

# Games in teaching English

## Outline

1. Introduction: Most teachers would agree that games are very important for

their students and I would like to support this idea describing

some of the games that I have used in my classes.

## Games in teaching English

Ivan Studecký

A. Games for In-Service III Michaela Čaňková

June 12, 1994

ii. Games according to Caplan

iii. Games in my class

4. Characteristics of games

B. Summary


1. Summary

A. Summary

1. Summary

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Thesis statement: Most teachers would agree that games are very important for their students and I would like to support this idea describing my experience with conditions of my classes.

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Abstract

Our teachers solve the problem how to make students happy in learning English. They can have different approaches and ideas, but games are certainly used by all of my colleagues. Teachers understand that they can use games and their competitive character in teaching of all the skills. They know that games are a great motivating stimulation for pupils, they work as effective therapeutical means. All the skills or vocabulary can be learned in this way with more fun, pupils can feel relaxed. That is why teaching process is much more effective, pupils improve their English more easily and so they are encouraged in their further learning. Zapletal's encyclopaedia is an example of the book which can help everyone in using games.



## Games in teaching English

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### Games in Teaching English.

Do you think games are suitable for teaching foreign language? Most teachers would agree that games are very important for their students and I would like to support this idea describing my experiences with conditions of my classes. We can ask why they are so important and I think there are many possible answers.

Games can be useful in teaching, above all, speaking and listening. Possibilities for training these skills in real, communicative settings do not exist in great quantity in teaching English as a foreign language situation, particularly if students do not hear English outside the classroom. Games are useful, of course, for other skills like pronunciation, communicative ability and so on.

As for usefulness of games, I think that many teachers support this idea. The children are sometimes tired and games are like a rest for them. They learn grammar by playing a game and repeat it though they do not think about any grammar. A game usually makes pupils pay attention but there are sometimes problems with childrens' discipline. We use games because they can help us in our teaching process and we know that pupils like them without knowing what the game is.

#### A. Games defined.

A lot of psychologists, educationalists, sociologists and anthropologists tried to define a

game. So far, nobody has created a definition which could satisfy everyone. Some games use the same technique and separations among them are not precisely defined.

I have chosen two definitions, in my opinion, best applying to this work. One of the biggest experts of games in the USSR, V.Vsevolodskij-Gerngros(1933), qualified contents of the word "game" this way: "We call the game such a kind of social practice, which exists in active imitation of any life phenomenon in the whole or in its part, outside a real practical situation; a social importance of the game consists in its training role in initial stages of man's development"[V.Vsevolodskij-Gerngros, 1933: 23].

I suppose we can agree with the author's opinion that a game has the training role, but we want to use games in real situations and teaching process is such a real situation both for pupils and teachers. The definition mentioned above seems to be too abstract for us.

The anthropologists, J.M.Roberts, M.J.Arth and R.R.Busch[1961]<sup>1</sup>, defined the game in the article "Games in Culture" as "...leisure activity characterized by: 1. organized playing, 2. competitiveness, 3. two or three teams, 4. criteria, that determine a winner, 5. settled rules" [J.M.Roberts, M.J.Arth, R.R.Busch, 1961: 597].

This definition, I think, fits much better because it expresses a competitive character of games, it mentions rules and it is much more understandable.

Experts such as Michael Carrier(1972) say that "games and activities are invaluable to the teacher of a foreign language because they provide an opportunity for students to use their language skills in a less formal situation" [Michael Carrier, 1972:6]. They say

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we can use a range of different activities that will enable us to add variety to lessons and enable pupils to practice the English language in a more stimulating way.

As Michael Carrier says, I think it is clear for most teachers that pupils need such situations. The quantity of activities or games we can utilize depends on each teacher, on his or her experience and, of course, classrooms' levels. If we can find any game which is suitable for pupils, it will be a great stimulant for our pupils. On the other hand, poorly chosen activities can disturb the lesson and make learning unpleasant. I suppose, pupils will refuse such a game. It can be because of different reasons. The teacher, for example, will prepare too difficult game for pupils' level. The pupils will be unable to understand rules of the game. Or the game takes too long and then it is boring for pupils. To avoid it in the next classes we should do selfreflections (analysis) of all the classes.

