

# Designing Learning Games to Improve the Learning and Teaching Efficiency of Vietnamese Subject for Students at School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University

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## **Abstract**

*Teaching Vietnamese subject at a foreign languages university is crucial due to its fundamental function in systematically comparing and contrasting the student's mother tongue with the target language. During Vietnamese language teaching, using learning games flexibly and suitably will create a positive and active learning environment for students. This article introduces some learning games which are classified into three categories: games for learning motivation, games for knowledge enhancement and lead-in activities. These games are collected and designed by the author during her experiences in teaching Vietnamese language for students at School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University.*

**Keywords:** — *Vietnamese, learning games, learning motivation, knowledge enhancement, lead-in*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Since Vietnamese subject is considered as a basic science subject containing the knowledge of abstract concepts and ideas of Vietnamese language, the active use of learning games will help motivate students to participate in learning dynamically and creatively. Practicing by playing games, students will have chance to acquire knowledge in a more profound way. In this way, students study on their own, practice teamwork skills and also reinforce the quick responsive skills. Being a researcher and classroom teacher at the same time, the author is well aware of the need for integrating learning games in the process of teaching and learning Vietnamese for the best effective results.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The application of learning games into teaching practices has been the attention of many educators in the world. According to V. M. Hong [1], games are a means of teaching. She introduced a system of learning games using words such as games of giving names, games of generalizing individual names, games of guessing antonyms and games of filling in the missing words, etc. Hong believed that these games bring learners joy and develop their intellectual abilities.

In Vietnam, many researches have been conducted on the field of designing and applying learning games in many different ways. Contributors of these researches include many authors such as Vu Minh Hong [1], Ngo Thu Cuc [2], Nguyen Thi Hoa [3] and Le Bich Ngoc [4]. The aims of this paper is to introduce the application of learning games in teaching Vietnamese for students at School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University (SFL-TNU) through which students' knowledge and skills are reinforced while new knowledge is created at the same time. Moreover, by using learning games, teachers create a cheerful and stimulating atmosphere in the classroom, and also motivate students to actively participate in the acquisition of linguistic knowledge [2].

## **III. DESIGNING LEARNING GAMES**

The aim of this paper is to design some learning games for students in every Vietnamese classroom at School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University. The duration of each game is ranged from 5 to 15 minutes, depending on the content of each lesson. These games can be applied at the beginning of the lesson in order to introduce the new topics, during the lessons to diversify the tasks, at the end of the lessons to enhance the knowledge, and even at the break time for students' relaxation. However, it is necessary that these games follow the content of the lesson and have suitable duration so that they can promote the most effective positive, creative learners. In addition, these games also develop thinking and further skills such as communicating, handling, coping, manipulating and quick responding; educate the spirit of solidarity, cooperation, sharing; and create a fun and friendly learning atmosphere and environment.

### **A. Games for Learning Motivation**

Partly collected and partly created by the author, the games presented in this section are aimed to help teachers create interesting learning experiences for students when they study Vietnamese language subjects. The games include quiz games, puzzle games, guessing word games and fast-paced eyes [1] [2] [4] [6].

Vietnamese subject is often scheduled to last for 3 periods (150 minutes) a week at the beginning of the morning or afternoon, so creating a cheerful and enthusiastic atmosphere is really needed. These games are often used at the beginning of the first or third period of the lesson in order to motivate students' learning. Each game lasts for 3 or 5 minutes.

### 1) Quiz Games

Purposes: to create joyful atmosphere, develop teamwork skills and personal responding skills.

Preparation: Teacher makes 20 riddles with entertaining content and answers in form of pictures (black and white or coloured)

Instruction: Students are divided into 7 groups of 8 to 10 people. Teacher delivers all the pictures to each group and then gives the riddles to them. Students have to match the pictures to the riddles. The winner is the group with the most correct answers in the fastest time.

Variation: Riddles can be derived from folk jokes or poems. Teacher reads out the riddles and the students raise hands to have permission to answer. The winner is the group with the most correct answers.

### 3) Ring the golden bell [2][4]

Purposes: to enhance the main content of the lesson; applied in the last lesson of the course.

Preparation: Teacher uses Microsoft PowerPoint software to design questions which cover all the main content of the lesson. There should be a countdown clock on the PowerPoint slide to count down time.

Instruction: Students work individually and sit at their desk separately. Each student prepares some papers to write down the answers. After Teacher shows and reads out each question on the slide, students have 5 seconds to think and 5 seconds to write down the answers. When the time for each question is over, students simultaneously raise the answer to teacher to see. Everyone with wrong answers have to leave the desk. The winner is the last one who has the most correct answers and is still sitting on his desk.

### 3) Treasure hunt [6]

Purposes: to practice the ability of reading instruction, analysing information, and working in team.

Preparation: Teachers make some questions which cover the main content of the lesson. For example, questions include identifying rhetoric and metaphor in the sentences and indicating their artistic effects.

Instruction: Students work in groups. Each group chooses a map to go around the classroom and find their question then give answer to the question.

The winner is the one who has the correct answer in the fastest time.

## B. Games for Knowledge Reinforcement

This group of games should be played at the beginning of the lesson to review the previous lesson or at the end of the lesson to systematize the knowledge. The duration of each game is only 5 or 7 minutes. The content of the lesson needs to be well followed by the content of the games which is scientific and highly applicable.

### 1) Spelling Games

Purposes: to practice the spelling rules and fast reading.

Preparation: Teacher prepares some papers containing words with wrong spelling which are arranged randomly.

Instruction: Students are divided into groups, each of which is provided with a paper of words. Groups have to quickly find the wrongly spelled words and circle them. The winner is the one with the most correct answers in the fastest time.

