

Enhancing learning and social adeptness through games in the EFL classroom

EFL クラス内でのゲームを通じた学習と社交能力の強化

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Abstract: As the landscape of current language education around the world trends toward experiential and collaborative learning, the practice of student interaction through games continues to sustain a degree of scrutiny and criticism. Some conservative academics, particularly in higher-education institutions, continue to assert that games in the classroom are immature, deficient in applicable learning, and show a lack of teacher objective and expertise. Rather than focusing on inadequacies of games, this paper illuminates the relevance of interactive, fun activities that enhance language acquisition and social adeptness. It highlights the applications that games have on multiple intelligences and variant learning styles while refining skills and recapitulating learning. Furthermore, it emphasizes how responsible implementation of games can be an indispensable medium for developing a vibrant classroom community that enhances social skills and motivation while at the same time reducing student anxiety and increasing participation. Additionally, criteria are offered to prevent a class from becoming a theater of trivial entertainment through inappropriate use of games. Conversely, it demonstrates how games can transform a classroom into both a training field for the advancement of skills and an arena in which those competencies are utilized.

KeyWords: games, interactive activities, learning styles, developing community, reducing anxiety, game criteria

要旨

世界中の現在の語学教育の特性が体験学習や協調学習重視の傾向にある中、ゲームを通じた生徒の交流活動は何らかの詮索や批判を被り続けている。保守的な、特に高等教育機関の学者達は教室内でのゲームは幼稚で実用的学習として不十分であり、講師の目的や知見の欠如を表すと主張し続けている。この論文はゲームの欠点に重点を置くのではなく、語学習得と社交力を強化するインタラクティブで楽しい活動の妥当性を解明するものである。スキルを精錬し反復学習をしながら、多重知性と異なる学習法におけるゲームの応用性を説明する。さらに責任をもって実施されたゲームが生徒の不安の軽減、活動参加の増加、と同時に社交力とモチベーションを強化する活気のある教室内コミュニティを創り出すために欠かせない手段となりえる事を強調する。

加えて、ゲームの不適切な使用によりクラスがつまらない娯楽の場になる事を防ぐ為の基準を提供する。反対にゲームがどれ程スキル上達の為の訓練場、そして能力を発揮する場としてクラスを変える事が出来るのかを証明する。

キーワード：ゲーム、インタラクティブな活動、ゲームの基準、コミュニティ開発、不安の削減、学ブスタイル

Overview: A new era of learning

In the 21st century, a growing number of studies focusing on a new culture of learning is emerging. Teachers face a new breed of students of all ages, engaged in gaming, multitasking, and social networking (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotoma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006). Sanchez asserts in his paper, *Key Criteria for Game Design*, that both digitally and socially, Game-based Learning is now considered an alternative pedagogy adapted to new learners, and a strategy for embracing changes in learning (Shaffer, Squire, Halverson, and Gee, 2005 ; Thomas & Brown, 2011 ; Williamson, 2008). Within the context of this paper, games and Game-based Learning is simply defined as practical, interactive experiences that actively engage students in their learning process. It shows how games can be properly employed in this era as a valid platform in which to build language skills as well as real social skills that are enhanced through active participation.

The words “game” and “play” are often spoken as if they are a liability and should be used carefully in educational circles. When people hear, “Let’s play a game,” some associate it with time-wasting and nonsense (Jones, 1988). This causes them to be labeled as unproductive or unprofessional. In the context of this paper, however, games are broadly defined as activities that include fun ways of promoting student interaction, logical thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, and the use of specific language. They include role-plays, memory recall exercises and competition between both individuals and teams. Such activities require students to engage in either hands-on exercises or to complete mental challenges in which all learners participate. Games teach students to role-play, consider alternatives, strategize, and to think flexibly in various situations and simulations. They are an effective means for learning because they offer students a hypothetical environment in which they have multiple chances to put their acquired language to use with their counterparts. Games are intended to be a framework that have explicit and carefully thought-out educational purposes and are not intended to be played primarily for amusement (Abt, 1970).

The first section of this paper addresses the relevance of games to various learning styles in English as a foreign language. It introduces Howard Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences and connects it to how games can be applied to providing a constructivist environment that is community-oriented and inclusive to various levels of linguistic competency. It views the act of language learning as a collective activity in which students build their knowledge through the assistance and scaffolding of peers and teachers. It also argues that, along with constructing knowledge, games build student confidence and identity as competent language users (Luk & Lin, 2007). This section concludes by highlighting four generally accepted academic uses for games: (1) the applications of variant learning styles; (2) the practice and refinery of acquired language and communication skills; (3) the practicality of summation and review; (4) the generation of increased motivation.

