Why English Only? Learn It Through A Language Game: An Effective Tool For Primary English Classes

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Abstract
Humans on this planet primarily use language to express themselves, communicate, and lead fulfilling lives. Presently, other than one's mother tongue, English has become an unavoidable component of modern life and it needs to be learnt and developed especially in children at an early age in order to prepare them for their future competitive world in which English rules their academic and professional lives. In fact, a strong proficiency in this language will undoubtedly help them create an admirable niche for themselves. Researchers and educators have created a range of tactics and approaches for language development, particularly in English, with this objective in mind. Language games are regarded as one of the most effective teaching tools, particularly for young students, to enhance the development of their verbal competence. These give children the chance to pick up a new language, grammar rules, structures, and concepts. By forcing children to speak, listen, and write, these games teach them how to communicate with others. These activities give them the chance to improve their verbal communication abilities and verbal self-expression. These require the use of one's imagination and ingenuity to come up with new phrases, idioms, and stories, as well as critical thinking abilities.
This paper is a modest attempt to demonstrate first the importance of the English Language and the role of language games as an effective tool in giving children, especially of primary standards, a solid foundation in the English language.

Keywords Language, games, children, English, competence & proficiency.

If you want to take full advantage … there is only one way to do it; learn English…
- David Crystal

The English language is nobody's special property…   - Derek Walcott

Introduction
It is quite natural that when a language becomes a global language – by being the language of business, academics, research, IT, media, advertisement, Science and technology – its significance grows unprecedently. It is equally true that a quarter of the world's nations speak English and now for a nation to flourish on various fronts such as economic,

academic, research, commercial, and social, English has become a requirement on a worldwide scale. It has nearly permeated now every aspect of modern man's life because of its elegance of style, richness, clarity, dynamism, lucidity, eloquence, flexibility, ingenuity, vigour, and vitality. In today's global perspective, for professional, academic and business excellence, a strong command of or over English is important and an essential requirement. Henry Hitchings in his well-known book The Language Wars: A History of Proper English mentions:

> No Language has spread as widely as English, and it continues to spread. Internationally the desire to learn is insatiable. In the twenty-first century, the world is becoming more urban and more middle class, and the adoption is a symptom of this, for increasingly English serves as the lingua Franca of business and popular culture. It is dominant or at least very prominent in other areas such as shipping, diplomacy, computing, medicine, and education … (Hitchings 2011:300)

In the same vein, Nicholas Ostler in his book, Lingua Franca: English until the Return of Babel, says:

> The current status of English language is unprecedented. Simultaneously, it has a preeminent global role in science, commerce, politics, finance, tourism, sport, and screen entertainment and popular music with no challenger comparable to it, it seems almost untouchable….. (Ostler 2010:267)

Mr Mark Robson, Director of English and Exams, British Council, says about English:

> English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide – that's one in every four. By 2020, we forecast that two billion people will be using it – or learning to use it. And it is the economically active, the thought leaders, the business decision-makers, the young, the movers and shakers present and future who are learning and speaking English. They are talking to each other more and more and English is the 'operating system' of that global conversation. (For details, see reference below)

He states further:

> Research shows how a good command of English cannot only enhance an individual's economic prospects but also contribute to national growth and competitiveness. In a 2012 survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit, nearly 70 per cent of executives said their workforce will need to master English to realise corporate expansion plans and a quarter said that more than 50 per cent of their total workforce will need English ability. English is becoming a core criterion in determining employability. Early adopter advantages are gradually fading and are being replaced by economic disadvantages for those who do not speak the language. Those who are not online or cannot speak English are increasingly left behind. (For details, see reference below)

Similarly, Tsedal Neeley, Professor in the Organisational Behaviour Unit at Harvard Business School, in her article titled Global Business Speaks English in Harvard Business Review, remarks:

Ready or not, English is now the global language of business. More and more multinational companies are mandating English as the common corporate language—Airbus, Daimler-Chrysler, Fast Retailing, Nokia, Renault, Samsung, SAP, Technicolor, and Microsoft in Beijing, to name a few—in an attempt to facilitate communication and performance across geographically diverse functions and business endeavours. (For details, see reference below)

She further states:

Similar concerns drove Hiroshi Mikitani, the CEO of Rakuten—Japan's largest online marketplace—to mandate in March 2010 that English would be the company's official language of business. The company's goal was to become the number one internet services company in the world, and Mikitani believed that the new policy … was vital to achieving that end, especially as expansion plans were concentrated outside Japan. He also felt responsible for contributing to an expanded worldview for his country, a conservative island nation. (For details, see reference below)

She further adds:

