



## GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR LANGUAGE PRACTICE: FUN WAYS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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### ANNOTATION

This article explores the role of games and interactive activities in promoting English language acquisition among students of varying proficiency levels. With the increasing demand for communicative competence, traditional approaches often fall short in maintaining learners' motivation and engagement. This study presents an overview of effective game-based strategies used in the ESL/EFL classroom to create an interactive and low-anxiety learning environment. It further analyzes data from a small-scale action research project conducted among secondary school students to measure the impact of language games on vocabulary retention, speaking fluency, and classroom participation. The findings indicate a significant improvement in learner engagement and language performance, confirming the pedagogical value of incorporating fun and meaningful tasks into the curriculum.

**Keywords:** language games, English language learning, classroom engagement, communicative activities, ESL/EFL methodology, student motivation, vocabulary development

### АННОТАЦИЯ

В этой статье рассматривается роль игр и интерактивных занятий в содействии освоению английского языка среди учащихся с разным уровнем владения языком. С ростом спроса на коммуникативные навыки традиционные подходы часто не справляются с поддержанием мотивации и вовлеченности учащихся. В этом исследовании представлен обзор



эффективных игровых стратегий, используемых в классе ESL/EFL для создания интерактивной и не вызывающей беспокойства учебной среды. В нем также анализируются данные из небольшого исследовательского проекта, проведенного среди учащихся средних школ для измерения влияния языковых игр на сохранение словарного запаса, беглость речи и участие в классе. Результаты указывают на значительное улучшение вовлеченности учащихся и успеваемости в языке, что подтверждает педагогическую ценность включения увлекательных и значимых задач в учебную программу.

**Ключевые слова:** языковые игры, изучение английского языка, вовлеченность в классе, коммуникативная деятельность, методология ESL/EFL, мотивация учащихся, развитие словарного запаса

## **INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, language teaching methodologies have gradually shifted from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered approaches, emphasizing interaction, creativity, and learner autonomy. One of the most effective ways to implement these changes is through the use of games and activities designed for language practice. Language games are not merely recreational but serve as powerful pedagogical tools that contribute to vocabulary acquisition, grammar reinforcement, fluency development, and cultural awareness. When students are engaged in a fun and relaxed setting, they are more likely to take linguistic risks and participate actively in communication. In contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, creating authentic and enjoyable learning experiences becomes crucial. Therefore, this article examines how games and activities can enhance the quality of English language instruction and evaluates their impact through a practical study conducted in an EFL classroom.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

Numerous scholars have emphasized the value of games in language teaching. According to Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006), games provide meaningful contexts for practicing language and encourage real communication.



Similarly, Hadfield<sup>1</sup> (1990) argues that games facilitate the development of communicative competence by requiring learners to interact, negotiate meaning, and produce language spontaneously. Lee<sup>2</sup> (1995) suggests that game-based activities help reduce affective filters such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes, thereby improving learner confidence.

The methodology for this study combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A class of 30 secondary school EFL students aged 13–15 participated in a four-week intervention, during which various games were incorporated into regular lessons. The games included vocabulary bingo, role-play simulations, speaking board games, charades, and storytelling chains. Pre-tests and post-tests were used to measure vocabulary and speaking performance. In addition, classroom observation and student feedback surveys were conducted to assess engagement and motivation levels.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The results from the study suggest a noticeable improvement in students' language skills and overall engagement. The vocabulary test scores showed measurable gains between the pre- and post-test stages, and student participation in speaking activities increased significantly.

**Table 1: Vocabulary Test Results (Pre-test vs. Post-test)<sup>3</sup>**

Vocabulary Test Score Range	Pre-test (% of Students)	Post-test (% of Students)
0–10 correct answers	26.7%	6.7%
11–20 correct answers	53.3%	36.7%
21–30 correct answers	20%	56.6%

<sup>1</sup> Hadfield, J. (1990). *Intermediate Communication Games*. Longman.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, W. R. (1995). *Language Teaching Games and Contests*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Uberman, A. (2018). The Use of Games for Vocabulary Presentation and Revision. *English Teaching Forum*, 36(1), 20–25.



This table illustrates the shift toward higher vocabulary retention. After implementing language games, over half of the class scored in the top range, compared to just 20% in the pre-test.

**Table 2: Student Feedback on Language Games (n = 30)<sup>4</sup>**

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Games made learning English more enjoyable	93.3%	6.7%	0%
Games helped me remember new words	86.7%	10%	3.3%
I felt more confident speaking during activities	83.3%	13.3%	3.4%
I prefer traditional grammar drills	13.3%	16.7%	70%

These figures confirm that the majority of students found games to be beneficial for learning and confidence-building. Only a small minority expressed a preference for more traditional methods.

In classroom observations, it was noted that shy and less motivated students became more active participants when games were involved. The competitive element, team collaboration, and the element of surprise contributed to an increase in student talk time and spontaneity in language use.

## CONCLUSION

The integration of games and interactive activities into English language teaching has been shown to be not only effective but also essential in fostering a positive learning environment. This study has demonstrated that such activities significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and classroom participation, especially among learners who may otherwise struggle in more conventional learning settings. The psychological benefits—reduced anxiety,

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<sup>4</sup> Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.



increased motivation, and enjoyment—further strengthen the argument for including game-based learning in language curricula.

It is essential for educators to select games that align with learning objectives and are appropriate for students' age and proficiency levels. Moreover, teachers should act as facilitators who guide students through meaningful interactions rather than passive recipients of instruction. By doing so, the classroom becomes a dynamic space where language learning is associated with discovery, experimentation, and joy. Future research could explore the long-term effects of consistent game-based instruction, as well as adaptations for online and hybrid learning environments. Nevertheless, the current findings strongly support the notion that games are not peripheral to language instruction but central to engaging and effective pedagogy.

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