Games for Language Learning
THIRD EDITION
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Introduction

The aims of this book: a summary
1 To provide a wide range of games.
2 To give examples which are suitable for all levels of proficiency, but with an emphasis on beginners to intermediate.
3 To minimise competition and maximise challenge, creation, play.
4 To minimise exposure to failure and maximise success for all learners.
5 To give examples of texts which are ready to use.
6 To help the teacher to use, adapt or invent games.

Who is the book for?
This collection of language games is mainly for learners from beginner to intermediate level, although many of the games can be adapted for use with advanced proficiency learners as well. The examples that are given are for learners of secondary school age and above, although teachers of younger children will be able to adapt many of the examples. We have tried to make the book of particular relevance to beginner teachers who would like to have a handbook of a wide selection of games. We also hope that more experienced teachers will find that the range of games (and variations of games) makes this a useful collection, which might inspire them to adapt or create games of their own.

What is a game?
For the purpose of all three editions of this book we have taken the word 'game' to mean an activity which is entertaining and engaging, often challenging, and an activity in which the learners play and usually interact with others. A testing question might be: "Would the learners be happy to do this activity in their own language?" We would like all our games to pass this test. Competition against others is not an essential ingredient of games, but challenge often is. In selecting and describing our games we have tried to minimise competition, with winners and losers, and to maximise challenge, where everyone feels inspired to 'have a go' and do their best. Competition may be stimulating for some, but it can also be destructive, making players...
anxious, with losers categorising themselves as 'no good' and the winners
categorising themselves as 'very good'. Neither of these things may be true,
and neither helps learning.

Why games?

Language learning is hard work
Language learning is hard work. One must make an effort to understand, to
repeat accurately, to adapt and to use newly understood language in
conversation and in written composition. Effort is required at every moment
and must be maintained over a long period of time. Games help and
courage many learners to sustain their interest and work.

Experiencing language
Games also help the teacher to create contexts in which the language is
useful and meaningful. The learners want to take part, and in order to do so
must understand what others are saying or have written, and they must
speak or write in order to express their own point of view or give
information. Games provide one way of helping the learners to experience
language rather than merely study it.

Repeated use of language items
Many games cause as much use of particular language items as more
conventional drill exercises; some games do not. What matters, however, is
the quality of practice.

The contribution of drill exercises lies in the concentration on a language
form and its frequent occurrence during a limited period of time. Many
games similarly provide repeated occurrence and use of a particular
language form. By making language convey information and opinion, games
provide the key features of 'drill' with the added opportunity to sense the
working of language as living communication. Games involve the emotions,
and the meaning of the language is thus more vividly experienced. It is, for
this reason, probably better absorbed than learning based on mechanical
drills.

Central to learning
If it is accepted that games can provide intense and meaningful practice of
language, then they must be regarded as central to a language teacher's
repertoire and not merely a way of passing the time.

Class, individual, pair, and group work

Opportunity for every learner to use the language
Of the four types of grouping, individual, pair, and group work are of
especial value in ensuring that each and every learner has optimum
opportunity for oral practice in using language, going beyond what is
possible in class work.

Pair work
Pair work is easy and fast to organise. It provides opportunities for intensive
listening and speaking practice. Pair work is usually better than group work
if there are discipline problems.

Group work
Some games require four to six players; in these cases group work is
essential. If there is to be competition between groups, they should be of
mixed ability. If there is to be no such challenge, the teacher might choose
groups according to ability; this is very much a personal choice. Many
teachers consider it advisable to have a group leader. However, it is our
experience that groups can operate perfectly well without a group leader.
The leader would normally be one of the more able learners. However, there
is much to be said for encouraging a reticent learner by giving the
responsibility to him or her. The leader's role is to ensure that the game is
properly organised, and to act as an intermediary between learners and
teacher.