In literature we can find notes about aims of games. Retter Collin and Neus Valls[1969] say that "The principle aims are:

- 1 to guide and encourage communication in English
- 2 to provide reasonable coverage of teaching items
- 3 to provide a collection of teaching games with the spirit of children's own games"[Collin Petter and Nens Valls, 1969:1].

As for guiding games in preceding definition, I suppose some of them the teacher has to conduct, but sometimes pupils can play the game themselves without a teacher's aid. He can be a participant or a prompter. It can usually be in the case of well-known games that pupils play repeatedly.

## B. Why to use games

Now I would like to return to pupils' tiredness, to their ability to pay attention, to relations between games and pupils' level. First, consider being tired. We can see very often our pupils are tired in lessons. It can be caused by different reasons, but it is another problem and in our situation we have to solve it immediately, otherwise, the effect of our teaching is weak or none. I think it does not matter if we do not manage everything we had wanted to do with children and an application of a game. When they are tired, it can help us to reorient them to learning again and to revise their ability to pay attention. We can have such games prepared before class if we suppose the children will be tired. We know their time-table and we can anticipate their being tired. But sometimes we can be surprised by their tiredness and, I think, each teacher can react at once and choose any short game for his or her pupils. It depends, of course, on the teacher's experiences.

Second, the previous paragraph is connected with pupil's ability to pay attention. Any game, I think, can help us in this problem. If the pupils play a game, they don't think about any grammar, correct pronunciation, writing or some other rules. They want to play a game and it is the most important thing for them at that time. When we play a game with my youngest pupils, and it is not a competitive game, each of them demands to try it, either to hide Dodo [our toy-friend] or to look for it. If I cannot change all the pupils, because our time is over, they beg me to play it once more in our next lesson.

Next we can include in some situations, for example, singing songs or physical exercises or both together. Somebody maybe could argue with me that a song is not a



game but, in my opinion, it can be and it can stand for some other type of game practising for example vocabulary, listening and the like.

Next, there is a problem in playing games for which we need more time. It is very difficult to persuade my pupils not to speak in Czech and try to speak only English.

Maybe they try to speak English only for the first moments and just when I observe them, but when I go to the next group to listen to them after a few minutes other groups start to talk in Czech. It is common when we play some board games with dice and everybody has his statuette. "Such games cannot be played only for 3-4 minutes and the class must be usually divided into groups. They usually have to carry out some commands, talk about the situations and, above all, my older pupils begin to speak Czech. Even when there is a rule written for the game such "And you must speak English or you miss a turn. The teacher's role is in this case quite difficult and the importance of such games could be debatable. But generally we can say games are suitable for helping students to pay attention

Another thing is grammar rules. As for grammar, most pupils do not like to be drilled to learning it. They refuse to do it and drilling surely is not a positive thing. But when we can get them a suitable game, they learn grammar with pleasure. Here could be a problem with a check of mistakes: I mean, we should accept only correct forms formed by students and not, for example, let them write bad forms on the blackboard because someone could remember just that incorrect expression. I think, we should at least cross out such wrong forms.

The author of games in the teaching process, Mario Rinvolucri[1984] argues with this



and he would suggest that “ this does not, in fact, happen in grammar games

because the pupils are wary of each sentence they see and make very conscious judgements about which are correct and which are not. I have such experiences with some of my pupils that they imprint just wrong expressions, and other children then repeat it after them. That is why I am for crossing out or correction.

At any rate , grammar is perhaps so serious and central in learning another language that all ways should be searched for which will focus student energy on the task of mastering it. One way of focusing it is through the release offered by playing games. The pupils are satisfied if the teacher asks them to do something that feels like an out-of-class activity and in which they check what is going on in the classroom. They become subjects, while commonly for a lot of time they are the objects of teaching. The game can be fun for children and serious at the same time. The main idea is that the fun mobilizes energy for the achievement of the serious goal” [Mario Rinvoluti, 1984: 5].

