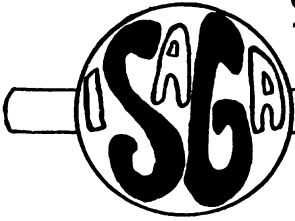


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GAMES WITH AIMS

Classification and Adaptation of Foreign Language Teaching Games

by Friederike Klippel

Based on the distinction between "game" and "play" in game theory this paper deals exclusively with games and their place in foreign language teaching. In order to be able to use games successfully and effectively in the foreign language classroom it is necessary to analyse not only their foreign language content but also their structural properties, e.g. rules and patterns of interaction. Based on the results of this analysis the various ways in which games are suitable for foreign language learning can be listed and discussed.

Thus the present paper deals first with the structural properties of rule-governed games and their impact on foreign language learning. In this context the distinction between the goal of a game and its teaching objective is of fundamental importance. Both types of aims have to be taken into account when looking at games as learning situations. The teacher is made aware of the individual qualities of games and his task of selecting, adapting and playing facilitated, if games are presented in detail. A model is proposed for this purpose. Finally, a way of classifying traditional language teaching games is suggested.

THE STRUCTURE OF GAMES

In contrast to "play", "games" are rule-governed and often contain an element of contest, either between the participants themselves, or the participants and the game materials. The formal characteristics of games have been described by a number of authors. Inbar/Stoll (1970, 54) define a game "as a set of rules. In particular, it is a set of more or less elaborate and explicit rules about the constraints under which a goal is to be achieved with certain resources". Similarly Gillespie (1974) sees the rules as the central factor in game structure and names seven types of rules which govern the players' be-

haviour in every aspect : "initiation and termination rules, deployment and disposition rules, communication rules, arbitration rules, intervention rules, enforcement rules, outcome rules". Both Sutton-Smith (1971) and Avedon (1971) give a more extensive list of formal game elements (Sutton-Smith : purpose, actors and counteractors, motive of play, outcome; Avedon : purpose, procedures for action, rules governing actions, number of required players, roles of participants, participant interaction patterns, results or pay-off). The fundamental aspects of goal, players, procedures which are all determined by the rules are mentioned by these authors as well.

When considering the use of games in the teaching of a particular subject these structural properties have to be taken into consideration. Thus a thorough analysis of the games is not only necessary but vital. By analysing the rules of a game which determine the behaviour of the players, their use of resources and possibilities for interaction, the teacher becomes aware of the demands the game makes on its players. The tasks they have to perform can be foreseen to a great extent. Therefore games are largely "predictable" learning situations and thus their use in class can easily and effectively be planned. In this way games are similar to other types of classroom activities like drills or group work. Furthermore the rule structure makes games repeatable, and the repetition of a pleasurable experience (like a popular game) is always welcome to the learners.

Naturally, games can differ widely in the complexity of their structure. Many language teaching games are structurally very simple, e.g. guessing games quite often demand nothing more than the asking of a certain type of question. In this way the player's attention is directed to this particular task, e.g. asking yes-no-questions; he need not worry about other language problems, but can, once he has mastered the sentence pattern to be used, concentrate on playing and thus practise (unconsciously) this element of the foreign language. Basically the rules of a game restrict the player in his spontaneity at the same time granting him considerable freedom to act within the framework of the game. As all participants in a game tacitly accept the rules before starting to play, this kind of restriction is not felt to be negative. On the contrary, if a rule is thought to be too strict or generally unacceptable or inadequate it can be modified or dropped by common consent. This process takes place quite often in the spontaneous games of children. In the foreign language classroom it provides a valuable situation for the practising of communicative skills.

GOAL AND TEACHING OBJECTIVE

Discussion of the rules is, however, only part of participant interaction during a game. Communication oriented towards reaching the goal of a game, e.g. the guessing of something or the fulfillment of specific tasks, differs in its extent and complexity from one game to another. Discussion games (e.g. Balloon Discussion, see Appendix) on the one hand demand extensive verbal communication from the players before an agreement can be reached, acting-out-games (e.g. Simon Says, see Appendix) on the other hand contain hardly any verbal communication.