What about mistakes?
The greatest 'mistake' (if oral ability is an aim) is for the learner not to speak
at all! Thus, although some mistakes of grammar or pronunciation or idiom
may be made in pair or group work, the price is worth paying. If the learners
are clear about what they have to do and the language is not beyond them,
there need be few mistakes.

The teacher's role
The teacher's role, once the groups or pairs are in action, is to go from group
to group listening in, contributing and, if necessary, correcting.

If you have not organised group work before, then it is advisable to work
slowly towards it. First of all, make the learners familiar with work in pairs.
Add to this games in which rows of learners (if that is how they are seated)
play against you or between themselves. Finally, after perhaps several weeks, ask the rows of learners to group themselves together to play a game between themselves.

To minimise difficulties, it is essential that the learners are very familiar with the games they are asked to play. (It is helpful if they are familiar with the game in their own language.)

Once the learners are familiar with group work, new games are normally introduced in the following way:

1. explanation by the teacher to the class
2. demonstration of parts of the game by the teacher and one or two learners
3. trial by a group in front of the class
4. any key language and/or instructions written on the board
5. first ‘try out’ of the game, by groups
6. key language, etc., removed from the board
7. the game continues.

Types of game

Being aware of the essential character of a type of game (see below) and the way in which it engages the learner can be helpful in the adaptation of games or the creation of new games.

The games in this edition of the book are grouped according to their family type within each of the eight sections. The family name is always a verb. This verb summarises the most important way in which the learners are engaged in the game, for example, IDENTIFY or CREATE. In every case this verb refers to the mental engagement on the part of the learners. The use of language arises out of the way the learner is engaged.

CARE AND SHARE

‘Caring and sharing’ games include all those games in which the learner feels comfortable while sharing personal information with other learners. These games relate more to invitation than to challenge. The striving implied by challenge is incompatible with the notion of ‘caring and sharing’. The origin of this established phrase is the title of the classic book written by Gertrude Moskowitz, Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class (Newbury House 1978).

See games 1.1–7.12.

DO: MOVE, MIME, DRAW, OBEY

The learner is expected to do something non-verbally in response to a read or a heard text.

See, for example, games 3.1, 5.1, 7.1.

IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE, GUESS, SPECKULATE

The learner is challenged to identify something which is difficult to identify or to hypothesise about something which is then compared with the facts.

See, for example, games 2.1, 5.2, 7.4.

DESCRIBE

The learner is challenged to describe something to another learner, by speaking or writing, so well that the other learner can do something, for example, draw a picture. The learner may describe something objectively or subjectively, communicating his or her own feelings and associations.

See, for example, games 2.3, 4.2, 7.15.

CONNECT: COMPARE, MATCH, GROUP

The learner is challenged to connect, compare, match or group various items of information, perhaps pictures or texts, objectively or subjectively. He or she uses language to describe or comment on the pairs or groups of information.

See, for example, games 3.6, 6.7, 7.16.

ORDER

The learner is challenged to put various bits of information into an order of quality and importance, subjectively or objectively, or to put texts, pictures, objects, into a developmental sequence, also subjectively or objectively.

See, for example, games 5.6, 6.10, 7.18.

REMEMBER

The learner tries to remember something and then communicate what he or she has remembered.

See, for example, games 5.8, 6.11, 7.21.

CREATE

The learner is challenged or invited to make a story, write a poem or produce some other kind of material using their imagination. Here the distinction between ‘challenged’ and ‘invited’ is worth making. ‘Challenged’ might
include those story-making starters in which you stipulate certain features: for example, you stipulate that a certain tense form must occur very often, or that the story must be exactly 50 words long. 'Invited', because sometimes the best way to stir the creative forces is to 'invite', 'encourage', 'show interest', and so on.

See, for example, games 3.9, 4.3, 7.22.

