

THE ROLE OF MOVEMENT-BASED GAMES IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Movement-based games are becoming increasingly important in English language teaching because they combine physical activity, communication, emotion, memory, and classroom interaction. Traditional language lessons often require learners to sit, listen, repeat, and write for a long time, which may reduce attention and motivation, especially among young learners and lower-level students. Movement-based games create a more active learning environment where students learn English through action, cooperation, competition, and meaningful use of language. This article discusses the theoretical foundations, pedagogical benefits, classroom applications, possible challenges, and practical recommendations for using movement-based games in English lessons. It argues that such games can support vocabulary learning, speaking confidence, listening comprehension, grammar practice, classroom motivation, and learner participation when they are carefully planned and connected with lesson objectives.

Keywords: *movement-based games, English language teaching, kinesthetic learning, Total Physical Response, vocabulary learning, speaking skills, student motivation, active learning.*

INGLIZ TILINI O‘QITISHDA HARAKATLI O‘YINLARNING ROLI

ANNOTATSIYA

Harakatli o‘yinlar ingliz tilini o‘qitishda tobora muhim ahamiyat kasb etmoqda, chunki ular jismoniy faollik, muloqot, emotsiya, xotira va sinfdagi o‘zaro munosabatlarni birlashtiradi. An’anaviy til darslarida o‘quvchilar ko‘pincha uzoq vaqt davomida o‘tirish, tinglash, takrorlash va yozishga majbur bo‘ladilar. Bu esa, ayniqsa, yosh o‘quvchilar va boshlang‘ich darajadagi talabalar orasida diqqat va motivatsiyaning pasayishiga olib kelishi mumkin. Harakatli o‘yinlar esa yanada faol ta’lim muhitini yaratadi. Bunday muhitda o‘quvchilar ingliz tilini harakat, hamkorlik, raqobat va tilni mazmunli qo‘llash orqali o‘rganadilar. Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili

darlarida harakatli o'yinlardan foydalanishning nazariy asoslari, pedagogik afzalliklari, dars jarayonidagi qo'llanilishi, yuzaga kelishi mumkin bo'lgan qiyinchiliklar va amaliy tavsiyalar muhokama qilinadi. Maqolada harakatli o'yinlar dars maqsadlari bilan puxta bog'langan va oldindan rejalashtirilgan holda qo'llanilsa, ular lug'at o'rganish, gapirishga bo'lgan ishonch, tinglab tushunish, grammatikani mashq qilish, darsga motivatsiya va o'quvchilar ishtirokini oshirishga xizmat qilishi ta'kidlanadi.

***Kalit so'zlar:** harakatli o'yinlar, ingliz tilini o'qitish, kinestetik ta'lim, Total Physical Response, lug'at o'rganish, gapirish ko'nikmalari, o'quvchi motivatsiyasi, faol ta'lim*

РОЛЬ ПОДВИЖНЫХ ИГР В ОБУЧЕНИИ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

АННОТАЦИЯ

Игры, основанные на движении, приобретают всё большее значение в преподавании английского языка, поскольку они объединяют физическую активность, коммуникацию, эмоции, память и взаимодействие в классе. Традиционные языковые занятия часто требуют от учащихся длительного сидения, слушания, повторения и письма, что может снижать внимание и мотивацию, особенно у младших школьников и студентов с низким уровнем владения языком. Игры с элементами движения создают более активную образовательную среду, в которой учащиеся изучают английский язык через действие, сотрудничество, соревнование и осмысленное использование языка. В данной статье рассматриваются теоретические основы, педагогические преимущества, возможности применения в классе, возможные трудности и практические рекомендации по использованию подвижных игр на уроках английского языка. В статье утверждается, что такие игры могут способствовать усвоению лексики, развитию уверенности в говорении, пониманию речи на слух, практике грамматики, повышению мотивации и активному участию учащихся, если они тщательно планируются и связываются с целями урока.

***Ключевые слова:** игры, основанные на движении, преподавание английского языка, кинестетическое обучение, Total Physical Response, изучение лексики, навыки говорения, мотивация учащихся, активное обучение*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English effectively requires more than explaining grammar rules and asking students to memorize vocabulary. Language is naturally connected with

action, emotion, social interaction, and real communication. In many classrooms, however, English lessons are still organized mainly around textbooks, written exercises, translation, and teacher explanation. Although these methods can be useful, they may not fully engage learners who need physical activity, practical experience, and meaningful interaction. Movement-based games offer an alternative approach because they allow students to learn English while moving, acting, competing, cooperating, and responding to language in real time.