As for you, do these games require a lot of preparation? For some games we have to master the rules and do a certain amount of copying of material. But once we have done the physical preparation, we can re-use a game without further work in other classes. Some games require no physical preparation at all. Other activities will take up almost none of our time and will offer us a view of our pupils that we are unlikely to get through most traditional exercises. We have a chance to watch our pupils they find out more about each other as people but through the target language.

Next, consider the pupils' level. It is very important in the selection of a type of game. I think we can use some games successfully both for younger and older pupils but there are, of course, differences in the use of vocabulary. The game or its structure can be the same, but older pupils can use many more words and so the game is more complicated.

Likewise, we also have games which are unacceptable for older children [the age 13-14] but younger ones like them. In my fifth class I very often use my toy-friend monkey Dodo [the pupils are 10-11 years of age]. The pupils know him from our lessons when Dodo taught them new words, pronunciation, intonation and the like. For example, we repeated expressions "here" and "over there" answering the question "Where is Dodo?" and the question "Is he...?" with the answers "Yes, he is" or "No, he isn't". My class liked it a lot and wanted to play hiding Dodo in the next lessons time and time again. But it would be too easy and simple for my eighth class and they would refuse to play it. And on the contrary, we cannot play some other games with younger ones, e.g. when we use our magazine "A TOT" because they do not know requisite vocabulary.

Anyway, do grammar games have any advantages? I think so. The pupils have to think what the grammar is about. The teacher can find out what the children actually know. Serious work is taking place in the context of a game. The classroom atmosphere is enlivened. And everybody is working at the same time- the time for while the game lasts is a period of intense involvement. The importance of using games is evident and I wish everyone great atmosphere and success in playing games.



### Games according to Zapletal.

Milos Zapletal is a great author of games. He edited 3 big encyclopaedias and because he's a Czech writer and everyone can find his books in a library I decided to choose some of his games and use them in my classes. Miloš Zapletal (1985) says that "the game is as old as culture and civilization, even much older. Games belonged to ordinary and obvious things for long thousands years. In the 19-th century the antropologists and ethnographers began to be interested in it more widely, but only in our era the game went to the top of the ladder. Psychologists recognized in it an important evolution factor. Sociologists found out that the game had significant influence in an integration of any individual into the human society. And educationalists understood that they could use games or similar activities in the educational process" [Miloš Zapletal, 1985:3]

At the same time there appeared thousands of books about games for different occasions. That is why I chose Zapletal's games because I think teachers usually look for them in foreign material and neglect our own sources. I would like to describe some games I use in my lessons. I am a teacher in a basic school and I teach pupils from 5-th to 8-th classes. I have only 3 years experience with teaching English but I taught Russian before and in my opinion I can use some methods or structures from those classes. My pupils start in 5-th class and their level depends on their level in the Czech language above all. If somebody has problems with Czech he must have problems in

English too, above all in writing and reading. If pupils do not understand rules in the Czech language they cannot, of course, transform their knowledge into English or if they cannot learn anything by heart they will have difficulties remembering an English vocabulary as well. In the initial steps when we do not read or write, such pupils can work together but after that they have more and more troubles and lose contact with the work in the classroom, above all in listening and speaking activities and then in reading and writing as well. I would like to compare my younger pupils with older ones [13-14 years], to compare how they work during playing games, to show what works and what does not work in each of the groups. I really do not want to make any list of games because there are lots of authors who have already done it.

Next is the book *Come and Play in this class*.

The next group is the 6th class. There are 11 pupils in this group. They are quite good in English, only one girl and one boy are weaker. The boy is again a dyslexic, but he is quite good at listening and he usually understands my commands. These pupils have learned English for 2 years and some of them take extra lessons with private teachers. In this class we use *Project English 1*.

The last group I have is the 8th class. There are 11 pupils and they have learned English for four years. They are quite good at listening and reading but they have bigger problems in speaking or writing. We use the book *Project English II* and some of the pupils have problems to use correct tenses, they make mistakes in the past tense (regular - irregular verbs). However the biggest problem here is the lack of interest of some pupils. They look like my pupils learning Russian a few years ago.