Adopting a global language policy is not easy, and companies invariably stumble along the way. It's radical, and it's almost certain to meet with staunch resistance from employees. Many may feel at a disadvantage if their English isn't as good as others, team dynamics and performance can suffer, and national pride can get in the way. But to survive and thrive in a global economy, companies must overcome language barriers—and English will almost always be the common ground, at least for now. The fastest-spreading language in human history, English is spoken at a useful level by some 1.75 billion people worldwide—that's one in every four of us. There are close to 385 million native speakers in countries like the U.S. and Australia, about a billion fluent speakers in formerly colonized nations such as India and Nigeria, and millions of people around the world who've studied it as a second language. An estimated 565 million people use it on the internet. (For details, see reference below)

David Crystal, the foremost authority on the English language, presents a lively and factual account of the emergence of English as a global language and explains the current state and potential of English as an international language of communication in his renowned book, English as a Global Language. He says:

English is a global language ….a language is global when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country…. To achieve such a status, a language has to be taken up by other countries around the world. They must decide to give it a special place within their communities, even though they may have few (or no) mother-tongue speakers. (Crystal, 2003:4)

In his book, English as a Global Language, Crystal talks threadbare about the significance of English in the current era. He asserts that English has become the preferred language for communication on a global scale, earning the moniker lingua franca. He goes on to say that several languages have historically been used as local tongues. Latin served as the

Catholic Church's official language throughout the Roman Empire in Europe and continued to do so for centuries after its fall. In China, where dozens of languages are spoken, Mandarin serves as the common language of governance and intellectual exchange. French served as the primary international language of diplomacy from the seventeenth century until English relatively recently took over. This makes very clear the fact that in order to excel and flourish in one's life, it is very necessary for a person to have very strong English Language skills especially speaking skill for it is this skill which enables one to express one's thoughts, feelings and research findings before the international audience.

Language is essential for convincing others and influencing them to believe in us. It was the thunderous speech of Sir Winston Churchill that made the Germans commit the folly of attacking Russia instead of England during the Second World War. It was the emotional and cautiously worded speech of Antony in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar that made him popular and downgrade Brutus. Carefully worded speeches do wonders always. No one is born with a strong command of language, one has to acquire it for presently, the speaker must be able to talk effectively, eloquently and purposefully in order to win the opinion of others on any issue – academic, professional, political, economic, social, etc.

This paper will primarily answer the following three research questions:

(a.) How do language games act as great learning / pedagogical tools?

(b.) How effective are language games for improving young learners' Language speaking skills, especially speaking skills?

c.) What are the young learners' experiences and expectations while playing these games for enhancing & strengthening their linguistic competence?

The research methodology used for this research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It shows that language games – Taboo, Scrabble, Boggle, Library Scavenger Hunt, Cross Cut, Bug Bite, Box Top Tops, Concentrate on Meaning, Dipping & Dripping Rhymes, Don't Say It, Fractured Proverbs, Scratch My Back, Let's Learn a Lovely Little Letter, Popular Picks, Quintessential Game, Shop Til You Drop, Superlative Scavenger Hunt, Crazy cuts, Pulling Strings, The Ruler Rules, Secret Message, Poison Pebble, Pick a Pet, Buttons in a Box, Pebbles for the Poy, Bake Me Some Pizza Pies, Let us go shopping, etc. – provide an extra opportunity for students to interact with others on a certain relevant, productive, and engaging topic. In the Taboo language game, you need to explain to other people, the keyword with the help of supporting words given in the card. It is a fantastic game. It enhances one's vocabulary and improves fluency. In the next language game namely Scrabble, you need to make words from a given set of letters. It helps in storming your brain and enabling you to come up with new words. Similarly, in Boggle, you choose a big ten to twelve-letter word and then you make smaller words out of it. It gives you a lot of fun especially with your friends when you are travelling by train, car or bus or you are completely alone and bored. Library Scavenger Hunt is a challenging and absorbing activity that can be used to help students practice or review library research skills. With

this scavenger hunt the students do the work – making up the scavenger hunt list for another team, trying to complete another scavenger hunt list, and checking another team's answers. It's fun to offer a prize of some kind to the winning team, or to every team that scores above a certain number of points. Since the game is a scavenger hunt, it's appropriate that the prizes be "scavenged" prizes. You might bring in garage-sale items yourself, of course. But it's even more fun to have the students bring in scavenger hunt prizes, the sillier the better. They might bring in "white elephants" from their basements, their lockers, garage sales or second-hand stores. Make a big prize table for all the goodies. When it's time for prizes, first-place team winners get first choice, second-place team members get second choice, and so on. "Library Scavenger Hunt" can be varied, of course, for different ages and skill levels. The activity takes four to eight class periods, depending upon the amount of time you want the class to spend. These activities hold children's attention longer than lectures do. An inattentive class will remember less than half of what the teacher says. In contrast, a group of students who actively participate in such activities fully comprehend the material and retain most of it. English language games are hence one of the most entertaining ways to teach youngsters English in the classroom.

