A study of the effectiveness of using games in teaching English for non-English major students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry (HUFI)

Nguyen Thi Ngoc Hieu ^{1*}

¹ Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry; ngochieu13082000@gmail.com

* Correspondence: ngochieu13082000@gmail.com; Tel.: 0969054140; +84

Abstract: The aim of this research at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry was to see how successful it is to use games to teach English to non-English majors. Teachers' and students' opinions were collected through two questionnaires. The findings of this study revealed that many concepts were found in two questionnaires: a questionnaire for students in non-English majors and a questionnaire for English teachers. According to the study, the majority of teachers and students supposed that using games in English classes is an effective method, but it remains a significant challenge for teachers to both create a positive learning atmosphere and impart enough content in a lesson. The study's conclusions help English teachers understand students' feelings and desires in English when they apply, and do not apply English games in teaching. Besides, it helps teachers realize the effectiveness of English teaching process through games.

Keywords: teachers; students in non-English majors; games

Citation: Lastname, F.; Lastname, F.; Lastname, F. Title. *Information* **2021**, *12*, x. <https://doi.org/10.3390/xxxxx>

Academic Editor: Firstname Lastname

Received: 2021, August, 17

Accepted: 2021, August, 22

Published: 2021, August, 22

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1. Introduction

1.1. General statement of the problems

Nowadays, some students do not like and feel pressure when they learn English. In particular, students who are not majoring in English at HUFI learn English to pass exams and get a TOEIC degree to graduate. Besides, learning English to get a TOEIC degree in some places where it focuses to teach for learners about vocabularies and grammar to get high marks. This makes students learn in a passive environment. Furthermore, students learn to this way, students do not practice speaking skills and those vocabularies which use only one purpose pass the exams.

1.2. Previous works

Since the development of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques in recent years, language teaching and learning has become more successful. According to Ngoc (2012) “CLT is a language education strategy that emphasizes the conveyance of meaning rather than the practice of grammatical forms in isolation” (p.26). Besides, According to Adeng (2012), English games encourage learners to use language creatively and communicatively other than

offering relaxation and enjoyment to them as the participants. In this regard, Godwin-Jones (2014) also said that language games are language learning through gameplay. Therefore, language teaching and learning should not be done in isolation, but in a positive, dynamic environment. As a result, students feel more relaxed and study English more effectively.

1.3. Statement of the aims, the research questions

In light of the aforementioned drawbacks, the researcher proposes a strategy for assisting learners in becoming more cheerful, energetic, and at ease when learning English. That is using English games in the English teaching process. To know if this method is effective, we have carried out the questions: (1) How do students feel about applying games in English? (2) What are the difficulties for the teachers in carrying out games in class? As a consequence, we would like to know students' thinking and teachers' problems of using games in the classroom.

2. Literature review

2.1. The importance of English and teaching games.

English is very important in our lives. English is, as you may know, the most widely spoken language on the planet. As a result, many good publications written by educational institutes and large universities are written in English. More than half of the websites on the Internet, such as newspapers, tools, and global online services, are written in English. Learning this language will provide you with access to an almost limitless amount of knowledge. Furthermore, mastering this language helps you expand many relationships and broadens your career prospects.

Following the importance of English is the English game. English games have become extremely important to English learners and teachers. It not only provides entertainment and relaxation, but also it also encourages students to express themselves creatively through their language.

2.2. Game concept in teaching English

Games in foreign language teaching are described by Byrne (1980) as a type of rules-based play that is happy and enjoyable. But Greenall (1990) said that "the term "game" is used whenever there is an element of competition between students or groups in an activity language". In agreement with the preceding points, Rixon (1992) claims that the game has two key features: edge competition and cooperation between players. According to him, the common goal of all language games is to develop and improve language skills, such as spelling, pronunciation, listening, reading...

In a nutshell, games are a method used in foreign language teaching. Accordingly, the activities are principled, competitive, and cooperative. Through games, learners have fun when developing their own language.

