TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH VERB TENSES THROUGH GAMES: ACTIVITY SAMPLES

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Abstract. *The communication requirements of our modern society have triggered a search for new teaching strategies and techniques, able to meet the learners' needs, especially since foreign language learning also develops certain challenging skills in the target language, particularly when exposing learners to real life communication contexts. The aims of this paper are to tackle certain difficulties encountered in teaching and learning English verb tenses and to present several innovative grammar teaching techniques. In view of these objectives, the paper consists of two main sections: the first section tackles some modern key elements in teaching English grammar, while the second section presents correlated activity samples of teaching verb tenses through games. The paper highlights the fact that grammar is not merely a content area that should be mastered by English teachers. Teachers should also be able to define it and to choose the most appropriate teaching methods, adapted to the students' needs and expectations.*

Keywords: *teaching grammar, verb tenses, English language, modern activity, game*

1. Introduction

The ability to communicate in a foreign language has always been useful and important. Nowadays, English has already become a genuine *lingua franca*, i.e. a language used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first or even second language, especially due to globalization and the spread of multinational environments (see Popescu, Bâcă 114-119; Bâcă 9-13; Nădrag 444-452). In our contemporary society, the learners' need to communicate in a foreign language (in a wide variety of contexts) has entailed a search for new teaching approaches and techniques. In this regard, Norman Fairclough suggests that "language is part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are linguistic phenomena" (Fairclough 19). Language should also be seen as a social experience that involves information transfer or exchange, emotions and different types of interactions, aimed at solving daily issues.

Against this background, the subject of grammar teaching appears to have little to no positive effects as far as the improvement of the students' reading, speaking, writing and listening skills are concerned (Kolln 25-31). Furthermore, nowadays, recent theories of second language teaching focus more on vocabulary acquisition (see Chirobocea, Popescu 67-82) and on teaching communication skills (see Zamfir 852-855; Maruntelu, Dumitrascu 63-69, Nădrag 631-638), the function of grammar representing the field of editing and proofreading (Elbow 169). However, the same scholar suggests that "students, especially the non-native speakers of English who account for a steadily increasing percentage of school populations at all levels, have the right at all times to ask their teachers why certain elements of grammar operate the way they do" (Elbow 167). Therefore, grammar represents a content area that any English teacher should be able to define, master and teach.

2. Teaching Grammar: Perspectives and Challenges

In recent decades, the subject of grammar teaching has been heavily discussed by language teaching specialists and, depending on various teaching and learning methods, it has played either a central or even a peripheral role. For instance, the Grammar Translation Method,

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which professed the central role of the form in the learning process, "was universally acknowledged as obsolete and inefficient" (Chirobocea 67), and the Direct Method and the Natural Approach marginalized the role played by grammar (Brown 360-362). Nowadays, scholars focus on discussions about task-based teaching grammar, the efficiency of various teacher and learner roles and the implementation of consciousness raising activities (Fotos 323-346).

It should be noted that the term "grammar" makes reference to a set of rules (and exceptions, of course) needed in order to make sentences. Brown (362) defines the concept of grammar in the following way:

> the system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in a sentence. Technically grammar refers to sentence-level rules only, and not rules governing the relationship among sentences, which we refer to as discourse rules.

In her turn, Celce-Murcia (465) makes a chart, highlighting the importance played by grammar for both adults and children, underlain by various categories, such as the learners' educational background, age, proficiency level, etc. Different variables are emphasized in her model, i.e. inductive (learners discover the rules based on the teacher's examples) and deductive (the teacher explains the rules and the students practice them) approaches. Another trend is represented by the mixed approach, where both the deductive and the inductive ways are combined. In this respect, Harmer (53) explains that:

> Focus on form occurs when students direct their conscious attention to some feature of the language, such as a verb tense or the organization of paragraphs (…). It will occur naturally when students try to complete communicative tasks (…). Focus on form is often incidental and opportunistic, growing out of tasks which students are involved in, rather than being pre-determined by a book or syllabus.

Nevertheless, numerous language syllabuses and textbooks are designed and structured according to certain language forms, and both teachers and learners focus on them because they are part of the respective syllabus. According to Baleghizadeh and Mozaheb (365), this is known as "focus on forms", "because one of the chief organizing principles behind a course is the learning of these forms."

