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Introduction

Most of us probably played some version of Peek-A-Boo as a child. This globally ubiquitous game, primarily played with babies, brings joy and laughter to children regardless of their parents’ language or ethnic backgrounds. Games like Peek-A-Boo and This Little Piggy not only entertain children but also teach important life skills and motivate them to interact with other children and people in a community. As the children continue to grow into more complex individuals, so too do the games they play—from Peek-A-Boo to Go Fish to Minecraft. Players learn so much through games because games give them comfortable and engaging environments that can also promote learning. If individuals grow up playing games, why not take games into our language classrooms to have fun and improve our students’ language skills?

New Ways in Teaching with Games offers at-a-glance activities that involve play and games that can enrich classrooms in both English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) contexts and can be used with both adult and young English language learners worldwide. K–12 teachers will find a variety of activities pertinent to their teaching contexts, especially if they teach young English language learners, and university-level instructors will find games here that can challenge their learners to produce language at more advanced levels in both oral and written forms. New Ways in Teaching with Games

• introduces traditional, online, and commercial games and explains how they can be used to practice language as opposed to having students learn about the language;
• illustrates games that can reinforce language across the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also encourage both culturally and pragmatically appropriate language production;
• enriches language classrooms with a variety of innovative, learner-friendly games that are seamlessly tied to language practice; and
• includes games applicable for both young and adult English language learners across the world.

There is a wide variety of game genres in the chapters of this book, and we have categorized them into six sections, as seen in the Table of Contents:

I: Traditional Pencil and Paper Games
II: Dice Games
III: Board Games
IV: Card Games
V: Technology-Mediated Games: Online, Apps, and More
VI: Miscellaneous Games

Each chapter also includes immediately accessible information about the appropriate language level for the activity discussed, the aims of the activity, amount of time required (both for preparation and in class), and required resources. Unless it is noted, each activity is free of cost. Following this preliminary information, each game then includes detailed lesson instructions on what should be accomplished before the game (i.e., teacher prep or student tasks prior to game day), during
the game (i.e., game play), and after the game (i.e., student homework, follow-up activities, etc.), as well as caveats and options.

We know that the materials and resources available to each educator vary; however, for the sake of simplicity, the activities in this book assume that all teachers have access to a blackboard or whiteboard, basic internet service, and paper and writing utensils.

New Ways in Teaching with Games also includes access to a supplementary website hosted by TESOL Press, where you can find appendices (with handouts, exercises, etc.) for a number of these activities and also videos produced by each of the contributors that illustrate how these games can be played. We asked the contributors to create these videos because, as any gamer can tell you, written instructions may not always alleviate confusion. On the other hand, actually watching someone play a game as they explain how it works tends to clear things up almost immediately.

All videos and appendixes are available here: www.tesol.org/teachingwithgames

We hope that language teachers around the world will take advantage of the games introduced in this volume and be able to find matches between some of the games and their instructional context.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF GAMES

The histories of games and world civilization are inexorably linked.¹ One of the earliest known games dates back to ancient Egypt, with the first evidence as early as 5,000 years ago in the form of Senet, which was played in that country for more than 3,000 years (Piccione, 1980). Visually, this game could easily be mistaken for a modern board game that might be found in a home or school today—at least from the two-dimensional perspective provided by the Egyptian Tomb painting from the Egyptian Queen Nefertari (1295–1255 BC; Figure 1). Though the exact rules of play for this game have been lost to time, in roughly the same time period, other games, such as The Royal Game of Ur (played with a game board and set of dice made from knucklebones), emerged in Mesopotamia (Becker, 2007).

The game Go also emerged during this era in China (approximately 3,000–4,000 BP) and is still played today across the globe in a format that would be instantly recognizable to those who played it thousands of years ago (Fairbaim, 2007). A “recent” addition to this genre that may be more familiar to many readers is chess, with the earliest versions originating in India before evolving into the recognizable version in Persia in the 1400s prior to migrating to Europe (Murray, 1913), as seen in Figure 2, which illustrates two Knights Templar playing a match in 1283.

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¹. This book is not meant to be a research-focused book on the history or educational use of games. A few works that provide an overview of those topics include Beavis, Dezuanni, & O’Mara, 2017; Blumberg, 2014; Donovan, 2017; Gee, 2003; Reinhardt, 2019.
In modern history, board games began to explode in popularity in the 1800s, partially due to advances in printing and production technologies that for the first time made such games within the economic reach of a significant percentage of the population. Though a number of card games have existed for hundreds of years (blackjack, also known as twenty-one, has been around for about 300 years), the vast majority of the modern board games (this eliminates chess, Go, backgammon, etc.) played today were produced well into the 20th century, and even classics like Monopoly (1935), Scrabble (1938), and Yahtzee (1956) are relative newcomers in comparison to their ancient game cousins.

