EMPLOYING AND ADAPTING TABLETOP GAMES IN THE EFL SETTING

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  • ELL Tools and Strategies Conference
  • PCA/ACA

“Pretty Sneaky, Sis!”: Employing Tabletop Games with L2 Students to Develop English Language Skills and Pop Culture Schema”

By Conan Kmiecik and Alex Hatheway
PCA/ACA 2015
WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The audience will be able to…

• Understand the definition, styles, and current developments of tabletop games
• Identify some potential tabletop products for the language classroom
• Examine how to adapt elements of tabletop games
• Playtest some DIY language tabletop games for different learners
• Appraise the usefulness of tabletop games in the EFL context
• Create their own tabletop games for their classroom contexts and learning objectives
UNDERSTANDING THE GENRE OF TABLETOP GAMES
“Tabletop games are games that are normally played on a table or other flat surface, such as board games, card games, dice games, miniatures wargames or tile-based games.”

“Tabletop game” Wikipedia

- Adventure Games
- Board Games
- Card Games
- Dice Games
- Paper and Pencil Games
- Roleplaying Games
- Strategy Games
- Tile Games
TWO TYPES OF GAME STYLE

GERMAN- OR EURO-STYLE GAMES

“...emphasize strategy while downplaying luck and conflict. They tend to have economic themes rather than military and usually keep all the players in the game until it ends.”

AMERICAN-STYLE GAMES

“...generally feature a prominent theme, encourage direct conflict between players [...] and have a significant degree of luck.”

“Eurogame” and “American-style board game” Wikipedia
RENAISSANCE OF TABLETOP GAMES IN THE WEST—DOHA, NOT SO MUCH!

“You get a lot more couples now – young, professional, just bought somewhere. They still want to meet up with mates but they don’t want to go out and get pissed any more. They like the idea of getting a game out, having a few drinks, bit of fun for two or three hours around the table.”

“The Rise and Rise of Table Top Games”
The Guardian (September 25, 2016)
SCHOLARSHIP ON [TABLETOP] GAMES
REASONS FOR INCORPORATING TABLETOP GAMES INTO THE EFL CLASSROOM

- “[G]ames help engage all students, provide an opportunity for collaboration and/or cooperation, and provide an enjoyable learning experience” (Tuan, 2012, p. 260).

- “Games allow the students to show a little of their true personalities, build relationship with others, and practice various skills. They also allow the facilitator to see who knows the information and who is or is not afraid to share it” (Talak-Kiryk, 2010, p. 11).
GAMES ARE APPROPRIATE FOR LEARNERS OF ALL AGES

- “[F]rom my experience in Malaysia, it is adult who enjoy games—sometimes even more than children do. I have watched with amusement as senior managers argue (in English) as they struggle to get a bar of chocolate as a prize!” (Gaudart, 1999, 283)
WHY DO TEACHERS RESIST EMPLOYING TABLETOP GAMES

- “Guadart (2003) that many teachers are not keen to introduce games in the classroom because they find it troublesome to design games or feel that they are not creative enough to do so” (Lee, 2012, p. 6)
- “Guadart (2003) [claims] that teachers rarely make use of games and play in the formal classroom setting. It might also due [sic] to the fact that there are not many education language-focused board games available in the market” (Lee, 2012, p. 25)
ADVICE FROM PRACTITIONERS

• “The more you use games, the easier facilitating becomes” (Talak-Kiryk, 2010, p. 11).
WHY ADAPT TABLETOP GAMES FOR THE EFL CONTEXT?

• Provide a reprieve from test-based, teacher-centered learning
• Energize students
• Facilitate peer-to-peer classroom interaction
• Promote social communication
• Stimulate kinesthetic/tactile learning
• Provide low-tech alternatives
TABLETOP GAMES WORTH EXPLORING
ADAPTING TABLETOP GAMES
Past Participle Practice

Choose the answer without any mistakes.
Never have I ever...
  a) ate a bug.
  b) stayed awake for 24 hours.
  c) broke a promise to a friend.

Writing/Speaking Prompt

Would you rather have your clothes smell like rotten milk or have the taste of rotten milk in your mouth for one day?

Quiz or Test Review

Have students work in pairs or teams. Ask questions that require different types of knowledge—for example, linguistic, grammatical, spelling, and spatial recall. (Maybe consider playing the game at a space with food and drinks?)
SAMPLE PUB TRIVIA ANSWER SHEET

TEAM NAME: [Name]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MILK</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LIL BAYWINKLE</td>
<td>1/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. WHITE</td>
<td>2/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BASMATI</td>
<td>0/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. BBQ MCTABLE</td>
<td>0/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. B BUS Y</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. WHO DRAFTED GEORGE BURG</td>
<td>0/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 11/30

8. WHICH DECADE: 1955: 6/3
1950: 3/3
1920: 2/3
1890: 1/3

9. NUMBER? 2/4: 3/3

10. DRAW (Host's Call): 2/5

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TEFL Qatar
Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
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PLAYTESTING DIY GAMES
GAMES

• Vocabulary Parcheesi (adaptation of Parcheesi)
• Reading Dread (adaptation of the RPG Dread which employs Jenga)
• Roll and Write (adapted from internet examples, inspired by co-op games like Pandemic)
• Visual Directions

• As you play test a game, please consider the following:
  • What do you like about the game?
  • What could be improved about the game?
  • How would you adapt the game for your classroom or course?
SUGGESTIONS

- PowerPoint is a useful program for creating boards and cards for tabletop games.
  - Piktochart and Canva are other programs that might be good for creating boards or cards.
  - Need icons for your board or cards? Perform a search on The Noun Project.
  - Instead of creating playing cards, consider using Quizlet.
- Can’t find enough dice or the right type of dice? Consider making your own paper dice using a template, or have students download a free dice app.
- If you want to know about the features of the game prior to purchase, see if there is a playtest video on the Youtube series Tabletop.
- Don’t feel like reinventing the wheel? There are a multitude of ESL classroom games available on the internet. Search for ESL games on Pinterest, or check out the US Department of State Activate Board Games.
- As a project, have students create their own language game. Have the students record an instructional video and playtest the game in the class. Further readings:
  - “Making Board Games in the Classroom” How to article from the Chronicles of Higher Education
  - “Creating a Board Game” Sample assignment sheet and rubric
No Limit Obstacle Course

Start:
- a. Hurdles
- b. Obstacle
- c. Log

Middle:
- d. Ladder
- e. Inclining Wall
- f. Cargo Net
- g. Inclining Wall

End:
- h. Inclining Wall
- i. Cargo Net
- j. Inclining Wall

Special Obstacles:
- k. Inverted Rope Descent
- l. Swing, Stop, and Jump
- m. Wire
- n. Balancing Logs
- o. Balancing Logs
- p. Swing, Stop, and Jump
- q. Wire
- r. Wire

Finish:
Trade