Although it has been considered a working strategy typical of grammar teaching, the focus on form also underwent severe criticism. Such an example is provided by Sheen (225), who considers that

> an underlying assumption of a focus on form approach is that all classroom activities need to be based on communicative tasks, and that any treatment of grammar should arise from difficulties in communicating any desired meaning.

On the other hand, in Ellis's perspective (102), "the grammar taught should be one that emphasizes not just form but also the meanings." Moreover, in his view, a valid focus on form should offer learners the occasion to employ (in their communication activities) the forms studied. Additionally, the same scholar explains that "an incidental focus-on-form approach is of special value because it affords an opportunity for extensive treatment of grammatical problems (in contrast to the intensive treatment afforded by a focus on forms approach" (Ellis 102).

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The fact that we can focus on form by means of noticing was discussed by Harmer (54), who defines it as "a condition which is necessary if the language a student is exposed to is to become (…) language that he or she takes in." Furthermore, Lynch (125) explains that "Noticing is certainly part of successful language learning; one can hardly imagine (adult) learners making substantial progress without it."

Besides noticing, other influential strategies for teaching grammar are represented by implicit methodological techniques, which, according to Ellis (167), "involve providing feedback on learners' use of the target feature in a manner that maintains the meaning-centeredness of the task."

It should be noted that besides the implicit methodological techniques (used in teaching grammar), the teacher can employ pre-emptive and responsive explicit methodological techniques. For the former, "the teacher draws attention to the targeted feature by asking a question or by making a metalingual comment", while the latter "occurs through negative feedback involving explicit attention to the targeted feature" (Ellis 170). A good teacher must be acquainted with the various grammar teaching strategies and approaches and with the important position held by grammar in foreign language teaching. Additionally, s/he should be a good manager; s/he must be patient, enthusiastic, flexible and intelligent.

Across time, there were diverse methodological perspectives that paved the way for the emergence of a debate over the role of grammar in EFL/ESL contexts that has survived over the decades. EFL/ESL classrooms have long been characterized as contexts for the learning of grammatical rules. In the field of linguistics, the Transformational-Generative approach played a prevalent role for over 40 years. His ultimate aim was to provide a full explicit description of language that could serve as a basis for the provision of rules for grammatically correct sentences. From this perspective, grammar was equated to abstract rules to prescribe high levels of correctness.

However, language scholars started to perceive several limitations in this approach, mainly limitations in terms of its impossibility to account for individual differences, its view of the language learner as a passive individual, and its absolute neglect of language functions in real communicative events. It was then that some functionalist models emerged. For these scholars, language is a form of social action. This focus on the social nature of language brought back the environment – context of situation and culture – into the analysis of language.

Functionalists claim that language, its nature, study, description and interpretation go beyond structures and encompass function. In this sense, function refers to the purpose for which a language form or phenomenon exists, to the ways in which words interconnect and to how words are used (Thompson 47-65).

In most EFL educational contexts, a shift in teaching practices and approaches has accompanied and evolved along with theoretical contributions. Consistently, educators have become aware that apart from managing the fundamental structures of the target language learners should be able to make connections between forms and functions and depict language uses. This implies an emphasis on complete texts with various social and cultural meanings and objectives, the communicative goal being the key feature of human verbal communication.

Undoubtedly, the primary aim of introducing ESL/EFL in a syllabus is to promote the circumstances that enable foreign students to learn English. However, because teachers are integrated in a national school system, they have to follow the guidelines and educational policies defined by the Ministry of Education. Consequently, they are expected to contribute to the holistic education of their students (i.e. to develop their personalities, to build up their

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values and character), not only to the improvement and reinforcement of their knowledge of the respective foreign language system.

The history of language teaching has shown us that different approaches and methods have often been promoted as "all-purpose solutions to teaching problems that can be applied in any part of the world and under any circumstance" (Richards, Rogers 248). The proposal in this paper is to suggest some strategies and techniques that would help teachers to develop their flexibility and creativity, according to their own contexts, based on the idea that learning a foreign language is more than memorizing a set of grammar rules.

From our viewpoint, English Grammar is a difficult subject not only for students but for everyone who wants to be a professional philologist. For instance, the verb as a part of speech is a grammar category with various denotations, meanings and stylistic potentials, with different combinations, grammar forms and associations with tenses and aspects.