The second section begins from the hypothesis that games are constructive to developing a vibrant classroom community. Three additional academic uses of games are presented by showing games as (1) mechanisms to develop an encompassing community in an acquired language; (2) tools to enhance individual and collective growth; (3) a means to reduce apprehension and anxiety in learning. Through bolstering classroom interaction, the author supports the position that games encourage a cooperative spirit within the class. There are numerous

opportunities for students to participate, ultimately helping to equip them with real, tangible, and applicable skills for communication.

The paper concludes with criteria for the use of games, followed with illustrations and descriptions of recommended activities. It contends that games should be tools for fortifying and putting content into practice rather than ending up as unproductive and ineffective entertainment. Learning through games, conducted with conducive guidelines, is a treasure trove to the process of learning as they support language acquisition through repetition and meaningful exchange.

I. Applications to Various Learning Styles

Although people have variant learning styles, educators continue to employ a myriad of standardized tests to gauge achievement and capacities. In general, students are measured against the same standards and evaluated according to a relatively narrow spectrum of skills. Those with good scores but poor communication abilities are often able to receive acknowledgment and rewards over those with lower scores but higher communication capabilities. If proficiency could be measured in a more qualitative and open-minded method, education could become more inclusive and open to multiple styles of pedagogy as well. However, the reality is that education is still geared towards getting students with various kinds of intelligence past the same standardized benchmarks. For this reason, some educators assume that the use of games holds no relevance in helping students pass their tests. It is argued in this paper, however, that Game-based Learning does have the power to improve test scores and enhance communication skills. It address the educational value that games have through their applications to various learning styles, refining acquired language skills, review and summation, and the connections that games offer between concepts and principles.

Current Educational Situation

As we begin to examine the relevance of interactive games to contemporary learning, it is helpful to outline the current educational situation in Japanese universities. The prevailing system assumes that students can learn the same materials in the same manner and that universal, uniform tests suffice to measure student learning. The system heavily leans toward linguistic modes of teaching with a strong emphasis on translation, memorization, grammar, and rote learning (Igami, 2006; Kikuchi, 2009, Hisamura 2012). One of the shortcomings of this system is that students spend much of their academic lives cramming for tests rather than learning purposeful interaction and communication skills. As cited in O'Donnell (2008), though the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEXT) since the 1990's has continually mandated reform in order to enhance communicative competence (Koike & Tanaka, 1995; Monbusho 1999; Tanabe 2003), educational goals remain to be mainly focused on preparing students for college and company entrance examinations. For the sake of such testing, the Grammar Translation System (GTS), which uses grammar and translation as the central teaching approach for language learning, continues to be rooted in Japan as a mainstream methodology with little variation across the

Japanese educational landscape (Jimbo, Hisamura, & Yoffe, 2009).

As data shows, in both society and communication aptitude assessment, merely cramming for entrance exams has yielded minimal success in oral communication competence and communicative skills. According to the Test of English for International Communication (TOIEC) (2013), ranks Japan 40th out of 48. The EF English Proficiency Index (2014) ranks Japan as 26th out of 63 countries and states that only 20% of English teachers in schools teach oral communication skills in English. The iBT TOEFL (2014) results for the non-native English-speaking world reveals that Japan continues to remain at the very bottom for speaking abilities. As recently as 2012, Japan shared the last place for the total iBT TOEFL scores with Tajikistan at 70 points, and the score remained unchanged in 2014 with Japan ranking only above Afghanistan with 69 points (Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT Tests, January 2014 –December 2014 Test Data). The evidence reveals that when information is acquired mostly through transition models, it is not always well integrated with prior knowledge (Richardson, 1997). The arduous tasks of memorizing vocabulary, grasping grammar and translating, shuts many students out from the learning process through boredom or the lack of real understanding. Some do succeed, but evidence shows that many, if not most, fall short.