Movement-based games are activities in which students use physical movement as part of the learning process. These may include running dictation, vocabulary races, miming games, “Simon says,” action commands, role-play with movement, grammar corners, treasure hunts, board races, ball games, station activities, and classroom surveys. Such games are not only “fun breaks”; they can become serious pedagogical tools when they are linked to clear language aims. For example, a vocabulary relay can help learners remember new words, a mime game can develop speaking and guessing skills, and a command-based activity can improve listening comprehension.

The idea of learning language through movement is not new. Total Physical Response, developed by James Asher, is based on the coordination of language and physical action; in this method, learners listen to commands in the target language and respond through body movements. This approach is especially useful for beginners because students can show understanding before they are ready to speak freely. Modern research on embodied learning also suggests that movement, gesture, enactment, and physical interaction can support language learning because learners do not process language only mentally; they connect meaning with the body, context, and action.

Theoretical Background

Movement-based games are closely related to several important educational ideas. The first is kinesthetic learning. Kinesthetic learners understand and remember information better when they use their bodies, touch objects, move around, and participate actively. In English lessons, this means that students may remember the word “jump” better when they actually jump, understand prepositions better when they stand “behind,” “between,” or “next to” objects, and learn classroom commands faster when they physically perform them.

The second theoretical foundation is Total Physical Response. TPR connects listening input with physical response. Instead of forcing students to speak immediately, the teacher gives clear commands such as “stand up,” “open your book,” “walk to the door,” or “touch something blue,” and students respond through

actions. This reduces pressure, supports comprehension, and helps learners connect sound, meaning, and movement. The method is particularly effective for young learners, beginner groups, vocabulary lessons, and classroom language practice.

The third foundation is the affective side of language learning. Many students feel nervous when they have to speak English in front of others. Movement-based games can lower anxiety because students focus on completing a task rather than worrying about mistakes. When learners laugh, move, cooperate, and compete in a friendly way, the classroom atmosphere becomes more supportive. Recent studies and reviews on game-based learning in EFL contexts also report that games can increase motivation, participation, and learning outcomes when they are used purposefully.

The fourth foundation is the relationship between physical activity and attention. Classroom movement breaks and physically active learning have been studied in education, and research generally suggests that movement can support attention, on-task behavior, and cognitive engagement. This is important for English teachers because attention is necessary for listening, remembering vocabulary, following instructions, and participating in communication.

Benefits of Movement-Based Games in English Teaching

One major benefit of movement-based games is improved vocabulary retention. Vocabulary is often difficult for students because words may seem abstract or disconnected from real life. When students learn vocabulary through movement, the word becomes connected with an action, image, emotion, or classroom experience. For example, verbs such as “run,” “walk,” “push,” “pull,” “turn,” “throw,” “catch,” and “climb” are naturally suitable for action-based learning. Even abstract vocabulary can be practiced through gesture, symbol, or dramatization. Research on gestures in foreign language learning shows that accompanying words with gestures can improve memory and recall.

Another benefit is the development of listening comprehension. In many movement-based games, students must listen carefully before acting. For instance, in “Simon says,” students must understand the command and decide whether to perform it. In “Find someone who,” they listen to classmates’ answers. In “Running dictation,” one student reads and remembers information while another writes it. These games train learners to process English quickly and meaningfully.

Movement-based games also support speaking skills. Many students hesitate to speak because they are afraid of making mistakes. Games create a more natural reason to speak. In a guessing game, students ask questions; in a role-play, they use functional expressions; in a survey game, they interview classmates; in a team race,

they negotiate answers. The focus shifts from “speaking perfectly” to “using English to complete a task.” This can gradually build fluency and confidence.

Grammar can also be taught through movement. For example, the present continuous can be practiced by asking students to act and describe actions: “He is jumping,” “She is writing,” “They are running.” Prepositions can be taught by placing students or objects in different positions: “The book is under the chair,” “Ali is between two students.” Comparative adjectives can be practiced through classroom movement: “Stand near something bigger,” “Find someone taller than you,” or “Move to the corner that shows your opinion.” Grammar becomes more visible and practical when students physically experience it.

Movement-based games also increase motivation. Students often enjoy lessons more when they can move, interact, and take part in competition or cooperation. This is especially useful for learners who become tired during long lessons. A five-minute physical game can refresh the class and prepare students for the next activity. However, the game must not be used only for entertainment. It should have a clear language purpose, such as reviewing vocabulary, practicing a structure, improving pronunciation, or preparing for speaking.