3. Teaching Verb Tenses: Modern Activity Samples

Curriculum developers and teachers must decide which forms should be taught. In this regard, as far as grammar is concerned, they must determine whether the respective grammar item communicates a purpose and whether students really need it (depending on their proficiency level and interests) (Savage, Bitterlin, Price 8-9). For instance, the plural of nouns originating from medical Greek and Latin (such as "septum/septa", "ovum/ova", "radius/radii", "cicatrix/cicatrices", "appendix/ appendices") does not arise very often in the lives of the students majoring in economic sciences and should not be included in their curriculum.

In Šabatová's view (12), presentation involves the introduction of the form, meaning(s) and use of a new language item (e.g. *did* for past simple in questions); students are taught how to apply grammar rules (and exceptions). It is also useful to mention the personalization. Presentation can take place using personalization, in which the teacher uses the students and their life experience in order to introduce a new language item (e.g. personal questions). Personalization can be the final part of a presentation, which is done through the use of texts or pictures (e.g. using a situation in daily life, menu in a restaurant).

Among the features that should characterize a good presentation, Harmer (225-227) enumerates: clarity (no understanding difficulties); efficiency (the possibility to manipulate the new language); liveliness and able to raise the learners' interest and involve them; appropriateness (not too much information); productivity (allow students to make many sentences or questions in a new language).

The teacher can fulfill these conditions in many ways. Such instances are: discovery techniques (learners are presented several examples of the new language item and then required to find out how the respective item functions), practice techniques (drills, interaction activities, activities that involve the learners' personalities, games), written activities (e.g. parallel writing, fill-ins, word order, written drills). Learners should practice their grammar a lot, and an efficient teacher should not forget that students have to accomplish their tasks with pleasure and not only as a necessity (Šabatová 14).

Nowadays, when searching the Internet for inspiration sources in order to make his/her ESF/ESL classroom more interesting and fun (especially when it comes to teaching grammar), the modern teacher is faced with an overwhelming number of materials and sample activities. In this regard, Mike Astbury, a multiple winner of the *Teaching English blog* award, in his online article entitled "Classroom activities to teach narrative tenses", shares several EFS/ ESL teaching resources. The author starts his online article by defining narrative tenses (such as past simple, past continuous, past perfect and past perfect continuous) as "verb tenses that are used to talk about the past" and that are

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often encountered "in stories, textbooks, spoken accounts and in descriptions of past events" (see Astbury, "Classroom activities to teach narrative tenses"). In order to practice these narrative tenses, he presents several games, "designed to help students practice narrative tenses", games that "do not require teacher supervision" and that "need at least two players." For these games, the teacher needs 16 cards and a short story; on each card there is a sentence that represents a part of the story and that employs narrative tenses (when combined together, these cards present the entire story).

The warm-up activity aims at familiarizing the students with the story. In this stage, the teacher may ask students to arrange the cards in the right order, in order to obtain a coherent story. The teacher may then ask students to put the cards face-down and retell the story in their own words. It is noteworthy that this warm-up activity also trains the students' memory and helps them acquire new vocabulary items.

The second activity presented by Astbury in his online article, "Classroom activities to teach narrative tenses" (entitled "Quiz") involves pair work and aims at testing the students' understanding of narrative tenses. This time, the teacher gives students the cards. However, on one side of the card, some narrative tenses are missing and the answers are on the other side. One student draws a card and shows his/her partner the side where the tense is missing. If the latter fills in the blanks with the correct form of the respective verb, s/he wins the card (which represents their score; the winner is the student who has the most cards). If the student fails to fill in the blanks with the correct form, then the card is placed at the bottom of the pile of cards. The students play the game until they use all the cards.

The main advantage of the games presented above is that although the story (i.e. making it up) and the cards (designing them) are time-consuming, they can be afterwards adapted and reused. Moreover, the teacher can motivate the students by asking them to write a story and make card sets together (which can be subsequently used by other students).

Based on the premise that grammar lessons are usually boring, Emily Monaco presents several games that can help the teacher integrate grammar in the ESL classroom and make it more enjoyable. Monaco's online article, entitled "4 ESL Grammar Games for Learning Verb Tenses and Having Fun!", is available at https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-grammar-verb-tense-games/. In Monaco's opinion, traditional grammar exercises "are useful at the beginning of the establishment of a grammar point", while "games are actually even more useful at the end" because "a student can usually successfully reproduce a grammar point on paper once he or she has learned it" but it is "more difficult to reproduce a rule like this in a freer setting, such as a game." Games help students to reinforce the grammar elements that have already been presented in the EFL/ESL class provided that they are properly explained, with well-thought-out rules, previously established by the teacher. It should also be taken into account the fact that, although they are useful and fun for the learner, games involve the teacher's effort and planning.

