Research Article

STIMULATING EFL BEGINNERS TO INITIATE SPEAKING THROUGH GAMES VIA PAIR-WORK ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated utilizing the games via pair work activity to engage EFL beginners in speaking. The study mainly aimed at benefiting from EFL beginners` potential interest in games to establish their oral communicative competence. The study followed the experimental and descriptive designs and used tests (pre- post-test) and an interview as tools for data collection. After analyzing the collected data by SPSS program, it was clear that playing games is an effective technique for engaging beginners in using English language verbally as long as possible. Games are also most appropriate activities that can be carried out inside and outside classroom (real life situations) and may be played with different other people from those at the class. In addition, games create interesting and enthusiastic learning atmosphere. In the light of these results, the study recommends that games should be employed for verbal classroom interaction via pair work activity.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In the recent years, developing oral communication has become one of the most important goals for learning foreign language. It comes from the perspective of language as a social phenomenon which fulfills communicative purposes. In fact, learning foreign language is undoubtedly a challenge to non-native speakers. But the big challenge is the low motivation of EFL pupils and teachers` inability of keeping their pupils interested.These difficulties normally affect and hinder EFL pupils` performance. So, the interest is very crucial factor for learning regardless of whether for language learning or another reason. As it goes without thinking most of the young learners love playing games and they are very interested of doing so whenever and wherever. Therefore, this study is conducted to benefit from this positive attitude of the pupils (interest in playing games) by using English language as a medium for playing games. In fact, pupils` inability of expressing their needs may mainly due to their lack of practice which in turn causes lack of interest. Thus, playing games maximizes English language practice so that driven pupils for practicing language to interact with the game actions.

Statement of the Problem

In general, it is observed that EFL teachers fail in keeping pupils` interests up to use English language for the purpose of communication. In particular, EFL beginners reflect their an inability of using English language verbally. Thus, low motivation of the pupils influences in their performance of verbal interaction and may hinder their learning. So, it is important that pupils` interests to be promoted and kept up as much as possible in order to maximize their verbal interaction. Therefore, this study is conducted in order to help EFL beginners to develop their oral communicative ability in the early stages of learning by using what they have an interest in, namely games.

Objectives of the Study

This study is intended to

1. Create interesting learning situations via playing games through pair-work activity.
2. Increase pupils` interest to practice English language verbally through adopting EFL teacher's techniques.
3. Put learning into action (the pupils interact unconsciously and spontaneously).

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Questions of the Study

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the sorts of the activities that canengage EFL beginners for interaction?
2. What are the techniques that EFL teachers adopt for effective verbal interaction?
3. To what extent EFL beginners can be motivated to take part into verbal communicative activities?

Significance of the Study

There is a need for establishing an effective verbal classroom interaction. Thus, this study is important and beneficial for the teachers whose major objective is developing speaking skills at the early stage of learning English as a foreign language. In addition, it is helpful for the teachers who are interested in creating an effective verbal classroom interaction for the beginners at the early stages of learning English.

Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the pupils of sixth basic class of the academic year 2016-2017. The study took place at Nusiba basic school for girls and Gumhuria basic school for boys, Damazeen, Sudan.

Scientific Terms

Richards & Schmidt (2002) define terms game and pair work as follows:

Game

An organized activity that usually has the following properties:

1. A particular task or objective
2. A set of rules
3. Competition between players
4. D.Communication between players by spoken or written language. Games are often used as a sort of activity to develop the quality of being fluent in communicative language teaching and humanistic methods.

Pair work

A sort of learning activities which involves learners working together in pairs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Games in Language learning

Games activities are appropriate method for involving pupils in speaking and create meaningful contexts for language use. Cambridge Advanced Learners` Dictionary (2008) defines a game as 'an entertaining activity or sport, especially one played by children.