Examples of Movement-Based Games

One effective game is **Running Dictation**. The teacher places a short text on the wall. Students work in pairs. One student runs to the text, reads a sentence, remembers it, returns to the partner, and dictates it. The partner writes it down. This activity develops reading, memory, pronunciation, listening, spelling, and teamwork. Another useful game is **Vocabulary Relay**. Students stand in teams. The teacher gives a category, such as “food,” “jobs,” “transport,” or “adjectives.” One student from each team runs to the board and writes one word. Then the next student continues. The team with the most correct words wins. This game is useful for vocabulary revision and quick recall.

Grammar Corners is also practical. The teacher labels four corners of the classroom with grammar options, such as “Present Simple,” “Past Simple,” “Future Simple,” and “Present Continuous.” The teacher reads a sentence, and students move to the correct corner. After that, they explain their choice. This helps students physically classify grammar forms.

Mime and Guess is suitable for verbs, jobs, daily routines, emotions, and idioms. One student acts out a word or phrase without speaking, and others guess in English. For example, a student mimes “brushing teeth,” “driving a car,” or “feeling nervous.” This game supports vocabulary, speaking, and creativity. **Find Someone Who** is a communicative movement game. Students walk around the classroom and

ask classmates questions such as “Do you like reading books?”, “Have you ever travelled by train?”, or “Can you play football?” They write names and later report results. This activity develops speaking, listening, question forms, and social interaction.

Preposition Hunt is useful for teaching place prepositions. The teacher gives instructions such as “Put your pen under your notebook,” “Stand next to the door,” or “Place the card between two books.” Students learn grammar through direct physical experience.

Challenges and Limitations

Although movement-based games are useful, they also have challenges. The first challenge is classroom management. If the teacher does not give clear instructions, students may become noisy or lose focus. Therefore, rules must be explained before the game starts. The teacher should demonstrate the activity, set time limits, and use simple classroom signals such as clapping, counting down, or raising a hand for silence. The second challenge is lesson relevance. Some teachers use games only to make students happy, but the game may not support the lesson objective. A good movement-based game must answer the question: “What English will students learn or practice through this activity?” If the answer is not clear, the game should be adapted or replaced. The third challenge is classroom space. Some classrooms are small or crowded. In such cases, teachers can use low-movement alternatives such as standing up, changing seats, passing cards, using gestures, moving to corners, or working in small groups. Movement does not always mean running; it can also mean controlled physical response. The fourth challenge is student personality. Some students may feel shy or uncomfortable acting in front of others. Teachers should not embarrass them. Pair work, group work, optional roles, and simple gestures can make participation safer. The teacher should create a respectful atmosphere where students do not laugh at mistakes. The fifth challenge is assessment. Movement games are sometimes seen as informal activities, but teachers can assess them through observation. For example, the teacher can note whether students understand instructions, use target vocabulary, ask correct questions, pronounce words clearly, or cooperate with peers.

Practical Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers should begin with a clear objective. Before choosing a game, the teacher should decide whether the aim is vocabulary revision, grammar practice, pronunciation, speaking fluency, listening comprehension, or classroom energizing. The game should serve that aim. Instructions should be short and clear. It is better to demonstrate the game than to explain it for a long time. Teachers can model the

activity with one student first. For lower-level learners, instructions should include simple English, gestures, and examples. Safety is also important. The classroom should be arranged carefully, and students should not run in dangerous spaces. Activities should be controlled, especially with large groups. Teachers should avoid games that may cause pushing, falling, or embarrassment. Teachers should balance competition and cooperation. Competition can motivate students, but too much competition may create stress. Team-based games, pair tasks, and cooperative challenges are often better than individual elimination games. The aim is to make all learners active, not only the fastest or most confident students.

Reflection should follow the game. After the activity, the teacher can ask students what words they used, what grammar rule they practiced, what mistakes they noticed, or what expressions were useful. This short reflection helps students understand that the game was part of learning, not just entertainment.

CONCLUSION

Movement-based games are powerful tools in English language teaching because they connect language with action, memory, emotion, and communication. They can improve vocabulary learning, listening comprehension, speaking confidence, grammar understanding, classroom motivation, and student participation. They are especially useful for young learners, beginners, mixed-ability groups, and classes where students easily lose attention. However, their success depends on careful planning. A movement-based game must have a clear language objective, simple instructions, safe organization, and a meaningful follow-up. When used professionally, movement-based games transform the English classroom into an active, communicative, and learner-centered environment.

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