Monaco explains that the teacher should make sure that the grammar element or rule has been properly understood by most (or preferably all) students before s/he integrates the grammar game into his/her class. The games should be chosen wisely, i.e. the teacher should use those games that reinforce a recently taught grammar item/ rule, and make sure that grammatically correct sentences are reproduced by students during the game (however, the teacher should not penalize the grammar mistakes that do not represent the main game point). Last but not least, the games should also be fun and the teacher should not enforce those grammar items/ rules that are uncovered or that need more study time, the goal being to make students "comfortable and confident about speaking up and participating during the game" (for more information, see Monaco, available at https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-grammar-verb-tense-games/).

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In her online article, Monaco presents the following games that help students learning verb tenses while having fun: charades (useful especially in order to practice present continuous), "Storyboard Game" (for practicing English past tenses), "Communal Story" and "Mother May I?" (for practicing modal verbs).

In order to play charades, the teacher should prepare paper slips with activities that are well understood and easy to act out, using a vocabulary known by all students (for instance, "brushing teeth", "having a shower", "painting"). Then, the teacher asks one student to act out these activities and his/her colleagues try to guess what their colleague is doing, using (in their guesses) present continuous (for example, "You're brushing your teeth!", "She's having a shower!", "Mary is painting!").

The "Storyboard game" requires the teacher to prepare a logical (or even an illogical) story in advance, based on about ten pictures. The teacher jumbles the pictures and asks the students to arrange them in a chronological order. Moreover, the teacher asks the students to do it only by saying what happened "before" and "after." Thus, when arranging the pictures chronologically, students have to interconnect them (i.e., by talking about one picture in relation to the others). For instance, the teacher may display on the whiteboard the following pictures, in a random order (as already mentioned, the story should include about ten pictures but, for the sake of the example, we will present only four):

1. A businessman in his office, wearing a shirt, a tie and underwear.
2. The secretary tripping over and spilling coffee on the businessman's trousers.
3. A secretary preparing coffee.
4. The businessman (wearing a shirt, a tie and black trousers) entering his office.

One of the students may give the following answer: "The businessman is not wearing any trousers because his secretary tripped over and spilled coffee on his trousers." If necessary, the teacher asks the other students to correct the sentence for grammar and order (by asking them: "Is that correct?") and then go on to the next picture that continues the story.

"The Communal Story" is extremely useful in order to enforce modal verbs, such as *could, would and should*. According to Monaco, students are given an idea (such as a character or a plot point) and are then asked to come up with their own ideas, using modal verbs. For example, the teacher may ask his/her students to imagine a funny story about a mad scientist who wants to conquer the world. In this regard, students may say: "What would he do? Maybe he would try to invent a powerful laser weapon!"; "Could we make him old and ugly?"; "Should we include an assistant? Like a dumb baboon?." The teacher should also name a student to write on the whiteboard the brainstorming notes. Afterwards, the teacher asks his/her students to write down (individually) their own version of the story, including all the brainstormed details. Finally, the teacher asks the students to read their stories aloud and compare the different versions.

In her online article entitled "5 Quick and Fun Verb Games to Liven up Your ESL Classroom", available at <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-verb-tenses-games-for-the-classroom/>, Elena Chou states that the study of English verbs "is a process riddled with challenges for our students", which "requires creativity that may often take us beyond conventional classroom activities." When the teacher uses games to teach grammar, s/he mitigates the stress and pressure entailed by language learning and contributes to the creation of a friendly atmosphere, where the language becomes meaningful and useful. Other advantages of ESL/EFL games mentioned by the author include:

1. Provide a welcome break from the usual routine of language instruction.
2. Encourage students to interact and communicate in meaningful manners.
3. Model real-life context of language use.

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4. Create opportunities for lesson review in a pressure-free environment.
5. Make language come alive while helping students to sustain the effort of learning (Chou).