2.3. Advantages of using games in teaching and learning language

2.3.1. Helping learners decline stress

In addition to family and material concerns, English can be another pressure for students who do not like to learn it. This thing makes them very stressed. As the result, some students feel bored and drop out of school. So, games are used to decrease student's anxiety about language learning. At this point, Crookal (1990) said that games are beneficial because they reduce anxiety, increase positive feelings, and boost self-confidence because learners are afraid of punishment or criticism while practicing the target language freely.

2.3.2. Helping learners to be more active

The game encourages learners to be more involved. Learners and teachers, according to Crookal (1990) shifts their roles and relationships through games, and learners are encouraged to take an active role in their learning process. As a result, when they fully focus on the English game, it helps them absorb foreign languages easily and feel more relaxed and more comfortable. According to Cross (2000) when students fully concentrate on a game as an activity, they learn a language in the same way that they acquire their mother tongue.

2.3.3. Boosting competitiveness for learners

According to Gibbs (1974) "Game is an activity carried out by cooperating and competing decision makers, seeking to achieve, within a set of rules, their objectives." Learning competition is a good thing. It helps to develop a sense of responsibility and learn more knowledge from their peers.

2.3.4. Increasing learners' achievements

Everyone knows that games can apply all English skills such as listening, reading, grammar... The purpose of applying games is to help learners improve English skills easily and help them feel more confident and comfortable when they use this language. The game is one way to practice languages, according to Zdybiewska (1994), since it provides a model of how learners can use language in real life.

2.4. Kinds of English games:

2.4.1. Game on Google

a. Baamboozle

This software provides a variety of English teaching games for teachers. This game splits the class into two or three groups that compete for the title of winner. Game also supports many pictures so that students easily understand and remember it for a long time. Thanks to that, it helps teachers save a lot of time to create an active environment for students. However, this software, in my opinion, has one drawback. Teachers must make their teachings available to the public. This will be a barrier for teachers who wish

to utilize this software to teach students, since some teachers do not want their work to be public.

b. Educandy

In this app, it is very great to revise vocabulary for students after the time study in class. Teachers just create an account that can help teachers make up many games. It helps students get excited when reviewing English vocabulary at home. Besides, creating many games helps students avoid boredom when they use it. It is most important that it is completely private. Teachers just put vocabularies into this software, after teachers send a link or give students game code.

c. Quizizz

Quizizz gives teachers English games which divide into more groups to compete against each other. In this software, teachers sign up for this program using a Gmail accounts. After this step, teachers can put vocabularies or pictures, or sentences into this app. It helps teachers make up English games themselves. Teachers just copy or send a game code for students. The special thing about this app is that students anywhere, just need an internet connection, can compete with their friends at the same time. After the game is over, the winners and losers will be found. This game is really so fun.

In conclusion, each of the above games has its good points, but they are only used for the reading part when using a free account. If teachers want to add the listening part, the software will charge. However, in terms of free English game software, these above games have met the very important criteria of a foreign language learning game. Its goal is to make learning enjoyable and exciting for students.

2.4.2. Game on PowerPoint (created by teachers)

On PowerPoint, teachers can be easy to use and create a lot of games which is suitable for their students' qualification. The advantage of making English games on PowerPoint is that teachers can add pictures, audio... to their work. Adding audio and pictures in some online English games are charged. So making games using PowerPoint is also an option that should be applied to teaching foreign languages. However, it will take a lot of time to create the lecture.

2.5. The suitable time to use English games:

Language games are usually used to fill the gap in the first or last few minutes of lessons, but that's a pretty limited view of the game. According to Lee (1991) a game "should not be regarded as a marginal activity, filling in odd moments when the teacher and class have nothing better to do". Depending on many factors, when games are applied in the English teaching process. Teacher can organize in the first minutes or in the middle of lessons or the last few minutes of lessons. It is worth noting that it is not a good idea for a teacher to disrupt a game to correct students' errors. Celce-Murcia (1979) said that "Interruptions should be as infrequent as possible so as not detract from the student's

interest in the game. An alternative to immediate correction is to make note of errors and discuss them when the game is over.” After the game is over, teachers should give students small gifts, for example: candy, a pack of snacks and so on. This is the driving force behind students’ active participation in activities.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study is designed as a descriptive study with the aim of showing the effect of using games in the teaching process for non-English major students of HUFI.