Learning styles

For some years now the idea that we all have different emphases in the way we perceive and learn has become part of every teacher's life. Learning styles are not considered to be exclusive. For example, the same person may sometimes want to be analytical and at other times may want to be creative. However, each person will probably have preferences. In any one class there can be many different preferences. The teacher is like a gardener responsible for many different types of plant, some requiring a lot of sunshine and others shade, some requiring pruning and others to be left alone. You can treat all your plants in the same way and watch some die while others flourish, or you can try to offer a range of different approaches and give succour to each and all of them. We have attempted to help you to do this by providing games involving a wide variety of learning styles, from 'visual' to 'dramatic'.

Visual

Some people respond best of all to information which is seen: pictures, writing, diagrams, etc. Note also: colour, size, design, etc. 'I see what you mean.'

See, for example, games 2.1, 6.4, 6.6, 7.14.

Auditory

Other people might respond to information which is heard: dialogues, songs, rhythm, etc. 'I hear what you are saying.'

See, for example, games 2.13, 3.3, 7.7, 7.25.

Kinaesthetic

Others might need to move and to touch in order to learn efficiently. 'I've put it together, at last.'

See, for example, games 1.1, 5.1, 5.8, 6.1, 6.9.

Creative

Some people need to use the language creatively even from the beginning. 'Let's have a go.'

See, for example, games 2.5, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11.

Analytical

Some people like to analyse language forms, looking for rules. Having understood the 'bricks' of the language then they might feel able, tentatively, to use them. 'Let's stop messing about and get down to the basic rules.'

See, for example, games 2.4, 2.6, 3.7, 3.8, 7.18.

Cooperative

Some people like to work with others. 'It's really good fun to work with other people.'

See, for example, games 1.2, 4.3, 4.12, 4.13.

Individual

Some people prefer to work by themselves. 'I like to be left alone to get on with it.'

See, for example, games 2.12, 3.7, 3.9, 8.9.

Serious

Some people can concentrate better if the approach is serious. 'I don't want to mess about, but get down to the real business of learning.'

See, for example, games 1.9, 5.4, 6.12, 6.14.

Amusing

Some people concentrate better if there is an element of humour and lightness in the experience. 'I like a good laugh.' 'Don't take it all so seriously.'

See, for example, games 4.7, 4.8, 7.2, 7.11, 7.24.

Dramatic

Some people experience and absorb language associated with drama and story telling. 'I love a good story.'

See, for example, games 3.2, 4.4, 4.13, 8.17.
Real
Some people prefer to deal with real examples from everyday experience. 'I want to prepare for the real world.'
See, for example, games 1.4, 2.8, 4.10, 6.13, 7.9.

Practicalities of organising games
Teachers experienced in using games in their teaching report the following, for which we are very grateful:

General ideas on using games
'Don't think that the use of the word "game" is a guaranteed way of motivating the students. They are too sceptical. It must be a genuinely engaging activity.'
'Don't tell the learners that they are going to play a game because they may not accept that some of them are games and they protest and be distracted from a positive attitude to what should be a pleasurable experience.'

The importance of making the game clear
'Find a way of demonstrating the game as well as explaining it, perhaps demonstrating it with the class as a whole or with selected students so that everybody can get the gist of it. It is essential that all the students know what to do before you let them go into pair or group work.'
'It is particularly important to make sure everyone understands what to do when the game is quite complicated.'
'Once the game starts it is difficult to help, so try putting helpful phrases on the board or on an A2 poster.'
'Avoid games which need a long introduction and explanation. The students will just turn off.'

Mistakes
'Of course, they may make mistakes when you are not there to correct them. But the biggest mistake is not to speak at all, so group work and pair work are essential.'
'Normally, don't interrupt a game in order to correct a mistake, but comment on it afterwards or just make a note for yourself to do more practice of that point at a future time.'

Introduction
'It is not the right time to correct mistakes of language during the game if that impedes the involvement of the students and the flow of the game. Correct mistakes later or, better, do activities which practise correct forms, later.'

Pair work and group work
'Pair work is easier to organise and control than group work.'
'If there is competition between groups then make sure that each group represents mixed ability.'

