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## **PLAY-BASED METHODS IN TEACHING ENGLISH**

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Mastering English skills, especially grammar skills, has always been problematical for ESL students of any level. Having learned a lot of rules and done plenty of written exercises the students are not often able to apply them when speaking and don't identify them when listening. Furthermore, the grammar learning is perceived as effortful and boring work. Taking this problem into account a teacher should realize the barest necessity of rationalization of this kind of learning activity and the necessity of searching and practicing more efficient tools in teaching.

Among the efficient and interesting methods of teaching and learning English grammar is the grammar games use. The games help teacher to create the context where the language and its grammar phenomena acquire real, living meanings and become useful. "Games motivate, give reasons for realization of grammar phenomena, as those who take part in the games are anxious to understand the real meaning of what they and their partners say. They strive for correct reporting the information and for being understood right by others. The gaming introduces an element of competition to the knowledge acquiring activity" [1]. Educational games impart a comfortable atmosphere to learning; create a friendly climate in a class-room. When playing or acting out the students have a good opportunity to exercise new grammar rules by living speech patterns, in

contextual, free and easy atmosphere as students' attention is directed and concentrated on a game content not on grammar as educational subject. The games generate favourable conditions for a fruitful work on a grammar theme and make students use the foreign language.

There are some remarkable teaching findings and ideas in a sphere of play-based approach presented on the web-sites of various international editions. In the article "Six Games for the EFL/ESL Classroom" of "The Internet TESL Journal"[2] Aydan Ersöz , an English teacher of Gazi University (Ankara, Turkey) says language learning is a hard work, so well-chosen game is invaluable tool to relax tension and at the same time to practice language skills. 'Games are highly motivating since they are amusing and at the same time challenging. Furthermore, they employ meaningful and useful language in real contexts. They also encourage and increase cooperation.' [3]. Jerry Thekes, a doctor of Applied Linguistics and skillful teacher from Great Britain, basing on his long teaching experience calls the gaming "a tool for holding students' attention for a long time" especially if a teacher uses visual teaching materials. In his article "Grammar games with students' total physical involvement" [4] Dr. Thekes states that play-based activities with proper visual materials are a powerful resource for an educational process promotion and agrees with Simon Mumford, an English teacher of Izmir University of Economics, who believes that teachers should involve graphical images and pictures since this way is the simplest and the fastest one to bring to a classroom a living situation that can embody educational theme. According to those methods of teaching grammar the remarkable grammar reference "Essential Grammar in Use" by Raymond Murphy is actually more drawn than written. As for professor Mumford teaching experience told in his article "Using Creative Thinking to Find New Uses for Realia [5]" the fact of play methods practice based on "everyday realia and activities from daily life" is very worth attention. And he practices it both for training, strengthening and explaining a new subject. He gives the example of the "performance" of the "Prepositions of place and movement"

theme. Usually the variety of prepositions does not serve to their easy adoption, so, the professor explain the theme by means of “A Tie and Prepositions” game: he shows “how to tie a tie” and comments the movements of his hands using the prepositions *under, in front of, over, up, behind, through, round, down* etc. The game usually produces a required effect.

Incorporating role-play into the classroom adds variety, a change of pace and opportunities for a lot of language production and also a lot of fun! It can be an integral part of the class and not a 'one-off' event. If the teacher believes that the activity will work and the necessary support is provided, it can be very successful. However, if the teacher isn't convinced about the validity of using role-play the activity "will fall flat on its face just as you expected it to" (Gillian Porter Ladousse 1987). Therefore, if you think positive and have a go, you may be pleasantly surprised.

Role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else's shoes, or when you stay in your own shoes but put yourself into an imaginary situation!

Imaginary people - The joy of role-play is that students can 'become' anyone they like for a short time! The President, the Queen, a millionaire, a pop star ..... the choice is endless! Students can also take on the opinions of someone else. 'For and Against' debates can be used and the class can be split into those who are expressing views in favour and those who are against the theme.

Imaginary situations - Functional language for a multitude of scenarios can be activated and practised through role-play. 'At the restaurant', 'Checking in at the airport', 'Looking for lost property' are all possible role-plays.

It is widely agreed that learning takes place when activities are engaging and memorable. Jeremy Harmer advocates the use of role-play for the following reasons:

- Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way

- The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world - thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities

In addition to these reasons, students who will at some point travel to an English-speaking country are given a chance to rehearse their English in a safe environment. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice. Mistakes can be made with no drastic consequences.

Role-play is possible at elementary levels providing the students have been thoroughly prepared. Try to think through the language the students will need and make sure this language has been presented. Students may need the extra support of having the language on the board. I recently did a 'lost property office' role-play with elementary adults and we spent time beforehand drilling the structures the students would need to use. When the role-play began the students felt 'armed' with the appropriate language. At higher levels the students will not need so much support with the language but they will need time to 'get into' the role.

Thus, analyzing some creative teachers' experience in their searching for efficient methods, the authors have reached the conclusion that play-based methods and activities are of current importance in Grammar class and have some clear advantages

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