

Techniques and Strategies *to* Enhance English Language Learning



Editors

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*This book opens space and ways
for better understanding of what
teachers and learners can do
to improve English language learning*

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CONTENTS

Contents	
Foreword	
Introduction	
PART 1	ENHANCING ABILITY IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION
Chapter 1	Diverging Tasks in Listening Activities <i>Wakhid Nashruddin</i>
Chapter 2	Improving Students' Listening Ability Using Podcasts <i>Luqman Baehaqi</i>
PART 2	ENHANCING ABILITY IN SPEAKING IN ENGLISH
Chapter 3	Using Games to Teach Speaking to Elementary School Students <i>Diani Nurhajati & Agung Wicaksono</i>
Chapter 4	Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills Using Video <i>Nana Priajana</i>
PART 3	ENHANCING ABILITY IN READING COMPREHENSION
Chapter 5	The Teaching of Reading: A Theoretical Review <i>Muhamad Mukhroji</i>
Chapter 6	The Importance of Teaching Reading Strategies to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension <i>Lia Agustina</i>
Chapter 7	Using Graphic Organizers to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension <i>Moh Kusen</i>
Chapter 8	Web-based Graded Readers for Extensive Reading <i>Isna Indriati</i>
Chapter 9	The Effective Strategies in Teaching English Written Humorous Texts <i>Dyah Rochmawati</i>

PART 4	ENHANCING ABILITY IN WRITING IN ENGLISH	131
Chapter 10	Explicit Techniques to Achieve Coherence in Essay Writing <i>Lilik Ulfiati</i>	133
Chapter 11	Using Facebook to Enhance English Department Students' Skill in Writing English Essays <i>Bambang Yudi Cahyono</i>	147
PART 5	ENHANCING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR	161
Chapter 12	Incorporating Short Stories to Help Young Learners Understand English Tense <i>Condro Nur Alim</i>	163
Chapter 13	Race and Win with Grammar <i>Yunita Puspitasari</i>	173
PART 6	ENHANCING MASTERY IN ENGLISH VOCABULARY	183
Chapter 14	The Use of Commercial Food Wraps to Enrich Students' Vocabulary Size <i>Wahyunengsih</i>	185
Chapter 15	Teaching Vocabulary through Discourse: The Step to Improve Students' Productive Vocabulary <i>Nurul Choyimah</i>	195
PART 7	FACTORS AFFECTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING ENHANCEMENT	209
Chapter 16	Does our Teaching Cause Learning? A Reflection on our Teaching and Insights into Factors Affecting Language Learning <i>Nur Mukminatien</i>	211
Chapter 17	Profiles of Successful English Language Learners: A Case Study <i>Hilda Cahyani</i>	221

PART 8	MEDIA TO ENHANCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING	23
Chapter 18	Teaching English Using Jazz Chants <i>Khoiriyah</i>	24
Chapter 19	Teaching English Using Songs through Adobe Audition <i>Saiful Rifa'i</i>	24
Chapter 20	Citizen Journalism as a Language Learning Medium <i>Arifah Mardiningrum & Erni Dewi Riyanti</i>	25
Contributors	26
Subject Index	26

nonsense language. Conventional teaching of tense needs to be improved to ensure both conceptual and practical understanding of tense among young learners. Therefore, an appropriate medium plays a significant role to help in this effort. Short stories can be promising media to help students to understand English tense. It is due to the nature of a short story that exposes actions or events in a sequence of time. Time sequence is an important concept that deals with tense and aspect. A short story also gives a clear context in which a certain tense or aspect is used. Incorporating a short story in the order to help young learners understand English tenses should be done in such a way to ensure the clarity of the theoretical concept that is applied in contextual sentences. The ways proposed in this chapter are basically supposed to be useful for English young learners.

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Race and Win with Grammar

Learning English can be a burden for some students. Most of the students are afraid of the subject. They think that learning English means facing numerous language rules and patterns. Moreover, due to their limited knowledge of current teaching method such as communicative language teaching (CLT), some English teachers teach the students grammar by using boring and uninteresting methods. These teachers argue that the teaching of grammar can only be effective if grammar is presented through repetition and rote drills. Misunderstanding of the nature of CLT may also lead to fallacies in the grammar instruction. Grammar might be considered unimportant since teachers have to focus on how the communication occurs. Thus, accuracy is not taken into account. This chapter presents how to teach grammar using a fun game, *Race and Win with Grammar*, a board game adapted from Toth (1995: 38) as an alternative technique to teach grammar. By using this game, teaching and learning grammar can be very attractive, interactive, fun, and effective.