A gap in the educational system is that students are not acquiring enough concrete communicative skills. According to Hato (2013), this is in part accounted for by the lack of opportunities for classroom interaction where students can obtain the right kinds of input and output (p.44). This could be improved, however, if a broader spectrum of learning were to be presented in a variety of ways, i.e. supplementary games that offer a contrasting set of assumptions that are educationally productive. Through creative interplay, teachers can construct an interactive stage for learning that embraces the rise of constructivism and student-centered learning.

Multiple Intelligences

When considering a wider range of learning styles and how they apply to games, psychologist and neuroscientist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is useful. Gardner's theory shows that learners need teaching styles with relevant social interaction, compelling hands-on opportunities, well conducted visual-spatial content, and chances for self-direction (Gardner, 1983). Although there are many mediums in which to make use of various intellects, interactive activities comfortably fit into how different people learn. Eight of Gardner's multiple intelligences are summed up in the table below.

Summary of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983; Kornhaber, Fierros, & Veneema, 2004; Carla Lane, 2005; Wax, 2013)

Linguistic: These types of learners can use words effectively. They have developed auditory skills and often think in words. Such people enjoy reading, playing word games, making up poetry or stories. They are taught by being encouraged to verbalize words that they see, or to read various printed matter. Apparatuses of teaching include computers, games, interactive media, books, recording devices, and lecture.

Logical-Mathematical: Some students have an ability to develop equations and proofs, make calculations,

and solve abstract problems. They think conceptually and can see and explore abstract patterns and relationships. They like to solve puzzles and ask ambitious questions. They can learn through logic games, investigations, and mysteries. It is best that they learn and form concepts before they can deal with details. (See Appendix A.)

Spatial: Some people think and learn within physical space, such as navigators and architects. They enjoy jigsaw puzzles, reading maps, and drawing. They learn through physical imagery such as graphics, charts, photos, video, multimedia, drawings, and texts with pictures/charts/graphs.

Musical: These kinds of learners are switched on to rhythm and sound. They love music but are also keen to other sounds as well. They often study better with music in the background. They can be taught through the use of song lyrics, singing, or speaking rhythmically. Teaching materials include music, dance, audio equipment, recording, performance, and musical instruments.

Naturalists: Such people have the capacity to identify and distinguish types of plants, animals, and weather formations found in the natural world. Such learners can categorize new and unfamiliar organisms. Teaching tools can include nature walks, camps, texts and activities that relate to nature.

Bodily-Kinesthetic: Learners have the ability to use his or her body to create products or solve problems with a keen sense of body awareness. They like movement, doing hands-on exercises and touching things. They express themselves well through body language and are taught through physical activities such as constructing items, acting, dancing, role-playing and communicative games. Tools for instruction include various types of crafts, equipment, and real objects that can be held or touched. (See Appendixes B and C.)

Interpersonal: These students have the gift of understanding and interacting with others. They learn through various forms of interaction, work well with their counterparts, make friends easily, and often have empathy for others. They can learn well through group activities, seminars, and diversified dialogues. Mechanisms for learning are team problem-solving activities, role-plays and simulation dialogues, acting, making videos, computer conferencing and exchanging written communication. (See Appendix B.)

Intrapersonal: More introverted people are apt to recognize and understand their moods, desires, motivations, and intentions. They have their personal goals and tend to shy away from others. These types of learners are in touch with their inner feelings; they have intuition and motivation, and in many cases, strong wills and opinions. They also learn well through independent study and contemplation. The best materials for them are usually books, journals, diaries and other creative materials in which they can work independently.

In summary, the design and delivery of effective teaching should be based on various learning methods that stimulate as many senses as possible because it reaches a broad range of learners. Games are an ideal means to initiate and fortify learning in all of Gardner's multiple intelligences, and Gardner himself lists games as a legitimate learning tool. He believes that since individuals collect and process information in various ways, it is essential that learners are presented with numerous ways of engaging with both old and new content. Although games are not the only means of doing so, they can incorporate logic, reasoning, kinesthetic, intercommunication, visual sensory, and spatial associations. Moreover, games stimulate interaction as students interpret and solidify learned material through critical thinking, retention, and recall. The process transforms language learning from

detached test cramming into a living, active, verbal and kinetic communication. Games breathe life into dormant, comatose language and frees it from the confines of mere text and head knowledge. They provide situations in which practical language is used, which in turn boosts communicative competency.