Furthermore, by integrating ESL verb games (which allow interaction, experimentation and live communication among students) into the ESF/EFL classroom, the teacher invites his/her students to personalize new English verbs by inserting them in meaningful contexts and creates learning opportunities that also allow them to understand the ways in which English verbs function in lifelike situations.

Chou presents in her article five verb games that can be used in ESL/EFL classes, i.e. "Hot Verb-Tato", "Pantomime Verbs", "Visual Verbs", "Verb Snip" and "Story Time."

"Hot Verb-Tato" is a variation of the game Hot Potato. Students are arranged in a circle and lively music is played in the background. The teacher asks the student holding the "potato" (represented by a ball, for instance) to say a verb before tossing the "potato" to another colleague. When the music stops, the student that holds the "potato" receives a punishment (for instance, s/he is asked to sing a song, to answer some questions in English or to use some verbs in meaningful sentences). The teacher can increase the game difficulty by asking his/her students to come up with verbs that denote actions from a certain field or that start with certain letters.

"Pantomime Verbs" help students expand their verb vocabulary and learn about rhyming in English. Before getting started, the teacher should explain the meaning of "rhyme" and practice it first with nouns and then with verbs. The teacher divides the class into two or three groups and says: "I'm thinking of a verb that rhymes with _____." When they have a possible answer, students raise their hands and ask: "Is it this?" (and say the verb); the first student who does this, wins a point for his/her group. The group that reaches the point goal wins the game.

"Visual Verbs" is designed to support ESF/EFL students practice various verb forms. In order to play this game, the teacher must prepare a list of verbs (appropriate to the students' language level) and divide the students into two groups. The teacher then writes the teams on the whiteboard (e.g. "team 1" and "team 2") and draws three columns under each team, which s/he labels in the following way: "base"," past" and "past participle." The students from each team are required to pick up a representative that goes to the front of the class. The teacher gives them (i.e. the representatives) a different verb and asks them to mine the respective verbs (speaking is forbidden). The other team members try to guess the verb that their representative mimes. The team member that guesses the verb is asked to go to the whiteboard and write the forms of the verb in the three columns. This game is played until one team guesses all the verbs from their list; afterwards, they "steal" verbs from their competitors, by trying to guess the verbs from their list. When the game ends, the teacher gives each team points for every verb form spelled correctly on the whiteboard. The winner is the team with the greatest number of points.

As an alternative to this game, adapted to more advanced language levels, would consist in the preparation of two verb lists, i.e. an easier and a harder one, and in the assignment of point values in accordance with the difficulty of these verbs (for instance, three points for easier verbs and six points for harder ones).

The activity entitled "Verb Snip" can be used for all ESL/EFL levels. Its main advantage is represented by the fact that it challenges learners "to think creatively and expand their verb inventory" (see Chou, available at

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https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-verb-tenses-games-for-the-classroom/). Moreover, it can be used as spelling practice. In order to play "Verb Snip", the teacher arranges his/her students in a circle and puts one of them in the center (this student is called "the pointer"). The pointer is asked to count to five, point at one of his/her colleagues and ask him/her to spell a word made of three letters (such as "cat, C-A-T"). Afterwards, the pointer counts to ten, choose a different colleague and say "Snip!." The student selected by the pointer has to enumerate three verbs that start with the letters of the previous three-letter word (in our case, for "cat, C-A-T", s/he might say "cut, arrive, turn"). Then, the pointer is asked to sit down and the person who answered him/her takes his/her place, chooses another three-letter word to be spelled and another student to spell it; then, the new pointer also chooses a student that has to say other three verbs that begin with the letters of this newly spelled word. As an alternative for more advanced students, the pointer may choose words made of four letters or even more. As a rule, the teacher should not allow students to repeat words; the teacher can also ban words that contain certain letters (such as "q", "x" and "y").

"Story Time" is a game that combines stories and memory; therefore, it is a challenge to the students' language skills and creativity. This game requires the teacher to prepare a basket with verb cards and to arrange the students into a circle. Then, the teacher picks a verb card from the basket and makes a sentence with it. The teacher passes the basket to the next student, who has to draw a card from the basket, repeat the previous sentence made by the teacher and also make a sentence with the verb from his/her card. The next student also draws a card, repeats the previous sentences and then makes his/her own sentence using the verb from his/her card, and so on. The goal of this game is to use the verbs from the cards and to make sentences that are connected to the other students' sentences, in order to form a story. As an alternative, the teacher can divide the class into more groups (each group receives a different basket with verb cards) and play this game in writing. When the game ends, the teams pick up a representative who goes to the front of the class and reads the story aloud. The most creative story (chosen by the entire class) wins the game.