Just as different as the kinds of communication leading to the goal of a game are the kinds of goals themselves. Goal describes the outcome of a game to be arrived at by the end of the game. In a guessing game this is the finding out of something, in a discussion game it might be the reaching of an agreement or the successful defending of one's point of view, in a continuation game it could be the correct rendering of a very long sentence. The teaching objective has to be distinguished from the goal quite clearly. Each game can be seen as fulfilling certain teaching objectives or subject-based aims, which are rarely congruent with the goal of the game. In playing a guessing game in the foreign language lesson it is not relevant to the teaching objective whether a player actually guesses correctly because the teaching objective lies in the practising of a particular structure. Similarly in the discussion game the process of arguing is far more important in respect to the teaching objective than the actual outcome. These two examples illustrate that a thorough analysis of each game is necessary in order to establish its teaching value. In view of foreign language learning some of the aspects to be investigated for each game are the following : Which skills and patterns in the foreign language must the players have acquired so as to be able to participate ? (E.g. for most guessing games they would have to know the use of "to do".) Which situations can arise during the game and what language elements are necessary to master them ? What kind of language production (productive or creative, reproductive, imitative) or comprehension (listening or reading comprehension, understanding gist or detail) is required ? Are the players capable of discussing rules and questions of game procedure in the foreign language ?

INTERACTION

Another element of the game structure that influences the quality of games as teaching situations for foreign language learning is the type of player interaction. Two sets of factors determine the players' goal-oriented interaction during the game; competition versus non-competition, skill versus chance. In this respect four basic types of games can be distinguished : 1. competitive games of skill; 2. non-competitive games of skill; 3. competitive games of chance; 4. non-competitive games of chance. These types, however, are rarely to be found in their pure form. A great number of games contain all four factors, and experience shows that within the group of language teaching games, most popular are those games which depend on the players' skill as well as chance and which are not too competitive. If the outcome of a game remains undecided for a long period - as it often happens when both skill and chance are present - the participants are motivated to go on playing. Interest in continuing or repeating a game is also important for the achievement of the teaching objective connected with the game.

The competitive quality of many games has been criticized by some German authors writing about simulation games (cf. Lehmann 1977b; Portele 1976). They feel that students participating in highly competitive games are largely motivated by the prospect of winning and not by the act of playing. As their desire to win the game is very strong, the players might try to hinder the flow of information to other players, they might avoid cooperation and learn to think in terms of "us" and "them" (Lehmann 1977b, 229). Therefore competitive simulation games could inadvertently teach values which run counter to the purposes for which games are played in the classroom. In the case of the shorter and less complex (in comparison to simulation games) games used for foreign language teaching the negative effects of a competitive structure do seem less pronounced. This is partly due to the fact that the pattern of competition differs widely; in some games individuals compete, in others it is pairs or groups, then again teams of varying composition. Many games also contain an element of chance which makes the outcome of the game depend less on the skills of the participants thus reducing the fear of failure. Finally, language teaching games often demand other abilities than those leading to success in normal teaching situations and give the less able student a chance to do well. Apart from these alleviating aspects as regards the competitive

elements in language teaching games, one should endeavour to propagate mainly games which train the participants in cooperating towards the achievement of a common goal. Then language teaching games can also foster the attaining of educational goals like cooperation and empathy.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

In addition to the structural elements of games discussed above, games are usually thought of as having a number of phenomenological characteristics. Various sets of these have been proposed by a number of theorists, in Germany mainly by Scheuerl (1973, 1st ed. 1954; 1975) and Heckhausen (1974). In spite of general agreement what these characteristics are, a situation in which all of them are present may still not be a game (or play), as long as the participants do not consider it as such. The final judgment of whether somebody is engaged in a game can only be made by the person concerned; which means, of course, that the same situation can be thought of as either a game or e.g. a training session by different individuals. If the teaching objective behind a game is unduly stressed the danger can arise that the players lose sight of the game-inherent goal and subsequently do not enter into the game spirit. Whereas children can easily forget their surroundings (the classroom setting and the teacher's intentions) during a game and enjoy it providing the goal be motivating, adults are far more often aware of the didactic purpose behind a language teaching game. This awareness, however, does not necessarily spoil their enjoyment in the game; the latter can be enhanced by their feeling of "doing something useful" at the same time as having fun.

When using games in the classroom the teacher's attitude is to some extent responsible for games being accepted as such by the students. A player's performance during a game should not be graded in any way. If the players are to enjoy a game and in their enjoyment practise the foreign language - often without realizing it - then they have to feel that the game is really different from the ordinary classroom situation. They should feel free to experiment and be creative without having to be afraid of ridicule or failure.