As for its significance, using games in an English class drives pupils relax and enjoy using the language. They are most an appropriate with children and young learners. Zhu (2012) argues that 'games are communicative in essence, and so using games in English teaching and learning can well benefit learning the various skills, as Zhu (2012) cited in Wright *et al.* (2006) says ' games can be found to give practice in all the skills, in all the stages of the teaching and learning and for many types of communication'. So, game playing is an effective technique in developing students` communicative

ability and support learners` interests and increases their motivation especially the pupils with low level. Games also can increase students` communication skill and co-operation with each others.

Why games?

Games are interesting activities that stimulate pupils` interests and involve them in interaction. Recently, games become very common especially among young learners aged five to fifteen years. Moreover, they are several and available in different levels, forms and types. Wright *et al.* (1984) argue that play games provide opportunities for young learners to experience learning in a meaningful context and purposeful way. On the other hand, Ali (2010), points out that Single teaching method is boring. Even a good way, if it is regularly used, it will lose attraction to the students. So, maintaining interest is very important, thus using games maintains interest. Games play a key role in children's study. Language games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. First, games usually involve friendly competition and they keep learners interested. Second, games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus helping them learn and retain new words more easily. These create the motivation for learners of English to get involved and participate actively in the learning. Third, games bring real world context into the classroom, and enhance students' use of English in a flexible, communicative way. Hence, Meyer (2013) points out that, in Denmark, most children are familiar with English words, phrases and sounds before they start learning the language in school and they may associate game activities with this knowledge.

Cooperative Games

Cooperative games are sort of games that are carried out by two persons and/or more. In this context Fletcher and Kunst (2006) define cooperative games as type of games that emphasize participation, challenge and fun rather than defeating someone. Cooperative games are fun, cooperative, challenge games in which the group is confronted with a specific problem to solve.

Cooperative vs. Competitive Games

Recently, trends of teaching and learning foreign languages are shifted from competitive processes between pupils to cooperative ones. In this context, Trent (2007) points out that cooperative vs. competitive as follows:

Table 1

Cooperative games...	Competitive games...
...encourage children play with one another.	...encourage children to play against one another
...allow everybody to win and succeed.	. ...allow only half or one of the group to win
...eliminate fear of failure.	
...let children play for play's sake.	. ...equate loss with failure.
...do not allow for elimination.	...let children play to beat the other guy or girl. ...have frequent elimination.
...are fun and supportive.	
...build feeling of worth.	
...increase self-esteem.	…rules and strategies often prescribed
...are self-validating.	
…encourage problem solving and decision making	...are not always fun and supportive!

The Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Dance points out that cooperative games promote individual and team success through group interaction. They are fun to

play and include all students, regardless of age, size, or ability level. The basic components of the successful cooperative games are cooperation, acceptance, involvement and fun.

Teacher`s Role

The teacher plays a key role in playing game. S/he exerts much effort especially at the early stages of a game. Wright *et al* (1984) point out that before pairs to get in action the teacher must make the learners familiar with working in pairs. So, to minimize difficulties, it is essential that the learners are very familiar with the game/s they are asked to play.

Once the learners are familiar with pair work, new games are normally introduced in the following order:

1. Explanation by the teacher to the class
2. Demonstration of parts of the game by the teacher and one or two learners.
3. Trail by pairs in front of the class.
4. Any key language and/or instructions written on the board
5. First 'try out' of the game, by pairs
6. Key language, etc., removed from the board
7. The game continues

Pair work

Wright *et al* (1984) say that pair work is easy to control and fast to organize. It provides opportunities for intensive listening and speaking practice. Pair work is usually better than group work if there are discipline problems.

Characteristics of Games that Stimulate Interest

Ali (2010) points out that a game can be very effective if its selection was based on using real objects especially those which are more familiar to pupils. Thus, using familiar real object may be helpful in creating better interaction. For example, teaching names of the stationary, types of fruits, instruments of game ….etc. On the other hand, games can be very impressive if they guide students to perform based on the text. Surely, students show big interest if they get a chance to act out the text of the game. The students will learn the English joyfully and easily. They also remember the language points deeply. The teacher also has the same feeling of satisfaction. Games that can be performed develop pupils` skills of observation and improvisation such as using facial expressions and gestures.