3.2. Participants

One survey was sent to the English teacher and the other was sent to students. This research enlisted the aid of eight English teachers. There is a high school teacher, and 7 teachers from an English center. In the students’ survey, there are 25 students who participated in this study. There are 17 non-English major students at HUFI and 8 non-English major students at other universities or colleges.

3.3. The Research Instrument

A questionnaire was prepared by the researcher for English teachers at an English center and a high school in Ho Chi Minh City. In this survey, 7 teachers and 1 teaching assistant participated. The researcher gave 6 questions for them. In the first question, some English skills are needed to improve by their students. According to the survey, there are 7 comments that are speaking skill, 6 opinions are listening skill and a teachers’ idea is general and academic background. In the second question, their opinion about games is a good method. There are 5 teachers that English games are a good method. However, 3 teachers do not think so. They think that it has both positive and negative aspects. In the third and fourth questions, some teachers’ feelings when using English games in lessons for students. There are 6 teachers in the third question said that games help their students feel happy and more active, but another do not think so. 3 out of 8 people believe that games put pressure on students in question 4. The fifth question concern the challenges that teachers encounter while implementing English games. There are a lot of disadvantages for teachers. Some teachers said that it brings noise to people around, or it is very difficult to control class and so on. In the last question, “If there are a lot of difficulties in applying games, do teachers want to continue?”. There is a good signal for this question. 100% of teachers do not quit it, because it brings a lot of benefits.

Another questionnaire was prepared by the researcher for students who did not major in English. In this survey, all of them said that English is necessary for your life and your future. 52% of people said that they are confident best at reading skill and 1% is not confident in all skills. Furthermore, there are 11 students for whom listening skill is the most challenging. When asked which skills or subjects they would like to use games to,

17 people of them said speaking skill. They feel excited and they will be participating enthusiastically.

4. Results

The findings of the data analysis for each item are explored in depth in this section of the paper.

4.1. In students' questionnaire

4.1.1. Motivating factors

Table 1. Some factors help students create motivation to learn English

1. Like or admire their English teacher	68%
2. English is very necessary for their lives or their future.	100%
3. Feel confident about reading skills best	52%
4. Like applying games in the process of teaching English-speaking skills	68%

According to the above statistics, 100% of students said that their biggest motivation to learn English is that it is necessary for their lives or their future. 68% of students express their admiration for their English teachers. In addition, there are 52% of students feel confident with their reading skills. And 68% of students are very interested in applying games in the process of teaching English-speaking skills. As a result, there are several reasons that motivate students to study English.

4.1.2. Demotivating factors

Table 2. Some factors make students feel not interested in learning English

1. The most difficult English skills are listening	44%
2. Feel stress when they learn English at university	16%
3. Maybe don't like or don't admire their English teachers university	24%

Through the data table, we see that students have the most difficulty in listening skill. 44% of students agree with this. Besides, some students also said that they are not interested in learning English because they feel stress when learning English at university. Another subjective factor is that they do not like and do not admire their teachers.

Despite the fact that the data indicates that a variety of factors cause students to hate learning English. However, this data is smaller than the variables in table 1 that inspire students to study English.

4.1.3. Students' attitudes when learning English with games

Table 3.

Statements	Agree	Disagree
1. Feel excited when teachers apply English games in lessons	96%	1% (Bored)
2. Students will participate enthusiastically	88%	12%

The results show that 96% of students think that using games in the teaching process is very interesting. Only 1 student thinks that it is bored. There are 88% of students that they will support and participate enthusiastically when their teachers organize English games in the teaching process. There are only 12% of students that they do not agree to participate.