According to Ludewig & Swan:

> We understand all too well that classrooms are busy places and that teachers never seem to have enough time. With that in mind, many of these games use common school supplies and can be implemented with little preparation, and that is a great place to start if games are new for your class. For example, "Back Words" or "Shoebox" can be played while a group is waiting in a line, turning a fidgety transition time into an enjoyable bit of skill practice. These are just two instances of games actually making more time for learning, rather than taking time away from an already jam-packed day. Providing curriculum-relevant game materials at learning centres is an excellent way to engage students who finish other work early, and well-designed games can make "free choice" periods much more productive. It is all about making classroom time more relevant, productive, and engaging. … Students themselves are also eager to bring in things to be used in a game they enjoy to make it more personalized. An example of this is found in "Pick a Pet," in which actual pet pictures can be included as game pieces. Even sets of game questions can be created by students for later use. This is a great help to the teacher, but also provides an extra opportunity for students to interact with significant subject matter before encountering it again in the game (Ludewig & Swan 2007: XIII)

Games are very prevalent in children's life. They enjoy playing with them and they can, as is found, easily and effectively be used for improving English language skills, particularly among young children. Teaching or providing instruction through games is related to the play-way technique. Play is an activity done for pure enjoyment, with no specific goals or end result in mind. For youngsters, the purpose of play is to have fun. Adults generally regard it as a waste of time, despite the fact that it provides enjoyment to players. Unknowingly, youngsters develop a lot while playing. Play promotes motor

and physical development in addition to curiosity and creativity, and it provides numerous opportunities to engage with the academic environment.

For this study, the researcher observed practically the impact of communicative games and conducted interviews regarding the impact of games on youngsters during research and the results of the survey offered surprising results for these games really enhanced especially the speaking skill of the learners. Further, the analysis of all of the research findings – book reviews, visits to Language Classes, interaction with individual learners, questionnaires and other researchers' findings – reveal that the efficiency of various language games varies. The majority of students discovered that playing games was fun and developed a liking for them. Certainly, Language games/exercises helped/enabled them in reducing their anxiety. These also act as stress busters and valuable means of relaxing one's despair and anxiety rather these fill learners with more motivation and enthusiasm.

Ludewig & Swan in 101 Great Classroom Games: Easy Ways to Get Your Students Playing, Laughing & Learning discuss the threadbare significance of games. They say:
... The rationale for taking school skills and wrapping them up in some fun to harness the power of games for learning. The features that make some games fun and others dreary are tricky, but we know that people enjoy a challenge, some fair competition, an escape into another reality, and a bit of surprise, and so the games in the pages that follow contain those motivating features. Each game is an opportunity to bring playfulness to skill practice in a way that increases the "fun quotient" and fuels the desire to engage in the game again and again. (Ludewig & Swan 2007: XI)
They further say:

> Each game ... is a "recipe for fun" with a purpose... We understand all too well that classrooms are busy places and that teachers never seem to have enough time. With that in mind, many of these games use common school supplies and can be implemented with little preparation, and that is a great place to start if games are new for your class. For example, "Back Words" or "Shoebox" can be played while a group is waiting in a line, turning a fidgety transition time into an enjoyable bit of skill practice. These are just two instances of games actually making more time for learning, rather than taking time away from an already jam-packed day. Providing curriculum-relevant game materials at learning centres is an excellent way to engage students who finish other work early, and well-designed games can make "free choice" periods much more productive. It is all about making classroom time more relevant, productive, and engaging. ...Since there are no expensive or exotic materials used in our games, a look through the garage or a junk drawer may be all that is needed to bring some fun to a day at school. Students themselves are also eager to bring in things to be used in a game they enjoy to make it more personalized. An example of this is found in "Pick a Pet," in which actual pet pictures can be included as game pieces. Even sets of game questions can be created by students for later use. This is a great help to the teacher but also provides an extra opportunity for students

to interact with the significant subject matter before encountering it again in the game. (Ludewig & Swan 2007: XIII)

They further add:

Whether we love it or dread it, dealing with competition is a part of real life. This is not a reason to bring harsh, all-or-nothing battles into the childhood experience, but it is a reason to consider games for children as socially desirable. These games provide an emotional safety net for competition since it is "all-in fun" anyhow. These playful chances to be beaten in the final play, misjudge your own abilities, or just plain make a mistake can help a player develop a resilient spirit to draw upon when these things inevitably happen "for real." Independent video gameplay simply cannot offer this significant benefit to character development. Play with people and play with machines are fundamentally different. In fact, there are few solitaire games in this collection precisely because learning happens best in a social setting. Plus, the games' shared reality and the need for players to agree on rule interpretation are a metaphor for serious real-world conflicts and negotiations… (Ludewig & Swan 2007: XIV)

In light of the above discussion, it is evident that language games provide young students with practice, a break from studying, and competition. These promote interactivity, cognitive growth, social skills, self-expression, and intergroup communication and therefore these undoubtedly strengthen the English language communication skills of children.

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