Determining the composition of pairs and groups
'People naturally choose to work with people they know well, but sometimes you might prefer them to be open to new working relationships. Ask the learners to stand in a line and then to go through the alphabet with A the first person, B the second, and so on. If you want to have five groups then the learners call out from A to E and then begin again at A. When this is completed you point to one part of the room and say, "All As over there. All Bs over here. All Cs, etc." In this way random grouping can be made quickly.'
'Think about group dynamics. Sometimes adding or removing one or two individuals from a group makes that group so much more productive.'

Success ... and particularly how to avoid failure
'The problem with some games is that they tend to make one person the winner and the rest losers. What we need in the classroom is for everybody to experience success as much as possible. Look for games or ways of playing games which allow for that.'
'Maximise ways of making every student experience success, for example, fewer games based on individuals playing against each other, and more based on team work.'
'Find the right level of game for the learners. This makes all the difference between success and failure.'

Justify the use of games
'When necessary, be prepared to justify the use of games to the students in terms of their efficiency: the frequency with which the language point occurs, meaningful use of the language, successful consequence if the language is used appropriately, memorability.'
Mainly speaking

The games in this section offer a reason for speaking, and thus they can give learners a confirmation and confidence resulting from the successful use of the language or a warning signal on the unsuccessful use of the language.

Some games give the learners considerable support in the language needed for the game, and other games offer a stimulus and context, but no specific language focus or support. Although some games are likely to cause the learners to focus on a particular language point, this section primarily offers practice in fluency rather than in grammar practice.

In these games the learners might make mistakes in their use of the language. As a general principle it is better not to interrupt the speaker but to wait until he or she has finished before first responding to the content, and only then pointing out a mistake in the formal use of the language, if you think it necessary to do so. A better way might be for you to note the mistake and to give focused practice on that point at another time.

IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE, GUESS, SPECULATE

2.1 Slowly reveal a picture

Speculating about the contents of a partially obscured picture using expressions of uncertainty (e.g. I think it is a …) and certainty (e.g. It's a …) Using particular vocabulary or language points (as determined by the teacher's choice of picture)

Procedure
1. Put a picture, for example, a magazine picture, in an envelope or hide it in a book.
2. Pull out a very small part of the picture and ask the learners to try to identify it.

3. Pull out a little more of the picture and ask the learners what they think it is now. Ask them to tell their neighbour what they think it is. This makes everyone participate by using the language and expressing their view.
4. Gradually show more and more of the picture. Encourage the drama of different opinions.

2.2 Liar!

Family Language
IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE
Main game Describing and answering questions about real and imagined pictures
Questioning others with the aim of determining honesty and exposing lies

Variation Scanning spoken text for untrue elements.

Preparation You will need 4 file folders: 3 containing pictures, 1 containing a blank sheet of paper.

Procedure
1. Give the file folders to four volunteers and invite them to look at what is inside, being careful not to reveal it to anyone.
2. Have the four volunteers take turns giving a truthful description of their picture, except for the volunteer with the blank paper, who should invent a convincing description of an imaginary picture in an attempt to fool the class.
3. Encourage the rest of the learners to ask the four volunteers questions in an effort to expose the 'liar'.
4. Let the class vote on who they think was the 'liar', then have the four volunteers reveal the contents of their folders.

Variation 1 You're pulling my leg!

Think up a tall tale to tell learners (or invent one spontaneously as you are playing the game, if you are comfortable doing so).

Procedure
1. Discuss the idea that there are always people who like to 'pull other people's legs', i.e. make them look a little foolish. Explain that this game will train the learners not to have their legs pulled! Explain that you will talk and include a few untrue statements. The learners must immediately raise their hands on hearing an untrue statement and say what is wrong with it. For example:
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Teacher or Learner 1: Yesterday I went into town and saw a beautiful car. It had six legs and went very ...
Learner 2: That's not true. Cars don't have legs, they have wheels. And they don't have six wheels, they have four wheels.
Teacher: Oh, sorry. You're quite right. Anyway, it was going very fast. I went to the chemist's to buy some bread ...
Learner 3: You can't buy bread at the chemist's.