Variant styles of learning, if accommodated, can result in improved attitudes toward learning and increase productivity, academic achievement, and creativity. Students use various styles when learning but tend to prefer a limited number of instructional methods. Moreover, evidence indicates that students can learn better, smarter, faster, and retain more information when the material is presented in their best learning style/multiple intelligences (Canfield, 1992). Additionally, (as cited in Watanpokakul, 2011) more research indicates that learners retain their learning longer if more active forms of teaching and learning are implemented (Bean, 1996; Sutherland & Bonwell, 1996; Fink, 2003). Almost seventy percent of students learn best actively and visually (McLester, 2005), making games relevant as a vital tool to reach those with variant learning styles.

Refining Acquired Language and Communication Skills

Rubin (1987) says that learning is a means by which “information is obtained, stored, retrieved, and used” (p. 29). The process of *obtaining* and *storing* information is found in almost any learning environment, but *retrieval* and *use* are lacking in many. Therefore, games are a means to provide valuable follow-up to what students acquire through instruction. Teachers and texts provide initial acquisition of new language, but understanding needs to be recycled and extended through various associations and through expanded networks of meanings and uses. For many learners, it is the only opportunity for them to verbalize and put into practice the things they have learned. For others, it is a chance, though interacting with others, to comprehend language and concepts that they did not fully grasp on their own. They are given some enjoyable ways to meet the same words and phrases from their lessons, embedded in different contexts and types of activities. Indeed, many games enable some learners to engage with the language without giving any thought to correct forms and grammar. For others, it is an opportunity to repeat and reinforce the forms that they learned. Furthermore, more responsibility for learning and practicing is given to all students because they understand that they must be alert and engaged to participate and interact.

Linking action to information is paramount as players are immersed in trying out new behaviors in an array of situations. That is why some games, such as role-plays and competitions, can take acquired information and then present it to participants in blended, realistic game situations. Making use of fictional situations in the classroom can translate into actual practice in real situations outside the classroom. When teachers present the meaning of words, phrases, and grammar, the content becomes students’ passive knowledge. Adding various life-like situations to the lesson, however, activates learned concepts through practice. Such endeavors can create a bridge from passive learning to active learning.

Conversely, another aspect of developing language, which is often overlooked, is the concept of fantasy. A game can act as a metaphor where players project their normal behaviors from real life into an imaginary situation (El-Shamy, 2001). Language skills are enhanced when students recognize that they are infusing their feelings and behavior into an interactive exchange. Games, although imagined, can trigger emotions and elevate involvement

and participation. Furthermore, being able to stir emotion through a new language is a breakthrough for learners because it instills a deeper sense of meaningful communication. As they begin to express emotions and feelings in their acquired language, unlocking a whole new door to real and practical exchange.

Language is further refined through channels for students to practice what they have learned through exercising independent thinking. Rather than merely selecting correct answers to teacher and text made questions, games can help students obtain additional fluency, creativity, and higher order rational thinking. (See Appendix B.) Since there are abundant ways to solve problems, there is more room for personal expression and imagination. For example, most dialogues include open-ended questions. Likewise, certain games offer opportunities for students to role-play, complete sentences, decipher mysteries, finish stories and dialogues, or answer questions on a board game. Through each activity, the students are actively processing and digesting new material as well as recalling unused vocabulary and phrases with their counterparts. The objective of learning a language is to speak proficiently in various situations, and students should be provided with ample opportunities for guided and independent practice (Talak-Kiryk, 2010). Well-designed games provide students such opportunities through active participation that consequently refines their skills.

Post Teaching - Review and Summation

Some educators regard games as “activities filling in odd moments when the teacher and his/her class have nothing better to do” (Lee, 1995). There are admittedly times when teachers do want to fill up the last five minutes of class with an activity or use a short game as kind of an intermission to relieve fatigue and stress. If games are part of the mainstream of a lesson, however, students should be provided with activities that are at the heart of learning both generally and specific to the lesson. Creative teachers can connect games to the content of the lesson and, therefore, increase exposure to the language. There needs to be as much meaningful repetition as possible to ingrain learning into long-term memory.