### III. Games in my classes

#### A. Characteristics of my classrooms

This school year I teach 3 groups. The youngest pupils are in the 5th class. They have started with English this year. I have 18 pupils in this classroom and 4 of them have already learned the English language for 1 year. They know some vocabulary and remember some constructions, above all with the verb to be. There are big differences among pupils in this class and three of them ( 2 boys and 1 girl) have big problems to remember vocabulary, basic questions and answers and I have to repeat for them all my commands in Czech. I use the book English for Children as an oral course for 2 - 3 months and then the book Come and Play in this class.

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B. Experiences from lessons.

1.KIM'S GAME

Lesson plan: The aim of this lesson is to revise vocabulary learned in previous topics.

Age: 9 - 15 years (and older)

Learning skills: vocabulary

Teaching aids: pictures, written words

Time: 5-7 minutes

The rules:

The teacher puts 24 things on the table - for example a pencil, a pen, chalk, a pin, a box of matches and other items like that. Then he covers them, calls pupils and tells them: "When I uncover the things, have a look at them and try to remember as many items as possible. After one minute I cover them again and you have to write a list of things."

Which has the fullest list after 5 minutes, he is the winner.

The game is called Kim's game after Kim who is the main hero of Rudyard Kipling's famous The Book of the Jungle. This game trains pupils' memory, attention and ability to concentrate.



I adapted the game for conditions of my classes. I use pictures or words written on small papers instead of concrete things. In this way we can better react on each of lessons, because the preparation for lessons is easier than to use some things. We can use pictures for given topics or words which we cannot draw, for example verbs or adjectives. Further more I limit the number of pictures or words and I use a square with 16 or 9 expressions. I prefer to shorten the time for covering pictures or papers for 30 or 45 seconds and for writing for 3 -4 minutes. Because the use of pictures is easier for pupils I use them more often for younger pupils ( 5th and 6th classes) and I use written words for my 8th class.

I usually play the game at the beginning of lessons to repeat the vocabulary but it could be used at any part of the lesson. There is also a possibility to vary the game. We can play it twice in one lesson with an interval. First we can start at the beginning and we can write the list once more after some time ( 10 or 15 minutes) with the same pictures or words. In this way we can compare pupils' results and recognize their ability to remember. Some have a so called "long" memory and the others have a "short" one.

We played this variation in my 5th class with 9 animal pictures which pupils knew from our lessons. I prepared two tables with different pictures and divided the class into 2 groups. Pupils' results were similar in both groups. Most of them had 7 or 8 correct words, 3 pupils had all nine words. The worst result was 3 in the first group and 4 in the second group. After our check - up we repeated colours and some verbs using the present tense continuous. About 15 minutes later, they had to write a new list. Their

results were surprising for me. Almost everybody had the same amount or wrote more words. It was probably thanks to our check - up when children repeated vocabulary and 15 minutes was not long enough to forget it.

I tried this variation next time, but without the check - up after the first list, and pupils wrote the second list at the end of the lesson. It was about 35 minutes later. I used pictures from different topics so that the pupils could not guess only according to one topic. They knew about 15 animals and if they had seen them in the pictures, they could have tried to guess their names. But their results were not too much worse. As for the first list, four pupils had 8 correct words and others had from 4 to 7 words. In their second list they forgot from 1 to 3 words. The best result was 7 and the worst 2.

At the same time I tried this activity in the 8th class. We did not use pictures but verb forms. I wrote verbs in present tense ( take, have, do, leave, read, write, make, catch, run) and pupils had to write a list of those verbs in their past forms. We played it also twice. First with the check - up and the second time without it. The situation with pupils' results was very similar to the one with my younger pupils. In the first case they had the same results or some of them even improved themselves. In the second case they forgot 1 or 2 verbs, one girl had the same result - 6 correct verbs. Incorrect past forms were not evaluated. Total number of correct words was not so high as with the pictures in the 5th class. It suggests that it is more difficult to remember written forms than pictures and pupils' next results supported this first comparison.

With the 6th class I tried to mix pictures and words together. I copied some pictures from Project story about Mickey, Millie and Mut and added some words ( e.g. want, throw,



turn) connected with those texts. We used a magnet board with 16 pictures and words and an increased amount of symbols caused pupils to forget more words. Their best result was 12 words in their first list and 11 words in the second list. The worst results were 6 and 3 ( the pictures of Mickey, Millie and Mut).