THE TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

Grammar is defined as the study of what forms or patterns are possible in a language and grammar is conventionally seen as the study of the syntax and morphology (Thornbury, 1999: 2). Meanwhile, Brown (2001: 362) mentioned that grammar is the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. Grammar is the mental system in human brain that enables human beings to produce and interpret the words and sentences of their language (O'Grady & Dobrovolsky, 1992: 4).

The teaching of grammar has become a controversial issue along with the occurrence of CLT. In its early years, some proponents of this approach refused grammar instruction in the teaching and learning process. They argued that explicit grammar teaching is incompatible with their communicative ideology. Sugiharto (2005: 173, as cited in Collins, 2006: 2) stated that CLT has a negative impact on grammar instruction. However, grammatical competence cannot be neglected as it is one component of the components of communicative competence which should be acquired by language learners to have intelligible communication. Brown (2001: 362) argued that grammatical competence occupies a prominent position as a major component of communicative competence. Without the knowledge of how to organize an intricate, complex array of rules into a permissible grammatical sentence, one's language would be simply chaotic. Meanwhile, Patchler (1999: 94) pointed out that "grammar allows us to generate an unlimited utterance with finite set of linguistic resources and to talk about the world beyond the here and now." Thus, the discussion of grammar instruction is not emphasized on whether or not grammar is important, but it focuses on how to teach grammar in order to build students' communicative competence.

In Indonesia, traditional grammar teaching can still be found in some language classrooms. The teaching of grammar falls into memorizing and drilling of producing grammatical sentences. In other words, grammar has been exclusively taught with merely analysis at the sentence level. Unfortunately, such grammar teaching is not in favourable for some of the students as these students find that studying rules and patterns such as those in tenses and word formation is like the formula in mathematics or physics. Thus, learning grammar is like learning mathematics and physics with stretched, complicated, and tiring repetitive drilling (Cahyono, 2009). The traditional way of teaching grammar can evolve bad impressions of learning a foreign language as students will get bored easily of the same repetitions and rote drills. Teaching grammar does not mean asking students to repeat models in a mindless way or asking them to memorize rules. Such activities can be boring and do not necessarily reflect grammar teaching. This does not mean that there is no place for drills, but drills should be used in a meaningful and purposeful way (Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

Some misconceptions in current approaches, notably the CLT, discourage the teaching of grammar. Some teachers in Indonesia possessing the misconceptions tend to neglect the accuracy of students' language compe-

tence in order to establish communicative teaching. They think that teaching grammar will linger communicative activities among the students. In fact, teaching grammar is needed to build students' communicative competence. Communicative competence should be seen to count linguistic competence not to replace it (Larsen-Freeman, 1991). Teaching grammar means enabling students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Thus, it is the teacher's responsibility to establish the teaching and learning process in such a way that grammar is presented in an effective manner which can eventually help the students to use the linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately, and which can create a fun and enjoying classroom atmosphere.

GAMES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

A game is basically a play governed by rules (Klauer, 1998). A language game is a language play governed by rules, but with clear linguistic rules to which all participants in the activity must conform. According to Klauer (1998), there are some characteristics of a good language game, namely, it is governed by rules; it has objectives; it is a closed activity; and it needs less supervision from the teacher. Thus, not all play can be a game; a play with no rules and objectives cannot be regarded as a game.

Along with the development of teaching approaches, the teaching and learning process, methods, as well as strategies may also be made relevant to the approaches. Accordingly, game as one of activities in the teaching and learning process has become very popular. Many teachers, nowadays, equip their teaching of English with games. They are enthusiastic in using games as their teaching devices, yet some of them often perceive games as mere time-fillers, a way of killing some times left in the teaching duration, or a break from the monotonous drilling. In fact, many textbooks and methodology writers have argued that games are not just time filling activities, but they have great educational values. Lee (1979) noted that games should be treated as central not peripheral to the foreign language teaching. Moreover, they are not just a diversion, a break from routine activities, but a way of getting the learner to use the language in the course of the game (Deesre, 2002).