Once the idea of the game is understood, play it in groups or in pairs. Learners might prepare their own 'talk' in writing, perhaps for homework.

Notes
- 'To pull someone's leg' means to tell them something that isn't true as a way of joking with them.
- 'Tall stories', entailing unlikely exaggeration, are a traditional form of story in both the oral and the written traditions of storytelling. Baron von Munchausen is one of the best known tellers of tall stories.

DESCRIBE

2.3 Describe and draw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>DESCRIBE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Describing a drawing and reproducing it by following instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving and following instructions using imperatives, prepositions of location, adjectives and comparatives of adjectives, vocabulary for shapes, and possibly specialised language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>You will need a picture or a drawing on paper or OHP transparency of a few quite simple and clearly defined objects (preferably not people). Use a technical drawing if you wish to focus on specialised language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure
1. Ask a volunteer to stand by the board. Then display a large picture which all the class can see, except the volunteer by the board. For example, the picture can be displayed on a movable board. If necessary the picture can be held up by two learners.
2. Invite the class to describe the picture and tell the volunteer how to draw it. Explain that the aim is to help the artist to make a good copy of the picture. It is helpful to begin with a general description. Here is an example.

Teacher: What's the shape of the picture?
Learner 1: It's a rectangle.
Teacher: Artist, please draw a rectangle ... a long rectangle. (The artist draws the rectangle. The class can call out for him or her to make it longer or shorter.)
Teacher: What is in the picture?
Class: A house ... a tree ... two people ... a dog ... some birds.
Teacher: OK. Now, is the line for the garden near the top of the picture, in the middle or near the bottom of the picture?
Learner 2: Near the bottom of the picture.
Teacher: OK, Artist, draw a line near the bottom of the picture ... a long, straight line. OK. Now the house. What shape is it?
Learner 3: It's a rectangle.
Teacher: Is it a long rectangle or a tall rectangle?
Learner 4: It's a tall rectangle.
Teacher: And where is the house?
Learner 5: It's in the middle of the picture.
Teacher: OK. Artist, draw a tall rectangle in the middle of the picture.
Mainly listening

Sometimes we listen for the gist of what the other person is saying and sometimes we listen for a particular detail of information that interests us. Sometimes the speaker's meanings are explicit, but at other times the meanings are implicit, and we must use our wits and imagination to catch the implications.

Responses to a text may be objective (for example, summarising the text or making an objective valuation of it) or may be subjective (for example, responding with personal ideas, feelings or associations).

When a learner's response to a text entails speaking or writing, it may be difficult for us to judge if his or her inadequacies in speaking and writing also mean inadequacies in listening. Furthermore, learners might be able to focus better on listening if they are not required to make an oral or written response. For these reasons we include games in this section that call for a non-verbal response, that is to say, 'listen and do'. The 'doing' shows, in a fair and accurate way, the extent to which the learner has listened, and understood.

DO: MOVE, MIME, DRAW, OBEY

3.1 Listen and draw

Teacher: My neighbour is a very tall, thin woman. She wears a T-shirt. She wears narrow trousers. She has big feet, very big feet. And she wears big black boots. She has a square face and a long, pointed nose. She has two small eyes right in the middle of her face. She is always miserable and she has a long, miserable mouth. She has a lot of hair. She never combs her hair. It is full of birds. She has long thin arms and she always carries her little cat in her arms.

1. Read a description of a person, object, animal or place. First of all, ask the learners to listen to the whole description without drawing. For example:
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4. Let the class vote for the top five most accurate pictures.
5. Consider asking the learners to do a similar activity in pairs or groups. For example, each pair of learners can be asked to describe, in writing, a subject that they can then describe to another pair for them to draw. Descriptions and pictures can then be displayed.