The Kim's game can have even more variations, of course. We can use some illustrations from picture magazines and pupils have to write down as many things, animals or people as possible. The time for watching the objects can be again 1 minute. The game with an interference can be another variation. While pupils are writing their list, the teacher is disturbing them telling such things that do not belong to the list or he/she can divert pupils in another way, for example by singing a song which pupils had learned. The teacher can also divide pupils into groups. Then it is better to use more things or words and groups compete among themselves.

## 2. WORD DUEL

Lesson plan: Revising vocabulary pupils can intensify their ability to communicate.

Age: 9-15 (and older)

Learning skills: vocabulary

Teaching aids: ----

Time: 5-10 minutes

The rules: *Make the game better*

This game is suitable for 2 teams, A and B. In the first round, the team A selects a topic for the duel ( e.g. Animals), for the second round the team B selects another one (e.g. Town) and so on the teams take regularly their turn. The teams choose one player who competes for his or her team. The players change their turn and name some things from the selected topic. Everyone has only 5 seconds to think a name over. The terms cannot be repeated. If one of competing players does not know any word in 5 seconds, his or her rival gains a point for the team.

*Let's learn English To improve pupils' listening is the right side of the brain*

As for rules for this game, I adapted them a little again. The topics were not selected by pupils but I prepared them before according to the topics we had learned. I used the game in the middle of our lessons so that pupils could have a rest. We played the game for 5 minutes. The maximum of points was 3 or 5.

In the 5th class we did not use any special topics but we played the game when we learned and repeated the English alphabet. I gave the pupils a letter instead of a topic and they had to use any words beginning with the letter. To give more pupils chances to speak I divided the classroom into 4 teams ( in 4 or 5) and first they played semifinal ( A against B and C against D). Whichever team had 3 points was the winner and went on into the final match. Defeated teams played for the third position then. This game took a little more time, about 8 - 9 minutes. It was more difficult for me to check two contests at the same time. I had to choose a different letter for each of the contests so that the pupils could not listen to the other group. We started each new 2 duels at the same time so that



I could regulate the game better.

In the 6th class I used the topics from their Project book ( animals, town, jobs, people, house, capitals, subjects, school things) and in the 8th class I added some grammar ( past tense forms, adjectives - comparative or superlative forms). We played the game about three times in each of the classes and I suppose it was quite good fun for my pupils. In this way they repeated their vocabulary and at the same time had a rest.

### 3. FACTS AND NUMBERS

Lesson plan: To improve pupils' listening is the main aim of this lesson.

Age: 9-15 (and older)

learning skills: listening

Teaching aids: a list of sentences and questions

Time: 10 minutes

The rules:

The teacher has to prepare from 5 to 20 sentences. Their topics and contents should be adequate to pupils' level and age. He reads the sentences twice and then he asks the questions referring to the previous facts. The number of questions need not be the same as the number of the sentences. Pupils write their answers, for each correct answer they obtain one point

This game requires more preparation from a teacher. Facts can be used and numbers either from English or from other subjects which pupils learn at school.

As for my classes, it was easier to prepare the sentences for my older pupils than for the younger ones because in the 8th class they know, of course, more words from English lessons and I could use more difficult structures for them. I usually prepared about 7 sentences and then I asked students some 10 questions. For example, I used the following sentence as the third from my list ( Magic Johnson played in American basketball "Dream Team" in Barcelona 1992) and I used 3 questions for this sentence ( 1. In what country were the last summer Olympic Games? 2. What is Johnson's nickname? 3. What is his nationality?). The questions were well done by boys, some girls were mistaken in the first question - they did not know the country!? - and in the second question - they did not remember Johnson's nickname, Magic.

After the pupils wrote their answers, we checked them up. Pupils wrote down correct answers on the blackboard and compared them with their own answers. They obtained 1 point for each correct answer and whoever had most points was the winner.

For next lessons I tried to prepare sentences only from pupils' books for English or from magazines that we used in our lessons and pupils' answers were better then.

#### 4. GUESSING AND LOGIC.

Lesson plan: By thinking up of suitable questions pupils improve their speaking.

