

**LESSON PLAN –
ONLINE GAMES TO TEACH VOCABULARY
TO YOUNG LEARNERS**

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1. Introduction

Most young learners would use any gap during their lessons to play all sorts of games because playing is fun and not dominated by the teacher. For this reason, implementing games (particularly online ones) are a useful aspect of lessons as games are an indispensable tool while teaching any language skill especially if employed effectively.

1.1. Why should teachers implement games into their lesson plans?

Several techniques, such as flashcards, dictionaries, verbal explanation as well as games, can be used while presenting and recycling new language items. Unless the teacher adapts different techniques every time a new item is being introduced or revised, the lesson will tend to be tedious and laborious for both teachers and students.

Most students, particularly young ones, have a short attention span, and they quickly lose interest (Harmer 2007). Monotonous lessons decrease students' enthusiasm for learning. Harmer (2007) suggests that teachers need to prepare what he refers to as "a rich diet of learning experiences" in which students can learn from a variety of sources. Thus, variation in class activities will encourage students to keep focused on language learning. There is always a need for a stimulus to maintain young learners' motivation. Thus, one way to reduce boredom and get students more involved in learning is by integrating online games.

1.2. Why are online games a useful tool?

Most online games for young learners are free and easy to access. The Internet has a good grasp of topics, which are suitable for fostering and enhancing language learning. Also, every time students know they are going to the computer lab, they usually get excited and motivated. The physical movement in itself is a stimulus. While playing, students will focus on the games and hence absorb the target language subconsciously.

There is a growing body of research supporting the use of games in language learning. Online games increase cooperation and teamwork, and at the same time they trigger friendly competition. They can even encourage introvert students to interact easily with others and contribute towards their independence (Lee, 2000). Not only are games amusing and challenging but they also constitute a different way of learning. Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (1984) hold that games create a meaningful context in which students are intrigued, angered, or surprised. Online games help students employ the target language in real context in which students learn by doing (Lee, 2000). Playing online games enhances all language skills as students are going to read, write, listen and communicate in the target language. In other words, students will be working in a meaningful environment, thus retaining the language more easily. Teaching vocabulary through online games should not be merely a time-filling activity, but instead needs to be carefully planned with well-defined educational value.

2. Lesson plan

Learning objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to recognize farm animals (cow, pig, duck, dog and sheep), identify their babies (calf, piglet, puppy and lamb), identify their dietary habits and their place of living, and create an animal farm card report.

Age group: kindergarten

Time: 55 minutes

Materials: Internet connection; LCD projector; score board; 2 sets of card pictures; blue tac; A5 sheet with farm animals pictures; pictures of more farm animals (from game);

copies of worksheet for baby animals; colored markers; newspaper sheets/ or colored cardboards; glue sticks.

Stage	Procedure	Time	Interaction
Warm up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divide the class into 2 groups: A and B. Give each group a set of 10 card pictures. The 10 cards contain pictures of five animals mentioned in the song that the teacher plays aloud, and the other five cards serve as distracters because they are pictures of animals not mentioned in the song. - Divide the board into two parts: A and B. Give each group 5 pieces of blue tac. Tell groups that they will listen to the ‘Old Macdonald had a farm’ song, and they will hear the names of 5 out of the 10 animals they have. Ask groups to run to the board to stick the picture of the animal they hear under their group’s name. - Click this link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_mol6B9z00. Remind the 2 groups to listen carefully to the song. Announce that this game is a competition between the 2 groups, and the group that sticks all the pictures correctly and quickly wins. - Go over the 5 words again with the whole class. Stick on one side of the class an A5 sheet with a picture or a drawing of a farm with animals to recycle recently taught vocabulary. 	10 minutes	T-Ss

	<p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4tzweWNDgE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Go over the completed task again with students to make sure they got the answers all correct. 		
After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell students that even though some animals live on a farm, they live in different places and eat different things. - Relate animals to humans by giving personalized examples from real life. Start by saying that you live in an apartment and like eating fruits whereas another student (call anyone) lives in x place and likes eating y thing. - Divide the class into groups again. Give each group one copy of the worksheet from: http://www.cookie.com/kids/worksheet.html#FarmAnimal. - Give each group a colored cardboard or a newspaper sheet, a pair of safe scissors and a glue stick. - Ask the same groups to return back to their screens and click on the following link to see the same worksheet (already minimized on their screens) http://www.cookie.com/kids/worksheets/science/farm-animal/k/fa1.html. Explain the task. - Ask each group to cut the animal and its baby; then decide in their group where this animal lives and what it eats. - Encourage groups to share duties; students can share scissors to cut pictures or share the glue stick 	15 minutes	Ss- Ss

	<p>to stick. Encourage groups to choose one person to represent the group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow time and monitor. Ask groups to shape their cardboard or newspaper sheet in the way they prefer. - Encourage group representatives to come out and talk about one of the animals they worked on. <p>Variation: Divide the class into groups of three. Bring a lot of Lego animals, trees, fences, blocks to class. Encourage each group to create their own farm with animals, fences, feeding areas, and barns. Monitor work, making sure you encourage students to be creative. Ask groups to display their work so other groups can go around and watch.</p>		
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3. Tips to consider

Besides being fun, games must have a pedagogical/ language and skill focus (Hong 2002). In order to provide students with games that are educationally sound and entertaining, the teacher needs to plan ahead such aspects as organization, material, equipment, teaching focus. The teacher needs to decide on the following:

- the number of computers available in the lab because sometimes students may need to share and work in pairs or teams;
- the students' proficiency level;
- the choice of vocabulary or grammar that the teacher needs to practice with the students;
- task sheets that will keep the students on track;
- the use of interactive input;
- the language skills that the game will enhance;

- the purpose of the game, its level of difficulty, complexity of game rules and its suitability for the students' cultural background.

4. Conclusion

Last summer, I had a chance to work with young learners aged 5 to 10. Taking students to a computer lab once a week for an hour and providing them with online games helped them not only learn new vocabulary but also recycle already learned items. Online games created an anxiety-free learning environment. The online activities converted the students' energy into a meaningful learning experience and helped them associate what they have learned in the computer lab with the real world. This setting usually creates a bond between the teacher and students.

References

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