The first video game, Tennis for Two (which later evolved into Pong), was created by physicist William Higinbotham in 1958 (Tretkoff, 2008), long before the first dreams of the internet. Online gaming involving interaction between players in different locations is most often credited to Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle with their creation of MUD1 (Multi-User Dungeon1) in 1978, which was connected to the ARPANET (a precursor of the internet) in 1980. This game may be considered the ancestor of all the thousands of MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) played by millions today, such as World of Warcraft. From those early experiments, the gaming world as we know it today—consisting of countless card, die, board, and electronic games—has evolved.

Figure 1. Nefertari playing Senet (n.d.), (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maler_der_Grabkammer_der_Nefertari_003.jpg). In the public domain.
A RATIONALE FOR GAME USE IN THE CLASSROOM

Though there has always been a significant role for the use of games in the language classroom, two of the most current and popular pedagogical concepts are gamification and serious gaming for learning (e.g., Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012; Godwin-Jones, 2014; Sørensen & Meyer, 2007). The term gamification for the classroom context can be defined as “using game-based mechanics, aesthetics, and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning, and solve problems” (Kapp, 2012, p. 10). Using games for language practice has a number of benefits.

First, gamification promotes interaction among learners/players because they are encouraged to produce the target language while interacting with an interlocutor or a gaming object (e.g., dice, card, board). This creates opportunities for negotiation of meaning and form(s) through the reformulation of statements, clarifying points, revising one’s previous utterances, and/or repeating a point to communicate one’s viewpoint during the gaming (see Peterson, 2010).

Second, games can make what used to be repetitive exercises into something more meaningful and fun. In regular drill-based practice, learners may pay too much attention to form and might miss the real-life applications of a linguistic form. In gamification, learners are not necessarily obliged to memorize correct answers; rather, they need to make an informed decision about their next move in a game by using correct language forms. This can lead to enhanced learning opportunities in elements ranging from vocabulary (Huyen & Nga, 2003) to grammar (Kasprowicz, 2017), and even in larger rhetorical structures such as argumentative writing (Lam, Hew, & Chiu, 2018).

Third, games can motivate learners because they tend to simulate real-world actions. Students feel encouraged to actively participate in an activity because games often include winners, losers, awards, and other forms of recognition; thus students are
extrinsically motivated to earn points to “beat” other teams or players. Winning the 
game in a language learning setting equals using the target language or linguistic skill 
successfully (see Garland, 2015).

In his excellent book titled Gameful Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: 
Theory, Research, and Practice, Reinhardt (2019) provides an in-depth analysis of eight 
affordances for gameful second language learning. These include the ability of games 
to provide opportunities for

1. contextualized language learning;
2. time for L2 use and learning;
3. space for sheltered practice;
4. goal-oriented learning and feedback;
5. opportunities for languaging and social collaboration;
6. means for identity work and play;
7. time and place independent and dependent learning; and
8. extramural, autonomous learning. (Reinhardt, 2019, pp. 113–136)

As language teachers, it should be our goal to carefully consider the games we are 
using in the classroom with these affordances in mind. While a “good” game will 
almost always be fun for students to play, language teachers know that we also must 
carefully structure the way that games are used in the classroom to also provide our 
students with ample opportunities to improve their language skills. We believe that 
the games shared in New Ways in Teaching with Games can create exactly those types 
of opportunities for interaction, promote language learning, and motivate learners 
in your classroom.

As teachers on limited budgets, cost is always a factor. Therefore, we include an 
approximate cost for each of the games. As previously mentioned, we are assuming 
that teachers have basic supplies, such as paper, scissors, a whiteboard/blackboard, 
and basic internet access. The costs reflected for each game will include materials 
like dice, actual board games, needed online game accounts, and so on. The approxi-
mate cost range (in U.S. dollars) is shown using the following key:

- Free
- $ = $1–$10
- $$ = $11–$20
- $$$ = $21+

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We could not have published this book alone. Colleagues from around the globe 
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from authors (aka teachers and game lovers) who submitted the innovative and well-
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before they are played. Thanks also to Myrna Jacobs, Kari Dalton, and Tomiko Breland from TESOL Press for their excellent help throughout the process.

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To our readers, we hope that this volume will bring fun and joy in your teaching and playful learning in your students’ language development.

Ulugbek Nurmukhamedov and Randall Sadler

REFERENCES