Using games as teaching and learning activities can expose the students' participation better and actively engage them in language learning (Ersoz, 2000). Harmer (2007: 223) argued that games could engage students and

encourage them to use the target structures with enthusiasm. By using games, the teaching and learning process are centered on the students, while the teacher acts as a supervisor and/or a facilitator. In other words, a game represents a learner-centered instruction, a technique in which it is the students who are actively engaged with the target language. According to Brown (2001: 46), learner-centered instruction is a technique which accounts learners' needs, styles, and goals. It is a technique that focuses on students' creativity, innovation, and sense of self-competence. Games are effective because they arise students' motivation, lower their stress, and give them opportunities for real communication (Deesre: 2002). In order to use language games effectively, the teachers should have a careful design of their lesson plan; thus a game is not used only for killing the time. Hadfield (1990, as cited in Deesre, 2002), suggested that "games should be regarded an integral part of the language syllabus, not an amusing activity for Friday afternoon or for the end of the term." Games can contribute to students' skills if they are incorporated into the classroom, particularly if they are used to reinforce or introduce a grammatical rule or structure. The way the teacher uses the language game will affect the ability of the students to use the language properly and meaningfully.

RACE AND WIN GAME

The Race and Win game is a kind of board game adapted from Toth (1995: 38). Toth's game is originally named as "Trying to Get Home." It aims to provide students with practices in making suggestions. In this case, the Race and Win game is aimed to let the students experience the use of subject and verb agreement in the present simple tense, particularly subject and verb agreement on the third-singular person subject and -s/-es addition of verbs. As other board games, the Race and Win is equipped with a board, counters, and dice. The students use the dice to move their counters along the path on the board (see Appendix 1). The students, with their counters, race to the finish to win the game. To win the game, the students should be able to make grammatical sentences in the present simple tense. Yet, some rules should be followed in order to be able to play it. The rules to play the game are as follows:

- * To start playing the game, distribute the game board with its cards and dice to each group of four students.

- * Ask the students to place their counters on START. Ask the students to take in turn to throw the dice and move along the number of squares shown.
- * If a student lands on an instruction such as "Miss a turn," he or she must follow this instruction. If they fall on an action square, they should make a grammatical (positive) sentence in the present simple tense based on the picture. If he fails to make a grammatical sentence, he or she is not allowed to move the counter.
- * If a player falls on a CARD square, he or she takes the top card from the pile of cards. If it is a question card, he or she should ask the questions, based on the former action square he or she fell on, to another player who holds an answer card. If he or she falls firstly on the CARD square, he or she can make his or her own interrogative sentence, not necessarily based on action squares. If there is no players who hold the answer card while one player has a question card, he or she can keep the question for later turn.
- * The players who hold more than one answer card can use any card that he or she likes. He or she should give a grammatical answer, otherwise he or she should go one step back and make other players remain still.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

The Race and Win game can be presented through three-phase teaching, i.e. pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching activities.

Pre-Teaching Activities

1. Use some pictures to do the brainstorming.
2. Ask and lead the students to guess one's occupation based on the pictures presented in front of the class, such as:
 - a. Can you guess what his job is?
 - b. He works in a restaurant, tastes some food, etc, so he is a/an ...
3. Ask and lead the students to mention some daily activities by using the pictures, such as:
 - a. What do you do every Saturday night?
 - b. Do you brush your teeth before you go to bed?
 - c. Let's see this picture. She has breakfast; what about this one?

4. Show the objective of the lesson, and tells the students that they are going to play a game.

Whilst-Teaching Activities

5. Group the students; each group consists of four students.
6. Discuss the rules of the game and how to play the game.
7. Demonstrate to the students how to play the game.
8. Distribute the game board with the dice and the cards.
9. Ask the students to play the game.
10. Distribute the activity report worksheet and explain the instruction (see Appendix 2).
11. Ask the students to fill in the activity in the report worksheet.
12. Ask the students to discuss the worksheet done by the students.

Post-Teaching Activities

13. Ask the students to sum up what they have learned.
14. Ask the students to have their reflection on the teaching and learning activities.