Stephanie Long, in her online article "8 Fun Activities for Teaching Verbs", available at <https://www.reachtoteachrecruiting.com/blog/fun-activities-teaching-verbs>, presents eight interactive activities that make the EFL/ESL grammar class more interesting and fun (some of these activities/games have already been presented in this section), i.e. "Storytime" (creating a story using verbs in different tenses), "Charades" (acting out certain verbs), "Relay Race", "Mother May I?" (asking for the permission to do certain actions), "Twenty Questions Verb Edition", "Verbal Ball Toss" (students pass a ball around and describe their actions), "Tic Tac Toe" and "Mad Limbs."

For the "Relay Race", the teacher has to write a list of personal pronouns on the whiteboard. S/he divides the students into two teams and asks them to line up in front of the class. Then s/he gives the students a verb and asks them to write its conjugation on the blackboard (the first student in line writes the conjugation for the first pronoun, the second student writes it for the second pronoun and so on, until they finish the entire list). As an alternative, the teacher can switch tenses and forms (affirmative, interrogative and negative) in order to make the game more challenging. The team with the greatest number of correct verb forms wins the game.

In order to play "Twenty Questions Verb Edition", the teacher asks one student to come in front of the class and s/he gives him/her a verb. The other students are required to guess the respective verb by means of simple yes/no questions; such questions are: "Do you do it at school?" "Yes!" "Do you like to write?" "No." "Do you like to paint?" "Yes." As an

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alternative, the questions can be formulated in the past tense ("Did you do it at school yesterday?"), past continuous ("Were you doing it at home on this time yesterday?"), present perfect ("Have you ever done this at school?"), or future ("Will you do it at home tomorrow?)." Moreover, the teacher can limit the number of questions (for instance, no more than ten questions) or can allow the students to ask questions until they guess the verb.

"Tic Tac Toe", which is a classic game, is played in teams. The teacher draws a tic tac toe on the whiteboard and writes a pronoun in every square. The first team sends a representative to the blackboard who receives a verb and is asked to conjugate it (in different tenses) "using the pronoun in the square they want to mark" (see Long, "8 Fun Activities for Teaching Verbs"). When the student answers incorrectly, the representative of the second team has to answer.

It is noteworthy that these funny games can be adapted to different ESL/EFL situations. Moreover, they develop not only the students' grammar skills, but also their attention, communication skills and team spirit.

Elena Shvidko, in her online article "Four Games for Practicing Verb Tenses", available at <http://blog.tesol.org/four-games-for-practicing-verb-tenses/,>, shares four games that the teacher can use in his/her ESL/EFL grammar class and make it more entertaining: "Grid on the Board", "Swap Chairs", "Truth or Lie" and "Tarot Cards."

The first game that Shvidko presents is called "Grid on the Board", which requires the preparation of two sets of sentences (of different colors), which contain different verb tenses. The teacher puts the sets on his/her desk and draws a table on the whiteboard, with four columns (i.e. form/tense, present, past, future) and three rows (i.e. simple, progressive and perfect). Then, the teacher divides the students into two teams. Each team chooses a representative that goes to the desk and picks a sentence. The team members read the sentence and are asked to write it in the table. If all the sentences are placed in the table correctly, the team wins.

The game entitled "Swap Chairs" helps students practice either one tense or all of them. The teacher arranges his/her students in a circle (they sit on chairs). The teacher chooses one student, called the Speaker, and asks him/her to stand in the middle. The Speaker then tells his/her colleagues: "Swap chairs if you have ever climbed a mountain" or "Swap chairs if you will climb a mountain this summer" (sentences can be made using a certain verb tense imposed by the teacher). The students who have climbed a mountain are required to get up and switch chairs. If no student gets up, the Speaker has to make another sentence. If only one student gets up, the respective student switches places with the Speaker.