Notes

- This is a classic ‘communication game’. There is an information gap: the speaker has the information and the learner does not, and must listen to understand it. The drawing shows, non-verbally, how well he or she has understood.
- If the teacher describes, then it is a listening game for the learners, but if the learners describe, it is also a speaking game. The art of describing is a very necessary art in daily life.
- For games in which the learners take on the speaking role, see pages 26 to 30.
- The tall thin woman and the animal could both provide the starting point for a fantasy set of characters and stories. See 4.13 Create a soap opera.

Some other subjects which might be used for describing and drawing:
- a street map on which learners have to write the names of the streets and key buildings
- a plan of a bedroom on which learners have to write the names of furniture and other objects
- a fantasy machine, e.g., a machine for exercising dogs, which learners have to describe in detail
- an abstract drawing in response to a poem
- a diagram showing a technique or process
- a graph or chart showing statistics

3.2 Act out a story

- **Family**: DO: MOVE
- **Language**: Responding through action to what is said
- **Preparation**: Think of a story or situation in which actions play a major part.

Procedure

1. Ask the learners to sit in a circle, if you have enough room. Otherwise, they may remain at their desks.
2. Tell a story in which actions play a major part, and encourage the learners to act it out. For example:

   **Teacher:** You’ve got a little cat in a box. Put the box on your desk. Say, ‘Sit still. Don’t move.’ Now stroke the little cat and say, ‘You’re a nice cat.’ Take the cat out of the box, very carefully and slowly. Put it down. Give it some milk in a saucer. Don’t spill it! Say, ‘Do you like the milk?’ Stroke the cat again. Now say, ‘Come on, little cat. Let me put you in the box.’ Pick up the cat carefully and put it back in the box. Say, ‘Stay there. Go to sleep. Go to sleep, little cat.’

   Show your friend your little cat. Tell her what it’s like and what it is doing.

Note

This is a version of the classic TPR (Total Physical Response) game which is recommended particularly for the early stage of language learning and particularly, though not exclusively, for younger learners.

**IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE, GUESS, SPECULATE**

3.3 Listen for the difference

- **Family**: IDENTIFY, DISCRIMINATE
- **Language**: Listening for differences in a spoken text as compared to a written one
- **Preparation**: You will need a text on an OHP transparency or one photocopy of a text for each learner. Alternatively, choose a text from the learners’ textbook.

Procedure

1. Begin by asking the learners to look at the text you have chosen. Then say that you will read the text to them, but because you are tired you might make some mistakes when you read it, and they must tell you if you do.
Mainly writing

There are different reasons for writing in the foreign language classroom:
- We can see, very readily, the learners' proficiency level: what language items the learners can use correctly and what mistakes they make. This is the traditional and still useful role for writing.
- Many who are visual learners need to write in order to engage their way of learning ... they need to see the language. Writing with this purpose means that it is relevant even for learners who take no written examinations.
- Learners can be made aware of the many different purposes for writing in society: describing, narrating, advising, etc.

Writing, like speaking, is normally intended to communicate something to somebody. It is thus an advantage if writing activities in the classroom result in someone reading the texts that the learners write *and then responding to them in an appropriate way*, rather than just you, the teacher, marking the texts for errors of form. If there is a response from a reader, then the writer finds out if the reader was engaged, was able to follow the ideas, and was able to appreciate the points made in the text. You can then help the writer to reflect on his or her communicative success, or lack of success, deriving from the form, i.e. the choice of words and the arrangement of them. In this way form can be related to communication.

The games in this section assume this close relationship between form and communicative purpose.

IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE, GUESS, SPECULATE

4.1 True and false essays

| Procedure 1 | Ask each learner to write an essay based on descriptions of real places and/or events, and tell them that each essay must contain five things that are not true. |
| Procedure 2 | Invite each learner to read at least three essays, and try to find the five untrue bits of information in each one. |
| Procedure 3 | If it proves difficult to find the five untrue bits of information in a particular essay, then invite the writer to read it to the whole class, and try to find the five things together. |

**Variation 1 True and false sentences**

| Procedure 1 | Organise the class into pairs. Ask each pair to write ten statements on separate strips of paper, some true and some false. |
| Procedure 2 | Invite the pairs to exchange their strips of paper and try to group them into true and untrue statements. |

**Variation 2 True and false dictation**

| Procedure 1 | Organise the class into pairs. Ask each pair to write five sentences, some of which are true and some which are not. |
| Procedure 2 | Invite the pairs to take turns dictating their sentences to the rest of the class, who should write them down and decide which are true and which are not. |

**Variation 3 True and false definitions**

| Preparation | Find a word unfamiliar to the learners, a definition of it, and a sentence exemplifying its meaning and use, as well as two or three false but plausible definitions and exemplifying sentences for the same word. |
| Preparation | Provide dictionaries for the learners. |

| Procedure 1 | Read all your definitions and sentences to the class, and ask the learners to decide which one they think is correct. |
| Procedure 2 | Once a decision has been reached, or the learners agree to differ, tell them to consult their dictionaries and check for themselves. |
| Procedure 3 | Once the class is accustomed to the game, ask individual learners to prepare one true and two or three false definitions of words as well as exemplifying sentences for the rest of the class. This could well be done for homework. Alternatively, ask groups of learners to do this preparation cooperatively. |
| Procedure 4 | To add complexity and fun, permit the mixing-in of an imaginary word, complete with definition and exemplifying sentence, into the series of genuine words. |
4.2 Draw the bank robbers

**Family**

**Language**

Defining the appearance of a person in writing using descriptive language

Reacting to written descriptions of physical appearance by drawing the characters described

**Preparation**

Provide a copy of a description of a fictional bank robber for each pair of learners. When inventing your bank robber, you may want to draw a picture of him/her before writing the description, but do not show the picture to the learners.

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**Procedure**

1. Tell the learners to write **WANTED** at the top of a piece of A4 paper.
2. Ask the learners to study your description of the bank robber and to make a large drawing of him or her on the poster. (Don’t let the learners see your drawing of the robber, if you did one.) Here is an example of the kind of description you might provide:
   
   *He has got a very small head.*
   *His head is the shape of a pear.*
   *His right ear is as big as a plate.*
   *His left ear is small and like a cup.*
   *His left eye is very small and his right eye is very wide.*
   *His left eyebrow is longer than his right eyebrow and it is nearer to his eye.*
   *His eyebrows are very bushy like hairy caterpillars.*

3. Display all the drawings and discuss those that do not tally with the description. Help the learners to appreciate the need for precision.
4. Invite pairs to invent a bank robber of their own and write a description of him or her, guided by your description of your robber. Set a time limit for this.
5. Ask each pair to exchange their description with another pair, who try to make an accurate drawing of the person described.
6. Tell each pair to pass the new drawing to yet another pair of learners, who write a description of the person based on the drawing.
7. Ask pairs to give this second description to one last pair, who must try to make an accurate drawing of the person described.
8. Invite learners to display and compare the sets of drawings and texts.

**Variation 1 Describe from memory**

**Preparation.** Find four pictures of people who look somewhat similar.

1. Show the four pictures all at once to the whole class. Tell the learners to decide which picture they want to describe, and not to let anyone else know their choice. Give them a short period of time, e.g., 10 seconds, to look closely at it, and then (from memory) to write a description of it.
2. Encourage the learners to mill around, asking three other learners, in turn, to read their description. They should then try to identify which picture has been described.

**Variation 2 Describe an object**

1. Brainstorm a list of objects on to the board.
2. Ask each learner to write a description of one of the objects.
3. Tell the learners to mill around, asking at least three other learners to read their text and to see if they can identify which object has been described.