PREPARING GAMES FOR USE IN THE CLASSROOM

The analysis of game structure forms the basis on which individual games can be discussed as fulfilling the role of a learning situation for foreign language learning. Incidentally, the aspect of learning by playing games is emphasized in the German term "Lernspiel" (= learning game), which expresses this intention rather better than the English language teaching game. Learning of varying kinds can take place in games. Firstly, there can be the learning of social behaviour, like the helping of others, which is dependent on the structure of the game. Secondly, there is the learning of generally useful skills, like strategies of questioning, concentration, or the training of perceptive skills. Thirdly, foreign language teaching games provide practice in the use of the target language; they let the players experience situations where the foreign language is a necessary means of communication. Lastly, games can provide students with the insight that learning can be fun and thus build up motivation. Although the teacher is the person who finally decides which games to play with his class, he can be helped in the process of selecting suitable games by having them presented in such a way that all important information can be seen at a glance. The following model is proposed for this purpose (cf. Klippel 1980b and 1980c).

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 15px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	
AIMS and CONTENTS	
Skills	:
Language	:
Other	:
ORGANISATION	
Level	:
Players	:
Material	:
Time	:
Preparation	:
Procedure	:
Variations	:
Remarks	:

The section AIMS AND CONTENTS lists both subject-specific aims - the skills (i.e. listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension, writing) and language elements to be practised - and general educational objectives. In the section ORGANISATION all those data are given that are necessary for the planning and playing of a game. The level a game is suitable for depends on both the aims and on the procedure; since it is virtually impossible for a game collector to decide whether a group of teenagers or adults are prepared to play a certain game, he/she can usually only state the lowest possible level at which the game could be used. Players provides information about the maximum and/or minimum number as well as the grouping of participants. Time refers to the approximate time needed for one round of the game with a class that is familiar with rules and procedure. Preparation states exactly what the teacher has to prepare prior to explaining the game to the class; in most cases this will be the production of materials or the setting-up of the room in a specific way. Procedure gives the rules for the game and some examples where necessary. For some games variations are suggested; especially in those cases where variants of a game are familiar or have been tried out and reported. Finally, remarks makes suggestions that either simplify the playing of the game or put it into the larger context of language learning by mentioning possible follow-up activities or combinations of games. For games that contain a variety of language material, be it structural or communicative, the compiling and handing out of a sheet of possible utterances for the players is recommended. When 45 foreign language teaching games were analysed and presented using the above mentioned model the teachers' response to the collection was very positive (for a report on the evaluation of 45 foreign language teaching games, see Klippel 1980b).

Of the collections of language teaching games on the market today (e.g. Chamberlin/Stenberg 1976; Dorry 1966; Gressmann 1979; Hill/Fielden 1974; Lee 1965 and 1979; Mundschau 1974; Wright/Betteridge/Buckby 1979) only the most recent publication (Wright/Betteridge/Buckby 1979) provides the teacher with more information on each game than just a mention of level and procedure, which is all most of the others do. But even Wright et al do not state other than language aims for their games.

The model suggested for the presentation of language teaching games above does not only facilitate game selection for the teacher but also furnishes him with a means to build up his own game collection, e.g. in the form of a card file.

The model also makes it much easier to adapt games for the needs of particular groups of learners. Each "ingredient" of the game can be changed. Whereas modification of the aims of a game in some cases necessitates changing the procedure and thus occasionally the structural character of the game, adaptation of the grouping of players, the type of materials or the level of difficulty can be performed without changing the whole game. This is illustrated in the following example.

FIND THE WORD

cf. Mackey 1965, 450

AIMS and CONTENTS

- Skills** : Reading comprehension
- Language** : Lexis (single words taken from a certain context)
- Other** : Concentration, speed of reading, recognition of word shapes

ORGANISATION

- Level** : from 1st year onwards
- Players** : maximum 30; groups of 4-6 players each
- Material** : an identical set of 10-20 flash cards for each group plus one set for the teacher
- Time** : 10 minutes
- Preparation** : production of flash cards : 10-20 cards per set in the format of A4 with a different word written on each of them.
The number of sets depends on the number of groups.
- Procedure** : The teacher gives a set of flash cards to each group. He then holds up one of the cards from his set, so that everybody can see it. Whichever group hold up the card with the same word first scores a point. The group with most points wins.