Feedback on Some Related Previous Studies

All the previous studies that are reviewed deal with utilizing games. These studies have come out with the common conclusion that utilizing educational games as an activity help EFL learners to learn. These common results can be summarized as follows:

- AL-Issa, (2008), points out that the use of games enriched the student teachers` command and understanding of "professional English".
- Yiltanlilar and Caganaga (2015), showed in their study that using Jenga game with teenagers increases the learners` motivation, self-confidence, and develops learners` communicative and vocabulary skills through collaborative and supportive environment, which affected students personality in a positive way.

- Zhu (2012), points out that it is important and valuable to use games in English language teaching. She also suggests eight games which could be used in class and presents some suggestions when using these games.
- Mubsalat (2012), pointed out that games have a good effect on improving primary stage pupils achievement for the primary`s stage and creating an interactive environment.
- Ali (2010), points out that, games are the most appropriate techniques in acquiring a foreign language, creating a soul of competition, improving language usage, and developing learning process; also games facilitate the teachers and learners role, and help the learners to use the language fluently.

METHODOLOGY

The study followed the experimental design. The population of this study consists of pupils of sixth year class of basic level, Damazeen, Sudan. A random sample of forty pupils: twenty girls from Nusiba basic school for girls and twenty boys from Gumhouria basic school for boys both in Damazeen city, Sudan were selected. Pupils` age range is between eleven to twelve years. They are divided into two groups: Group A which includes twenty females and group B which includes twenty males. The pupils of both groups are paired according to friendship tie. Two English language oral tests (pre- post-test) are conducted on two groups (A&B) as a tool for collecting data also an interview after both tests was conducted.

Background of Target Sample

Sample of this study are in its second year ever studying English as foreign language; deals with book one of Sudan Practical National Integrated English (SPINE 1). When in first year pupils just studied English Language alphabet. Thus, their second year starts with using these, those, this, that, have, and has which in the current study are used for forming oral tests.

Tools of Data Collection

The study adopted two oral tests (pre-post-test) and an interview as tools for data collection. Items of the test are derived from pupils` text book, SPINE one, unit one. It contains eleven items, six YES/NO questions and five word questions. As for the interview, it comprises five close- ended questions. Data was analyzed through SPSS software. The validity and reliability of both tools were confirmed by using Cronbach's alpha equation shown below:

Reliability coefficient = n (1 - Total variations questions)N- 1 variation college grades ———— —————————

Cronbach's alpha coefficient = (0.82), a reliability coefficient is high and it indicates the stability of the scale and the validity of the study Validity coefficient is the square root of the reliability coefficient is (0.91), and this shows that there is a high sincerity of the scale.

Procedures of Data Collection

Both groups (A& B) are subjected to two oral tests namely pre and post test. Firstly, the two groups are subjected to the pre oral test. The following two days, both groups are exposed to the new teaching program in which the pupils practiced English language orally through playing games for six days in four

English language classes. After a week has lapsed both groups were subjected to the post test to mark their progress. And after two weeks of post test, both groups are interviewed to check their impression of the experience. It is worth mentioning that the questions of the interview were translated into the interviewees` first language and that proved to be effective and helpful.

About the Game Which Performed

It is worth mentioning that the game used in the study is invented by the researcher for the purpose of this study. It is mainly designed to involve pairs of young learners in verbal interaction through games. It is designed to be performed by young learners aged from 11 to 12 years, i.e. those who study at sixth basic class (beginners). The game uses pair form, so each one of the partners will play two different roles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre & post test