Age: 12-15 (and older)

Learning skills: speaking

Teaching aids: ----

Time: 10-15 minutes



The rules are quite simple. One person thinks of a word. The others ask him the questions and he can answer them using only YES or NO. The formulation of the question is very important. The pupils change their turn in asking questions and whoever can answer first, he or she is a winner. If someone answers and uses a wrong word, he/she is out of the game. Other variation can be used as a competition of teams. We can divide pupils into 3 or more groups and they compete among themselves.

I used this game in both variations mentioned in rules of games as a competition among pupils or among groups. There were huge differences between younger and older pupils. For the youngest ones I had to use very simple things so that they could form simple questions and successfully guess the item. When the secret word was a personality, I was usually thinking of a pupil's name and pupils found out who I was. They used only questions with verbs to be and to have, colours, prepositions on, under, in and adverbs here or over there and found out things placed in the classroom. With older pupils in the 8th class or sometimes in the 6th class, for guessing the personality I could use some famous people, sportsmen, film stars, historical personalities or even cartoon heroes and the pupils were usually successful. I started to think of a personality and then the first winner thought of another one and so on. Instead of the personality we often used an activity or a verb. (For example, I thought I was the headmaster of our school. The pupils asked me: "Are you a man?" - "No". "Are you from our town?" - "Yes". "Are you from our school?" - "Yes". "Are you a headmaster?" - "Yes". "Are you Mrs Vydrová?" - "Yes". A point for the last answering pupil).

I needed about 10 - 15 minutes for the game to change pupils in thinking of words and to give them a chance to find the solution. That is why I planned the game usually for our final part of the lesson.

This game can be successful only if we select things, terms or personalities generally well - known. There is also a problem in groups when some weaker pupils can be more passive. So we can give them numbers in groups and they change their turn in asking the questions.

#### 5. TOWN, ANIMAL, NAME...

Lesson plan: The aim of this lesson is to revise pupils' vocabulary in connection with spelling and the English Alphabet.

Age: 9-14

Learning skills: vocabulary, alphabet

Teaching aids: pens, papers

Time: 10-15 minutes

The rules:

Everyone has his or her own paper with several columns and gives titles to them: Town, animal, name, verb, adjective, thing. The first pupil or the teacher starts to tell the English alphabet. He tells just A and then he goes on quietly. The second pupil after some time tells "Stop"! The first one announces a letter which he or she reached. That is a signal



for all the pupils to write down one word starting with the given out letter into each of the columns. When someone fills in all the column, he shouts "Finish"! After this command everyone stops writing and the pupil who finished first all the words begins to read his or her solution. If pupils have the same word as reading the pupil, they write down 5 points, for each individual word they obtain 10 points and in case that nobody has the word in the column except the first pupil, he/she one obtains 15 points. Then the pupils sum up their final results from the round and the game goes on with the next letter. The end of the game can be after 5 or 10 rounds.

In this game I used other heads for columns in comparison with the rules published in Zapletal's encyclopaedia. I used verbs, adjectives and things instead of rivers, plants, countries and birds because I assumed the pupils could be more successful with those categories. The number of countries is much more limited than the number of verbs or adjectives.

The game is well - known for our pupils and because I know they like it, I sometimes used it as a final activity to relax after some difficult grammar rules. I had to explain in Czech what verbs and adjectives are and the 5th and the 6th classes had more problems because of their limited vocabulary. We used usually 5 rounds and mostly older pupils were quite good at writing. The pupils' results correlated with their common results at school.

Here is an example of Pavla P. from the 6th class- she had the 2nd best result.

TOWN	ANIMAL	NAME	VERB	ADJECTIVE	THING
B- Birmingham	Bird	Bob	Bring	Big	Ball

M- Manchester	Monkey	Mary	Make	----	Motorbike
P- Plymouth	Pig	Peter	Play	Pink	Pencil
S- Sydney	Snake	Sarah	----	Small	Sweater
I - ----	Insect	Ivan	----	Iron	Iron



#### IV. Summary of classes

##### A. Advantages

In my opinion, the games which I described had more advantages for my teaching. I planned them for such parts of my classes when the pupils could have a rest. These activities interrupted some drills and helped the pupils not to be bored.