**Examples of language items the learners might find useful**

- It's red/green/brown with white spots. (colour)
- It's big/small/very small/smaller than a bottle top. (size)
- It's round/square/long. (shape)
- It's made of wood/metal/rubber/plastic. (substance)
- It's used for eating/fighting/working/feeding dogs. (purpose)
- It belongs to Harry/an old man/a young woman. (owner)
Mainly reading

We normally read in order to get information that is relevant to us. Our practical reading skills are sponsored and developed by this aim. The games in this section involve the learners in looking for and responding to meaning rather than responding to a text in a formal way.

The games call for a manifested response, that is to say, a response in which the learners do something to communicate to others their understanding, their feelings and their ideas, rather than just a response that is private.

Two important skills are concentrated on, namely skimming for gist, when the learners find out at speed what content a text contains, and scanning, when they search a text for some particular item in it.

DO: MOVE, MIME, DRAW, OBEY

5.1 What's my mime?

Family
Language

DO: MIME

Showing understanding of a text by miming it
Skimming and scanning a series of texts to find one corresponding to actions being mimed
Scanning a text for a particular language point
(optional) Writing texts that focus on actions (with special attention to verbs and possibly combinations of verb tenses)

Preparation

Display on the board a list of sentences that express actions which could be mimed. Alternatively, give a photocopy of the list to each learner.
The sentences could be written by the learners, or you could write them yourself. When writing or choosing sentences, you may wish to favour ones that not only offer practice in skimming and scanning, but also allow revision of a particular language point.

Procedure

1. Reveal or distribute the list of sentences to the learners.
2. Invite learners to take it in turns to mime any sentence on the list.
   Encourage the learners watching the mime to try to identify what is being mimed and then scan the list to find which sentence is referred to.

Examples of simple actions

A man is walking.
A woman is swimming.
A boy is playing football.
A girl finds some money on the ground.

Examples of more complex actions

A waiter was carrying many plates of food on both arms when he fell over a child.
An old man was reading a book when he heard his mobile phone and he looked for it in his pocket.
A young woman was walking along the road when she saw a friend on the opposite pavement.

Notes

- This game can also be played in pairs.
- There is a musical chairs version of this game, where learners walk around a line of chairs (one chair for each person) listening to music. One chair is removed and then the music stops and all the learners try to sit down. The one learner who cannot sit down not only loses his seat, but must also mime one of the sentences before being out of the game.

IDENTIFY: DISCRIMINATE, GUESS, SPECULATE

5.2 Telepathy (texts)

Family
Language

IDENTIFY: GUESS

Main game - Creating and concentrating on mental imagery in response to texts skimmed for gist
Attempting to 'read' the imagery in another learner's mind

Variation 1 - Skimming texts for gist in order to find the most
Games for Language Learning

Note
This game can also be played to practise the present continuous – see 7.5
Telepathy (pictures).

Variation 1 Guess the preferences of others
1 Display the five texts you have chosen and ask each of the learners to
decide which one they think is the most important.
2 Ask each learner to try to guess which text each of the other learners in
their group might have chosen, based in this case on empathetic
understanding, not on an attempt to read their minds.
3 Let the learners check their predictions, then find out who made the most
correct predictions.

5.3 Flashing a text

Family
Language

Preparation
Display a short text on an OHP transparency, on the board, or on a
large piece of paper.

Procedure
1 Flash your chosen text at great speed, especially the first few times you
reveal it. This makes the game challenging. For example, if you are using
an OHP, swing a book between the projector and the screen, giving the
learners only a split second’s view of the text between swings. Flash the
text as many times as you feel is fun and effective.
2 Encourage the learners to guess at what has been seen, and make no
comment about whether it is correct or not. The learners do not have to
try to read the text word by word, but may call out any part of the text
that they have seen. Slowly build up the complete text with them. To
make the game easier you may tell them the topic of the text.

Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.