Table 1 The frequency distribution of the variable Pre and post questions

No	Questions	Test type	Assessment of tasks performance		
			Fulfilled	Partially fulfilled	Not fulfilled
1	What do you have in your bag?	Pre	0 / 0.0	18 / 45.0	22 / 55.0
		Post	38 / 95.0	1 / 2.5	1 / 2.5
2	Do you have a cat in your bag?	Pre	1 / 2.5	8 / 20.0	31 / 77.5
		Post	38 / 95.0	1 / 2.5	1 / 2.5
3	What is this?	Pre	2 / 5.0	16 / 40.0	22 / 55.0
		Post	38 / 95.0	2 / 5.0	0 / 0.0
4	What is this and what is that?	Pre	2 / 5.0	14 / 35.0	24 / 60.0
		Post	36 / 90.0	3 / 7.5	1 / 2.5
5	Do you have a desk in your classroom?	Pre	2 / 5.0	5 / 12.5	33 / 82.5
		Post	39 / 97.5	0 / 0.0	1 / 2.5
6	Is that desk?	Pre	2 / 5.0	26 / 65.0	12 / 30.0
		Post	40 / 100.0	0 / 0.0	0 / 0.0
7	What is that?	Pre	7 / 17.5	23 / 57.5	10 / 25.0
		Post	39 / 97.5	0 / 0.0	1 / 2.5
8	Is this a cat?	Pre	1 / 2.5	12 / 30.0	27 / 67.5
		Post	37 / 92.5	2 / 5.0	1 / 2.5
9	What is that and what is this?	Pre	16 / 40.0	22 / 55.0	2 / 5.0
		Post	38 / 95.0	1 / 2.5	1 / 2.5
10	Is this a book?	Pre	1 / 2.5	8 / 20.0	31 / 77.5
		Post	38 / 95.0	2 / 5.0	0 / 0.0
11	Is this a train?	Pre	20 / 50.0	17 / 42.5	3 / 7.5
		Post	39 / 97.5	0 / 0.00	1 / 2.5

From table (1) the results of both tests are discussed and compared to check participants` performance and progress before and after exposing to the new teaching program. As shown, questions 1, 3,4,7,9 are information questions and 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 are YES/NO questions. Starting with information questions, Q1 in pre test shows that more than half of the participants didn`t succeed in fulfilling the question and the rest partially fulfilled the question. However, for the same question Q1 in post test, the result displays that most of the participants (95%) successfully fulfilled the question. It indicates that the game was a very effective technique in the participants` progress.

The result of Q3 in both tests is very similar to the result of Q1 with very little differences. As shown in pre test in Q3 that 55% of the participants completely failed in fulfilling the question, 40% of them partially fulfilled the item and that means just 5% of participants could successfully fulfill it. In the same question but in terms of post test the result has shown that 95% of the participants successfully fulfilled the question and the rest of percentage is equally distributed between the two other scales. This means that there is remarkable progress after playing the game.

The results of Q4 in pre test shows that just 5% of the participants succeeded in fulfilling the question whereas in post test 95% of them successfully fulfilled the question. Again it is confirmed that using games have a very effective role in making pupils interact orally well and overcome their inability of speaking.

The results of the last question of the word questions group, Q9`s result in pre-test showed that 55% of the participants partially fulfilled the question , 40% of them succeeded in fulfilling and just 5% failed in fulfilling. While post-test results obtained showed that 95% of the participants succeeded in fulfilling the question. From the result of Q9 it can be pointed out that the participants in pre-test show progress in fulfilling compared to their performance in the other questions and still steadily attain very interesting progress in the post. Thus, from the results of word questions, it is observed that there is a significant difference between participants` oral performance of

Benefit to the post test

As for YES/NO questions, the result of Q2 in pre-test has shown that most of the participants i.e.77% fail in fulfilling the question and 20% of them did not fulfill it properly. The result of the same question but in terms of post-test shows that the majority of the participants 95% successfully dealt with it. It is clear that the participants orally succeeded in using the verb to 'have' in the form of present simple particularly in YES/NO question.

The result of Q5 in pre test shows that the majority 82.5% of the participants failed in fulfilling the question orally whereas the majority of the participants or 97% in the post-test succeeded in fulfilling it orally. It means that there is a very good difference of benefit in the post test. As for the result of Q6 in pre test shows that 65% of the participants partially fulfilled the question, 30 % of them failed in fulfilling whereas 5% fulfilled it. The result of Q6 in terms of post-test shows that the whole participants 100% successfully achieved what is intended to be achieved. It means that in the pre test the

majority of participants did well attempt even it was partial, whereas the result in post-test really was fantastic so their performance was completely satisfying.