One of the least productive ways to acquire a language is to learn without adequate recycling and review. A great shortcoming in language training is that students are often introduced to new words, phrases, or skills once or twice and then shuffled on to the next subject or unit without sufficient application and recapitulation. When used properly, however, the implementation of games can be one of the most effective methods to reinforce recollection. According to Schmitt (2000), “Research suggests that if learners see or use a word in a way different from the way they first met it, then better learning is achieved” (p. 116), and games provide opportunities to do so. They help learners increase their exposure to vocabulary and provide them with meaningful engagement in the language. Similarly, research shows that individuals need to repeat new words and phrases from five to sixteen times to remember and ingrain them (Nation, 1990). In the process of recycling vocabulary, games can provide students with intensive and meaningful ways to practice language (Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby, 2005). In congruence to Gardner’s multiple intelligences, learners benefit from a myriad of games aimed at increasing exposure to the language by putting them in to various contexts. Reinforcing vocabulary and skills with enjoyable tasks for review is a proven method to improve learning because students have to sustain the effort to learn through

repetition.

One study conducted by Sadeghi and Sharifi, (2013), reveals that students who use role plays and games in their classes perform significantly better than other groups who receive different types of treatment. Their research reflects the findings of others who conclude that student interaction, if related to retaining learned material, links new words to prior knowledge which in return influences levels of comprehension. (e.g., Alber & Foil, 2003; Berne & Blachowicz, 2008; Charlton, Williams & McLaughlin, 2005). In brief, games create an atmosphere that improves acquisition, heightened levels of processing, and retention.

In this study, Sadeghi and Sharifi sought to determine the vocabulary gain of beginner EFL learners from four post-teaching exercises: role plays, games, speaking, and story writing. There were 116 students, aged 16-32, who were divided into eight treatment and two control groups. Both pre-tests and post-tests were administered using the Cambridge Key English Test (KET) as well as four units of a course book. The research used statistical tests, Analysis of Variants (ANOVA) and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), to determine what activities yielded the most effective results over a semester of 16 sessions. The results revealed that the most significant gains were achieved in the role-playing simulations, followed by various game-based activities. They concluded that exposure to language through fun activities resulted better in learning over the other methods. Both role-playing and games surfaced as the most effective means through which vocabulary was acquired. While speaking and writing tasks are still valuable post-teaching means to learning vocabulary, they proved to be less effective than role plays and games. The research also states that the group that received games as treatments tended to retain the previously learned vocabulary better than the rest of the groups (Sadeghi & Sharifi, 2013).

The study above is just one example out of many that highlight the success that games have in vocabulary retention among both adult and younger learners. In fact, researcher, Robert Marzano (2010), explains that he has been involved in 60 studies regarding the effects of games on student accomplishment and that “on average, using academic games in the classroom is associated with a 20 percentile point gain in student achievement” (p. 71). Such results show that games can be a proven and central part of instructional planning. To achieve the highest results for recall and retention through games, however, all studies indicate that it is essential that games are well constructed to be relevant to target language. It is additionally imperative that instructors bear responsibility for choosing suitable activities and ensuring that all learners are involved in the learning process.

Generating increased motivation

One of the most significant variables of a successful class is the amount of motivation and interest generated among the students. Since the late 1960's, writers and researchers have continued to support the claim that the overall atmosphere of the language-learning environment improves when games are used (e.g.: Boocock & Schild, 1968, Bredeieier & Greenblat, 1981, Tuan, 2012). The studies consistently show that games drive motivation as they are part of a pedagogy that is inclusive, entertaining, and challenging. Furthermore, the dynamism of the class atmosphere can increase through employing meaningful and useful language in real contexts. With raised interest comes increased competition and cooperation among students as they become

absorbed in competitive tasks. Moreover, they tend to put more effort to games than in many other learning methods (Avedon & Brian, 1971) as participants of multiple intelligences and levels are all included through the varied kinds of communication in which they engage.

For some educators, there is a feeling of uneasiness that the competitive nature of games creates an antagonistic environment. However, competition is a part of everyday life: aspirants compete for jobs; companies battle to win customers; lovers clash for companionship; teams contend for prizes in sports, and siblings vie for the last piece of cake. Society is riddled with competition such as rankings, exam scores and seemingly endless benchmarks for achievement, all of which sets people up for successes and failures. Competition differs in the classroom, however, because it is conducted in a more relaxed, hypothetical environment. Students can create spontaneous interaction with the class content, improving comprehension and participation while thinking on their feet. As their answers are validated, their anxiety lessens and their confidence grows.