As far as "Truth or Lie" is concerned, it helps students practice grammar and also learn interesting facts about their colleagues. For this game, the teacher needs dice (one for each team) and a list of questions in the present perfect (for instance, "Have you ever ridden a donkey?"; "Have you ever eaten seafood?"). The teacher writes a question on a separate piece of paper. Then, s/he gives a set of papers with questions to each team. As an alternative, the teacher can ask his/her students at the beginning of the activity to formulate a few questions for their colleagues. The class is divided into relatively small teams (i.e. 3-5 students). The teacher chooses one student in a team (called the Answerer) and another team member who has to choose a question and read it. The Answerer secretly rolls the die (the other team members should not see it); if the number is odd, the Answerer should give a true answer; if the number is even, the answer has to be false (a lie). Then each team member has to ask other questions (at least one question per person) in order to figure out if the answer given by their colleague is true or false.

For "Tarot Cards", the teacher has to prepare some simple tarot cards with pictures (or symbols) that represent different things such as happiness, family, power, travel, education,

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etc. The teacher organizes the students in pairs and the number of the tarot card sets has to correspond with the number of pairs, because each pair receives a set of cards. The teacher asks students to draw cards and make sentences in the future, in order to tell each other's fortune (for instance, "You will travel to London").

A very entertaining game that we propose is called "The Gossip." The teacher divides the class into teams of four students. In every team, two students receive headphones (students no. 3 and no. 4) and are asked to listen to music (so that they would not hear what the others are talking about). The other two students (student no. 1 and no. 2) receive a story, with at least five underlined key words. Student no. 1 reads aloud the story to student no. 2 (who is not allowed to see the text). Afterwards, the latter asks student no. 3 (who is listening to music) to remove his/her headphones and tells him/her the story (or what s/he remembers from it). Then, student no. 3 tells the story to student no. 4. In the end, student no. 4 tells the story to student no. 1. The aim of this game is to retell the story as accurately as possible (students compare the first and the last version of the story) and to guess as many key words from the story as possible. This game trains the students' memory, their attention to details and their ability to use tenses correctly. Moreover, they will have a lot of fun, especially if the teacher uses intricate stories, with funny details. It also draws the students' attention to the extent to which a story can be changed from one version to another, depending on the recipient's interests and personality. To make things even more difficult, the teacher can introduce new idioms in the story, in order to establish if "students are able to either activate or to predict [their] figurative meaning" (Istratie-Macarov, Leonte 224).

Most specialists profess the idea that we should teach our children to participate actively in the contemporary democratic society and that this should represent a vital important goal of the education system. Furthermore, nowadays, the educational environment is focused on accountability, and teachers are often reluctant to "waste time" on fun activities and games, especially since they have to cover an extensive curriculum. However, we should keep in mind the fact that these entertaining activities help students practice skills such as spelling, reading, counting, and active listening; moreover, they also develop other important general skills such as problem solving, risk taking, choice making, self-control, assertion, active participation, cooperation.

4. Conclusion

Learning a foreign language implies developing several skills in the target language, which sometimes can be a challenge for students, especially when they are exposed to real life situations of communication, and especially when it comes to grammar teaching and learning. Therefore, entertaining techniques (such as games) can be a useful and efficient tool that motivates students and makes them feel comfortable in the ESL/ EFL classroom. They can interact and discuss their different views, have fun and learn at the same time.

The first section of this paper had a theoretical nature and tackled several perspectives and challenges triggered by teaching grammar, a subject heavily discussed by language teaching specialists. Grammar provides the foundation for a set of language skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing. Having in view that a good knowledge of grammar helps learners to develop their language skills, the second section was focused on the practical aspects of EFL/ESL grammar teaching, as it dealt with the presentation of activity samples of teaching verb tenses through games.

Teachers should keep in mind that entertaining activities, such as games, help students practice a wide variety of language skills (i.e. spelling, reading, counting, active listening); moreover, they develop other important general skills such as problem solving, risk taking, choice making, self-control, assertion, active participation, cooperation. Entertaining

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grammar teaching techniques and strategies are, therefore, evidence-based and give teachers the tools they need to be highly effective instructors. This approach increases teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved classroom climate, and also helps students acquire academic, social and emotional skills.

Modern and entertaining teaching techniques and strategies should become part of what teachers do throughout the day as they conduct their regular lessons and activities, not only when teaching English grammar. Additionally, students should feel the benefits of these approaches constantly, not just during an isolated part of their day or week. In this way, they realize that the skills they are developing apply to all aspects of their learning and their lives - inside and outside their ESL/ EFL classroom. Furthermore, by integrating these teaching practices into everything they do, teachers change their classroom climate.

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