### 2) Speed Game [7]

Purpose: to practice accurate thinking ability and quick response ability.

Preparation: teacher gives chalks and boards to each group.

Instruction: Students work in groups of 5 or 8 members. Teacher quickly reads out a list of words and students have to write down all the words on the board quickly and accurately. When Teacher finishes reading, each group shows their boards to Teacher. The winner is the one with the most correct words.

### 3) True/False Game [8]

Purposes: to revise previous lesson and practice ability of quick responding, observing and evaluating.

Preparation: Teacher prepares True/False questions. Students make True card (in blue) and False card (in red)

Instruction: Students work in groups of 5. Teacher reads out the questions and students answer by raising the True/False card. The winner is the group with the most correct answers.

## C. Games for Lesson Introduction

### 1) The secret box [7]

Purpose: to provide students with the basic Vietnamese grammar which is required in writing subject; students accordingly will have quick response ability in order to identify Vietnamese grammatical structures and also promote team spirit.

Preparation: Teacher prepares some boxes in which there are pieces of papers containing some

writing requirements such as simple sentence, compound sentence and complex sentence writing.

Instruction: the representative of each group chooses a box and then discuss for 5 minutes before writing down the answers on papers and putting them back in the box. Teacher gives feedback on the answer and decides the winner.

## 2) Crossword

Crossword games can be in many different forms like crossword puzzle, word search or word diagram. Each game includes hints and the content is directly related to the content of the lesson.

Purposes: to practice the abilities of observing, identifying words based on the hints and the number of letters in each word.

Preparation: Teacher prepares some available crosswords in which the questions follow the topic and content of the lesson.

Instruction: Teacher randomly picks up a number which is equivalent to a student who then will have chance to choose a question. Teacher reads out the hints of the question and let the student think within 10 seconds. The student will be given an award if he or she give a correct answer, if not, other students will have chance to answer.

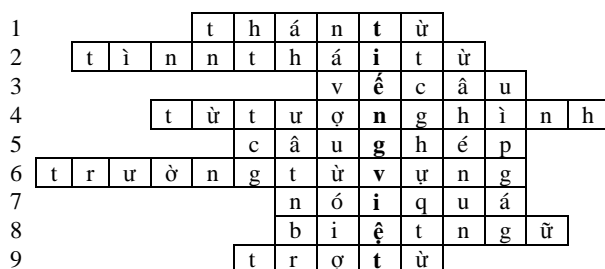


Fig. 1: An example of crossword games

## 3) Relay Race [8]

Purposes: to practice critical thinking and analysing skills.

Preparation: Teacher makes 4 error correction tasks in reference to the content of the lesson.

Instruction: Students are divided into 4 groups, each of whom is given a task. Groups have 4 minutes to discuss and then each member respectively goes to the board to correct a sentence. When a member finishes correcting and comes back to his or her seat, another member continues to correct the next sentence. The rest of the group do so until the last sentence. The group winner is the one with the most accurately corrected sentences.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The design of learning games in this paper is one of the methods to innovate teaching methodology

in Vietnamese language subject in particular and other basic science subjects in general. Well-planned, scientifically-motivated games will help to promote a positive attitude among learners, engaging learners in the acquisition of language knowledge [6]. Besides, various examples together with specific instructions will help the teacher achieve the desired teaching results as well as support students in the acquisition of knowledge of Vietnamese. The author, in conclusion, desires to propose some recommendation on the designing and applying Vietnamese learning games for students at SFL-TNU, Vietnam in particular and at other languages institutions where Vietnamese is taught and learned.

## 1) Recommendations to Teachers

First, teachers of Vietnamese subject should get to know students and be aware of the importance of learning games in the practice of teaching as a new teaching method aiming to promote students' activeness.

Second, teachers should design and apply appropriate learning games which are various and integrated with the content of the lesson. Besides, learning games can be designed and applied technologically in the combination with the teaching techniques by using projectors and other teaching and learning means and software. These applications are necessary to be relevant to the purposes, contents, forms, duration, and facility condition of the lessons.

Third, teachers should regularly conduct these games throughout the course and themselves be enthusiastically engaged in the games in order to inspire and stimulate the positiveness of students. Moreover, teachers themselves need to properly organize the games and manage the time of the lessons.

## 2) Recommendations to Students

Students are often mentioned as the main object in teaching and learning process. Thus, they are supposed to take the active and positive role the learning process. First, students should raise their awareness, behaviour, and positive attitudes towards the use of games by the teacher. Correspondingly, they need to determine their purposes in playing these games, which are to reinforce lesson revision, develop critical thinking and presentation skills as well as improve teamwork skills.

## 3) Requirements in Game Designing

Learning games should be appropriately relevant to the content of the lesson, which are flexibly carried out in combination with other teaching and learning methods.

The duration of the games should not exceed 20% the duration of a classroom period.

Selected games should be easily organized, which is suitable to students' abilities and learning condition.

At the end of the games, a discussion is needed to identify the educational significance of the games.

#### 4) *Recommendations to the Administration*

First, SFL-TNU should regularly organize seminars for teachers to improve teaching methods as well as to share their designing and teaching experiences since up to now there have been very few training programs for teachers, especially who of basic science subjects. Furthermore, there should be more intensive sessions on teaching methods to increase students' positive and active learning.

Second, SFL-TNU should encourage teachers to use active teaching methods in form of competitions about learning games designing for teachers and Vietnamese language practicing for students.

Third, SFL-TNU needs to equip more technical facilities for teaching in the current trend such as functional rooms, educational equipment, and copyright software on interactive teaching. Besides, there should be incentive policies for teachers who have well designed and applied new teaching aids in the classroom.

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