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Let the games begin! The Power of Games in the Young Learner Classroom

Games and childhood are natural allies, which is why the role of games in Kindergarten and Primary classrooms is so important. They are fun and enjoyable, fostering a positive atmosphere and attitudes towards the English language. In turn, this positive connection prepares children to be more receptive to learning the language. This session will focus on dissecting games (their components and skills involved) to highlight their benefits for the whole child. The setting-up of many different types of games will be demonstrated and practiced.

GAMES...

- are fun and enjoyable and children associate this pleasure and enjoyment with English.
- can create a context for uninhibited language use.
- naturally provide an opportunity and relevance for repetition.
- are social activities
- develop a child's cognitive skills
- develop fine and gross motor skills

FORMATS

“A format is a routinized and repeated interaction in which [adults and children] do things [...] together using language”
(Bruner 1983: 132)

1. A sequential structure
2. Clearly marked roles
3. Scripts to support communication

EEE model

“Encounter, Engage and Exploit” (EEE) model (Mourão and Gamboa, 2007).

EEE focuses on progression but along a series of lessons, what a child actually does from the beginning of a unit of work to the end of a unit of work.

- Encounter: GROUP physical / oral responses
- Engage: Group to INDIVIDUAL physical / oral response
- Exploit: INDIVIDUAL physical / ORAL response.

Scaffolding: Supporting children to move forwards in language use. Know when to scaffold and when to stop. Help, support and encouragement.

SOME GAMES

Sequenced memory game: Place flashcards on the floor face up. Go over the vocabulary in the same order the cards are placed in. Turn cards facing down. Make two teams. Select a person from Team A to say the word on the first card. If correct, turn over the first card. If the child can't remember they can request for help from their team using a coping strategy: “Help please” or say: “Pass”. You decide. The game continues with Team B giving the word on the second card until all cards are turned over.

Beat The Clock: Put in teams and give a set of flashcards to each (the same cards as the ones used in the “Sequencing memory game”). They have to race to put them in the same order as the previous game, from memory. The first team to state that they have put them in order wins if they are correct. ☑

Pelmanism: Place cards face down and players turn over cards 2 at a time to try to find matches.

T: Turn over a card. (Student turns over a card) What is it?

Child A: It's a...

T: Turn over another card. (Student turns over a card) What is it?

Child A: It's a...

T: Are they the same or different?

Child A: They are different.

T: It's your turn

Matching cards: Have 2 sets of cards. Place in different places in the room. Show a card. Say, "Look, an apple!" Give the apple card to one of the children and say, "Can you find another apple?" After the child brings the card back, place the two apple cards next to each other and say, "Look, they're the same! They match!" "These are different".

Freeze! (A group physical response.; ENCOUNTER)

Teacher and children decide upon an action to represent a word or expression they are learning. The teacher calls out the word or expression and the children do the action. When the teacher says Freeze! The children stop and become frozen statues, trying not to move. If a child moves they have to sit down and miss a turn.

Eg. Airplanes! Freeze! (if someone moves, sit down and miss a turn)

Airplanes taking off! Freeze!

Airplanes landing! Freeze!

Flyswatters (An individual physical response; ENGAGE)

Flashcards are on the floor or the board. Children are divided into two groups. One child represents each group, and is in charge of a flyswatter. The teacher calls out a word or expression (Apple! Or I like apples!) and each child runs to the flashcard set and swats the image that matches the call. If they swat the right one, they get a point for their team. Children take it in turns to represent their team.

Guess my card (Children to children; EXPLOIT)

Place 5/7 cards on the floor. A child thinks of a card (just by looking, and doesn't give any clues to the rest). The child asks: What is it?. Children take it in turns to ask eg. "Is it a ball?". If the guess is incorrect, the child says No, it isn't and turns over the (ball) card. Children try to guess again. With every incorrect guess, the card gets turned over. If they are correct the child responds with Yes it is and the guessing child gets a turn to select a card.

The echo game (Encounter)

Have the children sit in a circle. Show the flashcard of an image they are learning. Say the word or expression clearly and invite them to echo the word after you. Explain that echoes get quieter, so they should repeat the word or expression four times getting gradually quieter. Help them by counting the echoes on your fingers and praise them when they end quietly.

Slow reveal or peep hole (Encounter)

Cover a flashcard and reveal it slowly. Or cover a flashcard with a card with a key hole or circle cut into it so it doesn't reveal the whole picture.

Jump to the side (Encounter if played as a group or teams or Engage if they play individually)

Draw a line or stick some masking tape down the middle of the board continuing on the floor, so that you have 2 sides. Stick flashcards on either side of the line on the board. Children stand on the line to begin with, and when teacher calls out a word, children jump to the side of the line the flashcard is on. If jump to wrong side, they sit down. Can be played in teams, or individually as a physical response and later selected children can call out words.

"It's a..." / "I like apples" / "This fruit is red" / "This animal goes moo."

Which number? (Encounter)

What do children know already? Numbers 1-4? Colours? Shapes?

Place flashcards on the board and place other cards above each one: number cards, colour cards, shape cards, etc. Say I like apples. Which number/colour/shape is apples? Children answer using the language they know (colours, shapes or numbers), rather than the new language.

What's number 1? (Engage)

Place flashcards on the board and place other cards above each one: number cards, colour cards, shape cards, etc. Say What is number 1? Children answer: an apple.

(What's the triangle? what's red?)

Simon says: (Encounter)

Puppet says. Do what Sarah says, not does.

Freeze / Listen and do /Mime, Peep hole, slow reveal INDIVIDUALLY (Engage)

Early patterning (Engage)

AB or ABC. Have copies of the same cards. Create patterns for children to "read out". Children can create their own patterns and "read" them out orally.

Fruit salad (Encounter if responding physically, Engage if individually and orally)

Each child is a fruit but there needs to be 2 of each. When teacher mentions the fruit those 2 children change places, when say "fruit salad" and they all change places. Have children repeat the language.

Running game. (Individual + physical; Engage or Exploit from child to child)

Dynamic and quick. Teacher calls out words and students take turns, individually, in a line or around the circle running to the board, and touching the flashcard (saying the word if possible). You might want them to touch the card on the board or pick up a "microphone" and say the word.

Exploit: child calls out a word or expression. Child who runs must say what it is to win points. Want to be confident to be successful. Spoken component must be there. As long as when they get to the chair/microphone they say "I've got the pear".

Hopscotch: (Engage)

Make a big hopscotch on the floor (with paper or masking tape) and place flashcards in the squares). Children roll a dice, identify number, count numbers, jump (large motor skills) and say the name of item on flashcard they land on.

I'm thinking of... (Exploit)

Place flashcards on the floor or board. Think of one of the items and mention those that are not the one you are thinking of.

Eg: It isn't an apple. It isn't a banana. It isn't an orange. What is it? Children: It is a plum.

Chinese whispers (Exploit)

Whisper and pass it around the class. The children pass it on, the interaction is child to child. Children can choose the word. Say "Whisper an animal" for example.

Pass the parcel (Exploit)

Place cards in a bag/schoolbag/parcel made of newspaper. When the music stops, children open the bag or take a layer from the newspaper, hold up the card and say what it is.

Noughts and crosses (Exploit)

Exploit game-related language: "Umm? Help please". "It's your turn / my turn".

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