Variations :

Remarks :

Some of the ways in which this relatively simple game can be changed :

Skills : If the teacher wants the students to practise listening comprehension instead of reading comprehension, the procedure of the game or the materials have to be changed. In the first case the teacher does not show his card to the players but reads out the word on it. In the second case the players receive flash cards with drawings on them instead of words and have to hold up the correct picture for every word the teacher reads out.

Language : If whole sentences instead of single words are used to practise reading comprehension of longer utterances, the materials will have to be changed accordingly. Also, the time for the playing of one round will have to be extended, unless the number of cards is reduced.

Level : The level is largely dependent on the language aims of the game.

It can be raised by either choosing very advanced words or speeding the game up so that each card is only shown for a second.

Players : If more players are to participate in the game more material will have to be prepared. The game need not necessarily be played in groups; all kinds of groupings, from playing with the whole class, teams, to playing with pairs are possible. Practice would be more intensive, if every group received two packs of flash cards. They would then elect a leader who showed the cards only to the small group. After each round the groups could exchange their sets of cards.

Time : Changes in the time needed for the game would result mainly in an extension or reduction of the materials.

Procedure : The competitive structure of the game can be reduced by introducing elements of chance. This can be done by giving incomplete sets of flash cards to the groups, so that the winning group is not only successful because of their speedy reaction but also because its set of cards may correspond more with the sequence of words read out by the teacher.

A further advantage of the model lies in its facilitating the adaptation of games from other sources, i.e. children's games, party games, games from TV, games from other subjects for the use in foreign language teaching, because one is forced to analyse the game in question carefully and thus becomes more aware of its qualities and suitability as a learning situation.

CLASSIFICATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING GAMES

When starting to look to other fields for additions to the corpus of foreign language teaching games it seems necessary to attempt something like a survey of the types of games already available to the foreign language teacher. This task can only be performed satisfactorily if a system for the classification of language teaching games is developed. Although all compilers of game collections divide their books into different categories, these categories do not always follow the same system, e.g. party games versus true/false games (Wright et al 1979), "party" refers to the place where a game is played, "true/false" to the type of game task to be performed.

The following table makes use of the two types of aims which can be distinguished for each language teaching game : teaching objective and goal of the game (see above). Each type of aim is divided into sub-categories. In the case of the teaching objective the basic distinction of four skills and four language elements is followed, so that each game can be marked on both scales. For more complex games, which practise communication rather than just individual structures, a fifth column "all elements" had to be added.

As regards the goals of games, subdivision into categories proved more complex. The categories in the following table are to be interpreted as a first and probably not final attempt. The goal of a game is closely connected with the activity prevalent in the game, e.g. the finding out of something requires asking questions, the establishing of a certain order or pattern requires ordering and matching. These activities have been taken to characterize the different goals of games. They are based on those language teaching games that are commonly known. It is quite likely that the development of new games will therefore make it necessary to extend the present list.

teaching objectives of games	skills				elements of the language				
	listening compreh.	speaking	reading compreh.	writing	lexis	grammar	phonetics	pragmatics	all elements
carrying out instructions acting-out									
continuation									
transforming									
matching and ordering									
collecting									
guessing									
questioning/ answering									
filling in									
describing									
recounting something									
discussing									
spelling doing sums									

CONCLUSION

The basic aim of this paper is to argue for an integration of language teaching games into foreign language learning so that learning a foreign language can be made more enjoyable and in certain ways more effective. The necessary prerequisite for an extended use of games in the foreign language classroom is a thorough analysis of their qualities as learning situations. Only then will games be accepted as valuable aids and more teachers will consider their inclusion into their teaching of foreign languages. Integration of games does not mean their occasional use, when five minutes are left at the end of a lesson or as a reward for the students working hard, it means the acceptance of games as useful learning situations, both in a general education and in a subject-oriented way. In order to make teachers see games in a new light and help them use games purposefully it is vital to not only convincingly point out the values of individual games but also to present them in such a way that their properties become obvious and their selection and preparation facilitated. A model which attempts to fulfill these needs has been proposed above.

A survey of the stock of language teaching games forms the basis for expansion and innovation; new games have to be developed to cater for the changing objectives in foreign language teaching, i.e. the teaching of communicative skills.

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