons. "What the emphasis with the games used in foreign language teaching is the usage of language in an active way." (Müler, 1988:295).

Everytime, game is a term which keeps its importance in human life. The most two important qualifications of language games that appear very late after acception of language as a science are players and language. In this kind of games, language is not different from toys children play continously. Children learn language in a game atmosphere by obeying the rules. These are the factors that make easy to learn a language with games.

Language games activate many sense organs. It provides a complete learning,
 Language games make learning enjoyable,
 Students become active instead of passive because of language games,
 Students centered education is come true by language games,
 Students who have lack of motivation can be focused on the lesson by language games,
 Students can use their visual and kinesthetic abilities because of language games,
 Students find the opportunity of using the knowledge they have learnt,
 Games can be arranged about every subject,
 Students can't learn from memory because of games. They learn by making research,
 There are unsuccessful students in the foreign language lessons which are done by using traditional methods,
 Some students need more reading, writing and doing activities,
 Since lessons are done with dense grammar, students are difficulty in communication with foreign language. Language games are applied to eliminate these problems.

We can get the opportunities mentioned above by using games in language teaching. In the case of thinking the opposites of these items, it can be understood easily that these cause problems in language teaching.

These games make foreign language lessons enjoyable and students can learn on their own with the help of the games. Language games can't be chosen randomly. They should be related to wished grammar structures and words. By doing so, students learn the grammar and words with games. Language games are materials which give the students who are alone at home opportunity of studying and learning.

Language games are not only used for a certain period of time but also during the whole learning duration of foreign language. "To join a game is not only to know the game's rules. It is to know the game's aim and game's profit at the same time." (Hügli, 1991:543)

RESULT

Children spend the most of their time by playing games. Games are natural needs like food and water for them. Thus, to give foreign language teaching by hiding it through the games increases the productivity students think that they are playing games not learning a foreign language. They learn without deliberation and by chance because of the games.

Language games should be arranged according to the subjects and subjects should be choosen from simple to complex. Student should understand what success is by coming through the games which have simple structure. In the case of giving this opportunity to the student, he tries more. This is a necessary behaviour to increase the motivation level. By applying all these things, teachers can increase the students' learning wish. Boring and difficult activities can also be done.

RESOURCES

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