The result of Q8 in pre test shows that 67.5% of the participants at all not fulfilled the question, 30% of them partially fulfilled it and 2.5% succeed in fulfilling it. In post test of this question the result shows that 92.5% of the participants fulfilled the question successfully, 5% of them partially fulfilled it and 2.5% failed in fulfilling it. It means that the result of the post test support the effectiveness of using games in verbal interaction. The result of Q10 in pre test shows that 77.5% of the participants failed in fulfilling the question, 20% of them partially fulfilled it and 2.5% of them succeeded in fulfilling it. The result of post question showed that the majority of participants 95% succeeded in fulfilling the question. It supports the same result that obtained above here.

The last question of YES/NO part is question 11. The result of Q11 is quite different; in pre test score showed that half of participantsi.e.50% succeeded in fulfilling the question, 42.5% of them partially fulfilled it and 7.5% fail in fulfilling it. The result of the same question namely Q11 in-post-test shows that the majority 97.5% of the participants succeeded in fulfilling the questions whereas 2.5% of them failed in fulfilling. This means that half of participants already successfully fulfilled the question before exposed to the new teaching program. In spite of, the fact that the majority of participants also do succeeded in fulfilling the question. The total result of YES/NO question showed that there is a significant difference in participants` performance that was clear favours the post test.

Table 2 The statistical tests for the hypotheses

No	Questions	Test	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Median	Scale
1	What do you have in your bag?	Pre	36.950	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		Post	68.450	2	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
2	Do you have a cat in your bag?	Pre	15.800	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		Post	68.450	2	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
3	What is this?	Pre	18.200	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		Post	32.400	1	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
4	What is this and what is that?	Pre	43.850	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		Post	57.950	2	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
5	Do you have a desk in your classroom?	Pre	21.800	2	0.000	2.00	Partially fulfilled
		Post	36.100	1	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
6	Is that desk?	Pre	10.850	2	0.004	2.00	Partially fulfilled
		post	No difference			3.00	Fulfilled
7	What is that?	pre	25.550	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		Post	36.100	1	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
8	Is this a cat?	pre	15.800	2	0.000	2.00	Partially fulfilled
		Post	68.050	2	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
9	What is that and what is this?	pre	36.950	2	0.000	1.00	Not fulfilled
		post	68.450	2	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
10	Is this a book?	pre	12.350	2	0.002	2.50	Fulfilled
		post	32.400	1	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled
11	Is this a train?	pre	7.400	2	0.025	2.50	Fulfilled
		post	36.100	1	0.000	3.00	Fulfilled

From table (2) the statistical treatment of pre test for the questions 1,2,3,4,7and 9 have shown that high significant value is for the scale (*not fulfilled*), questions 5,6,8 showed high significant value favoured the scale (*partially fulfilled*) and questions 10,11 are showed high significant value for the scale (*fulfilled*). It means that most of the YES/NO questions in the pre test stage were marked in the scale (*partially fulfilled and fulfilled*) but the majority was for the scale (*partially fulfilled*).

This indicates that the participants were already able to deal with these types of questions but not properly. However, in terms of post test stage the participants showedhigh competence in dealing with these types of questions. As for word questions, it has shown that most of the questions in pre test were marked of benefit to the scale (*not fulfilled*). The results of all word questions in post test stage have shown high significant value of benefit to the scale (*fulfilled*). This means that most of the participants in the pre test were unable to interact with word questions however, they interact properly with these questions in the post test stage. This indicates that there is a significant difference between pre-post-test, however, the result favoured the post test. Totally, participants` performance after engaging in playing games for the purpose of initiating speaking English achieved a remarkable progress in speaking.