This study's results are consistent with previous research. People play games, according to Bartle (2004) because they want to have "fun". Similarly, Gee (2003) asserted that happiness is inextricably linked to deep learning and hard work.

4.2. In teachers' questionnaire

4.2.1. Teachers' feeling when using English with games in the teaching process

Table 4.

Statements	Agree	Disagree
1. Applying games is a good method in the teaching process.	62,5%	37,5%
2. Their students become more active and more happy.	75%	25%
3. Their students feel stressful when they use English games.	37,5%	62,5%
4. There are a lot of difficulties in applying the game's process.	100%	0%

According to the table, 62.5% of teachers said that applying games are a good method in the language teaching process. The remaining 37.5% of teachers think that it is not the best method to teach English. Applying games are bringing positive energy for students and making them become happier is approved by 75% of teachers. However, there are

also differing viewpoints on it. 37.5 % of teachers said that their students feel stressed when they use English games in lessons, and 62.5% do not think so. Especially, 100% is one of the absolute numbers in this survey. All teachers think that there are many difficulties when they use games in their lessons.

This result shows that teachers know what students need and what difficulties they face in their English learning process. Since then, they have been aiming to apply games in lessons to solve it, although there are a lot of difficulties for English teachers in applying games.

4.2.2. The Career flame of teachers

Table 5.

Statement	Agree	Disagree
Still want to continue although they know there are a lot of difficulties in applying games	100%	0%

The result shows that all teachers have the same idea. They still want to continue this method. It can be seen as a nice signal for students in particular and education in general.

5. Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to explore the effectiveness of using games in teaching English for non- English major students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry (HUPI). These findings show that although there are many factors affecting the English language learning of non-language major students such as feeling pressured, finding it difficult to learn English skills, and so on, it can not be denied the benefits of learning English. Learning English will give them many benefits in their lives such as expanding relationship, having good opportunities for job, and so on.

Understanding the necessity of English and the desire to help students learn it better, English teachers have used English games to reduce the pressure on students when they learn a foreign language. Besides, they want to create a good environment in which their students learn more actively, more competitively, and more cooperatively in class. It can be said that initiative, cooperation, and competition are three factors that determine the success of a foreign language class.

To do that, teachers have to go through many difficulties. According to the survey, teachers think that the application of games brings the noise to the people around. Besides, some teachers said that it is very difficult to create games that are suitable for each student or each lesson. Although it is difficult, we can see that all teachers find its

benefits more than its disadvantages. They are willing to overcome all these things so that their students study better.

In conclusion, it is clear from the results of this research that games are valuable instruments in language teaching classrooms in terms of creating a relaxed atmosphere for learners, and that games are very useful for both learners if they have an instructional purpose rather than being enjoyable.

6. Patents

Funding: Please add: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interests: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

1. What is your name?

2. Are you a student at HUFİ?

a. Yes b.No

3. Do you like or admire your English teachers at university?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

4. Do you think English is very necessary for your life or your future?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

5. Which English skill do you feel confident best?

a.Listening b.Speaking c.Reading d.Writing

6. Which English skill is the most difficult skill for you?

a.Listening b.Speaking c.Reading d.Writing

7. How do you feel about learning English at university?

a.Like b.Love c.Stress

8. Which English skills or subjects do you want teachers to apply games in the English teaching process?

a.Speaking b.Reading c.Listening d.Writing

9. How do you feel if teachers use English games in lessons?

a.Excited b.Bored

10. If your teachers use games during the English teaching process, will you participate enthusiastically?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

Appendix B

1. What is your name?

2. Are you an English teacher?

a.Yes b.No

3. Which English skill do your students need to improve?

a.Speaking b.Listening c.Reading d.Writing e. -

4. Do you feel applying games in the language teaching process is a good method?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

5. If applying games in the language teaching process, do you think your students feel happy and become more active?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

6. Do you think your students feel stressful when you apply English games in the language teaching process?

a.Yes b.No c.Maybe

7. Which difficulties do you face when applying English games?

8. If there are a lot of difficulties in applying games, do you want to continue? Why?

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