I suppose, they could serve as a motivating impulse for them. In this way they could overcome some difficulties with practising vocabulary, listening and speaking. The games helped my students improve their knowledge, not only of English but also of Geography, History and the like. They had to speak, ask questions and at the same time listen to their friends, or to listen to my sentences, questions and to react on them when writing their answers or solutions.

As for me, there is the big advantage that the games did not need too a long preparation except for the game FACTS and NUMBERS or maybe a little bit KIM'S GAME.

##### B. Disadvantages.

I found only one thing that was worse for some of pupils. I could not sometimes influence some passive and weak students because the game has its rules and the teacher cannot help one of the pupils. That is why mainly in my 5th class weak pupils had problems above all at writing ( Town, Animal, Name...) and in the conditions of the class they had no chance to win. In this case I divided the pupils into groups according to their

efficiency in previous lesson. However, their results were not convincing too much after that, either.



### V. Conclusion

I used the games mentioned in the text by turns within the whole school year. I think, we practised all the skills, listening, speaking, only reading was omitted a little. Pupils read only their written solutions in our games. The games we played were intended more to practise pupils' vocabulary and I suppose, playing the games the pupils should have improved and they might have extended their vocabulary.

Although we sometimes scored the game, practising listening, speaking and vocabulary was the main goal for me.

Every teacher certainly has problems with slower pupils. It is not important for them to manage the same results as better pupils, but it is necessary to allow such pupils to reach their own particular success. The teacher should be able to recognize in what activity the pupil is better and to bring out the skills. In this way he can positively motivate the pupil in learning English. As for this, I suppose, the role of games is obvious.

Pupils practising language skills had a rest at the same time and in this way the importance of using games was more enforced.

Generally, I have to say that the games used helped me a lot in my teaching, above all to keep good atmosphere, and my pupils liked them very much. I can recommend to everyone to try playing these games and I hope my work can help some of my colleagues.

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## Ivan Studecky - Games in teaching English

1. The reasons the author gives for playing games are convincing, but he is preaching to the converted.
2. The reduced role of the teacher in games is an important reason for playing them, i.e. teacher as prompter (p.5)
3. The detailed description of classes (p.12) is helpful in giving a good context for the reader for later lesson plans.
4. The generation of variations (p. 14-16) to Kim's Game, especially the variant that seemed to suggest that students remember pictures better than words, shows a spirit of inquiry that is laudable.
5. The author discusses problems that occurred in games (i.e. p.18 with Word Duel ) and sometimes suggests changes to address them.
6. There is a concentrated effort to deal with the problem of weaker and more passive students (i.e. p. 21).
7. A main criterion for games in this paper is ease of criterion! preparation. This is a very, very important criteria, and one that is frequently ignored in descriptions of great sounding activities that rarely get used because of the amount of preparation time involved.

### Points for discussion

1. If the definition of a game by the Russian (p. 4) is too abstract, why include it in the paper?
2. If the teacher only accepts correct forms (p. 7), when can the students work on their communicative fluency, also an important skill? Is the purpose of language to communicate or to be correct? Of course both are important and to some extent interdependent, but sometimes students could be allowed to try to communicate their meaning without worrying about form, just as children learning their first language are not always corrected.
3. Isn't the question, "As for you these games require a lot of preparation?" (p.8) too informal for an academic paper in it's direct address to the reader?
4. The author's contention that a song is a game goes unsupported. (p. 7) What criteria for games discussed earlier does a song meet?
5. The problem with the Zapletal source is that this is a final paper for working on English reading as well as writing skills.
6. A table listing the games and suggesting at least one part of a textbook where each game could be used is needed.
7. One time it is asserted that in games students don't need to think about grammar and its rules (p.6), but later (p. 9) its asserted that students have to think what the grammar is about' in grammar games. Aren't these statements contradictory?

The strongest points of this paper are the number of variations, the criteria of minimum preparation time, and substantial discussion of passive/weaker students needs. The weakest point is a fuzzy research section where games are not defined in a concise way.

TABLE (#6 ABOVE) CROSS-REFERENCING GAMES TO  
TEXTBOOK(S) REQUIRED