Interview

Table 3 The frequency distributions, percentages and statistical test (Chi-square) of the first three questions in the interview

No	Questions	Frequencies and percentages				Chi-Square	
		Yes	Not much	Neutral	No	Chi-Square	scale
1	Did you enjoy the game?	35	3	2	0		
		87.5	7.5	5.0	0.0	52.850	Yes
2	Can you normally use what you have learned from the game?	39	1	0	0		
		97.5	2.5	0.0	0.0	36.100	Yes
3	Do you feel playing games like this improve your English language speaking?	30	1	9	0		
		75.0	2.5	22.5	0.0	33.650	Yes

From table (3) the obtained results have shown that 87% of the participants enjoyed the game and feel fully satisfied, 97% of them believes they can use what they have learned from the game and 75% of the participants feel that playing games develop their speaking ability in English language and only 22% of them could not decide whether playing games could develop their speaking ability in English language or not. Also, the same table (3) displayed Chi-squares results which showed that the questions of the interview have high significant value for the scale (yes). This favours the obtained results above here that the participants enjoy playing games and could use what they have learned from the games.

Table 4 The frequency distributions and percentages of the fourth question of the interview

Answer	Place			How many		People		
	School	Other place	Both	Only one time	More than once	Classmate	Others	Both
Yes	9	4	16	7	22	15	3	11
	22.5%	10.0%	40.0%	24.1%	75.9%	51.7%	10.3%	37.9%
No				11				
				27.5%				

Did you play the game again? If yes, where, how many, with whom?

The results of table (4) have shown play of the game in terms of place, frequency and with whom participants play the game. The obtained results have shown that 22.5% of the participants play the game in the school, 10% of them play it in any other place but not in the school and the majority 40% of the participants play the game in school and at any other place.

This means that games are appropriate techniques to be executed inside and outside classroom contexts. In terms of how many, the result has shown that 72.5% of the participants play the game more than one time, and 27.5% of them do not play it again. This indicates that the majority enjoyed playing the game. This result supports what have already proved that playing games is an appropriate technique for much more practice. In terms of with whom the game was played, the result has shown that the majority of the participants 51.7% play the game more again with their classmates, 10.3% of them play the game with other people and 37.9% of the participants play the game with both namely with those who are and/ are not from their classmates. It means that the game is a flexible technique that can be performed with different people in different places. However, in the classroom it is better that pupils be paired based on friendship ties when playing games.

Table 5 The frequency distribution and percentage of the fifth question of the interview

Answer	Very satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied
Satisfied	25	9	6
	62.5	22.5	15.0
Unsatisfied, because	Confused	Neutral	Difficult
	0	0	0
	0.0	0.0	0.0

How satisfied are you with the game? If no, why?

According to table (5), the results have shown that all participants are satisfied with playing the game. It varies between 62.5% of the participants were very satisfied, 22.5 % of them just satisfied with it and 15% of the participants were satisfied but to some extent. The majority of the participants were very satisfied with the game. This study has shown above that the pupils played the game again and again. This means that the pupils were very satisfied and interested in playing the game.

CONCLUSION

As has been seen, the study tried to find out whether using games can stimulate EFL beginners to engage in verbal interaction, and how it keep them interested in practicing English verbally, whenever and wherever it is possible. The result has shown that:

Playing games is an effective technique of stimulating EFL beginners to initiate speaking particularly in pair work form. Also, one of the important conclusions of the study is that the activity arouses EFL beginners ' interest to use English verbally inside or/and outside classroom contexts with different people.
In addition, the study found that, playing games creates interesting learning atmosphere.

Recommendations

Depending on the obtained results, the study recommends that as follows:

Sudanese ministry of education has to adopt playing games as one of the techniques for developing EFL beginners' verbal interaction skills, because it proved its effectiveness for the purpose of verbal interaction with young learners especially in the form of pair work. Games should be carefully designed and learnt before their generalization. It is better for games to be designed and executed playing cooperatively. Pair work is an appropriate form for verbal interaction with young learners especially if it based on friendship ties.

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