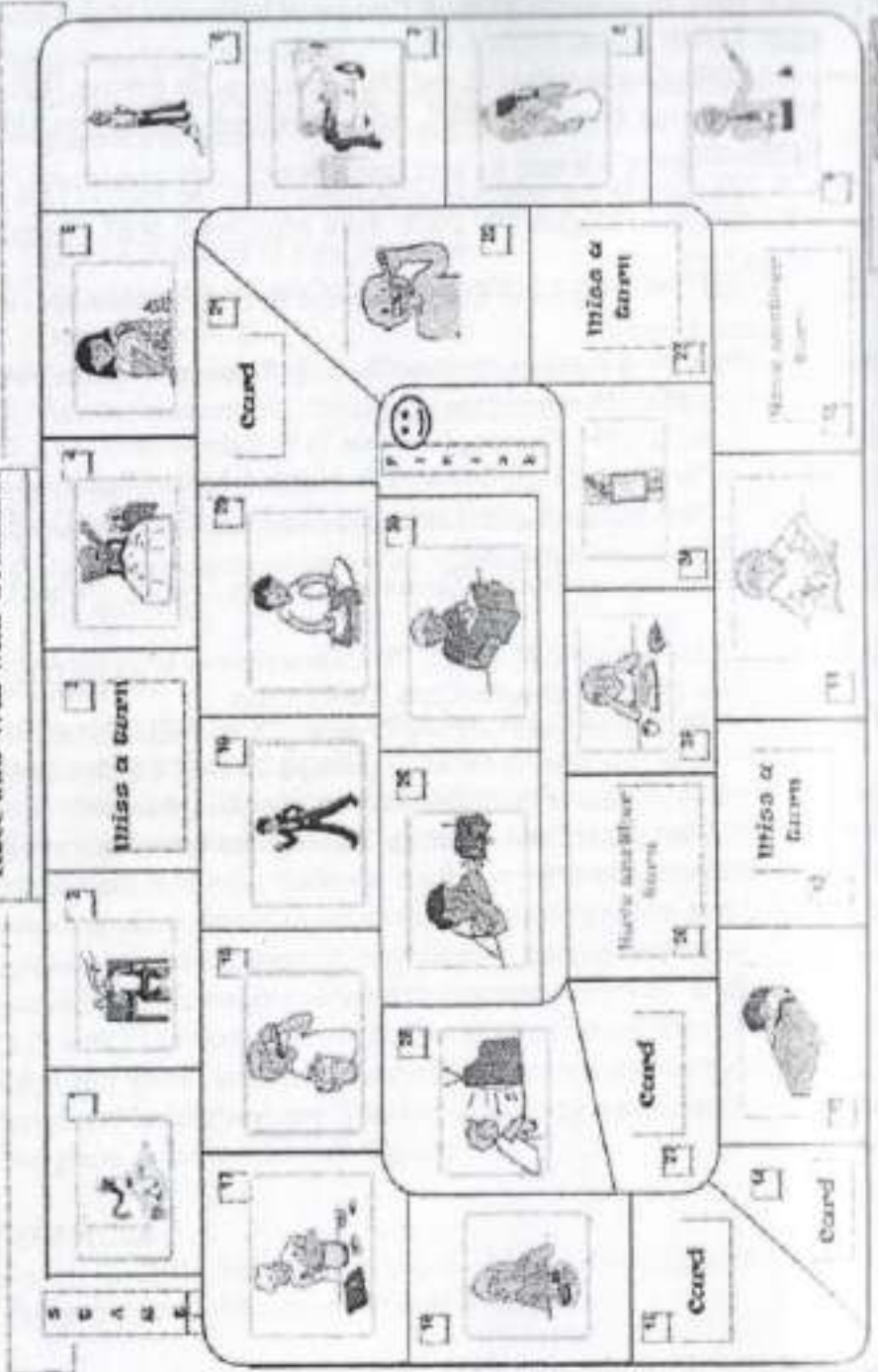
CONCLUSION

It is evident that games bring many benefits in the teaching and learning of a language, particularly English. Teachers can get many benefits in using games in their class. This chapter presents the Race and Win game, a board game that can help much in teaching the present simple tense. The strategy described here is to help students to use the game as a medium to practice the use of present simple tense to construct grammatical sentences, notably agreement of the subject of third singular person and the verb. By using this game, students are encouraged to practice the use of -s/-es addition on verbs in order to make grammatical sentences in the present simple tense. Through this game, students' motivation is increased due to the sense of challenge and fun of the game. Therefore, it is very beneficial for teachers to use the game in the teaching of English.

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Group : _____ Date _____
 Name(s) : _____

i. While playing the games you have made some sentences; now, please write the sentences in the table below.

No	Name	Sentence
1		
2		
3		
4		

ii. With your friends, try to make some sentences using the verbs *play*, *sweep*, *watch*, and *go*.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____