Studies show that both cooperation and competitiveness have a positive effect on motivation because they both foster bonding and communal sentiments within a class (Julkunen, 2001; De Grove, 2012). Moreover, competition has the benefit of instilling a sense of comradeship in the classroom, and weaker students gain peace from the support of their peers and teammates. Group unity, goals, and interests are shown to play a positive role in motivating as students are integrated to rally for a reward, recognition, or a sense of achievement. Integrated students are active participants and have more persistence in learning a second language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1988; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). It's the camaraderie, competition, and the entertainment that keep game players coming back for more (Talak-Kiryk, 2010).

Class participation tends to be high for games due in part to the fact that the preceding lessons have already equipped students to deal with problems presented. Additionally, the class becomes increasingly student-centered, spurring more active involvement. Once the students' attention is captured, they can be motivated to take part and exercise the language that they have acquired. Moreover, they can transform a mundane class into a challenging, stimulating and enjoyable endeavor in which participation tends to be at a maximum. If anyone prefers not to take part, however, he or she should never be forced to do so. Much learning can still result from quietly observing what others say and do.

Regardless of having enjoyment or not, the ultimate goal is for students to learn. In fact, having an entertaining, pleasurable class does not necessarily motivate students to learn. On the contrary, students with the desire to learn embrace games more enthusiastically if they are relevantly associated with the language matter being studied. When a connection between learned content and activities is made, students find meaning in what they do. With purpose comes fulfillment, and with fulfillment comes more motivation to participate and learn. Likewise, pointless activities that have nothing to do with course content can demotivate and reverse student ambition. Therefore, higher levels of motivation can be achieved when games are directly linked to the content of the class. Meaningless tasks can be both unproductive and a waste of valuable learning time. Teachers need to consider which games to use when to use them, how to link them to the syllabus, textbook or program, and how different games will benefit students in different ways (Mubaslat, 2012). They must also help students understand

the relevance of content that they might not find inherently interesting to engage the class and heighten motivation to learn a new language.

II. Games as an Apparatus for Developing a Vibrant Community

Not all students are as socially capable as others, but games are a valuable apparatus for helping develop social adeptness and acceptance. Social skills and adeptness in the context of this paper, however, are not regarded merely as attitudes or conduct. Instead, they are elements of behavior that help students to adapt to, and practice language in, as many interactive contexts as possible. Consequently, a spirit of peer acceptance sets the stage for a cooperative, active community to flourish. In turn, these skills spill into the world outside the classroom where such skills are applied in real-life situations. This section underscores the case that games help create a vibrant community through (1) developing an inclusive community; (2) enhancing individual and collective growth and; (3) reducing apprehension and anxiety.

Developing Communal Inclusivity in an Acquired Language

Language-learning games provide a good channel for instructors to promote an inclusive learning community. For any class, the community should go beyond traditional definitions to be inclusive, self-reliant, tolerant, respectful of others, and have a responsibility to each other for learning. Activities provide a way to practice and enhance such traits as all participants are encouraged and expected to interact with each other. Students quickly recognize that games are an effective means of communication as they re-engage with the language in which they have been taught. Through this process, students can boost their knowledge and ingrain concepts deeper into their minds by learning from each other. Student teaching enables student teachers to improve their comprehension of the subject through clarifying, simplifying, and generating examples (Nutt, 2014). Quality instructors and books are of utmost importance to teach and lead, but the acts of student-to-student learning/teaching help establish stronger links in the classroom community.

The community is further developed as games require tasks to do, questions to solve, vocabulary to remember, and ideas to exchange. As each person has numerous chances to participate, the community becomes increasingly inclusive and student-centered. Moreover, even the most hesitant participants have something to do or contribute, building community through high involvement. Through this process, students do much more than merely play games. They also contribute conspicuous things such as their unique personalities, experiences, background, ambitions, and abilities. They carry their previous knowledge into each activity as they encounter varied challenges from an array of angles. The more diverse their characters and knowledge, the more their counterparts benefit as distinctive voices of their community are heard. People learn to interact with those whom they might not normally associate. Consequently, people unconsciously learn to be inclusive contributors to the learning process in a congenial spirit.

When instructors make the transformation from being transmitters of information to facilitators of activities, classes tend to become more independent of teachers and texts. Students are therefore enabled to manage some of

their learning as they interact on various levels. If groups are separately on task, the instructor is freed to address weaknesses in individuals and groups. If the whole class is playing a game collectively, students are volunteering answers rather than the instructor doling out questions to an unresponsive class. Additionally, the facilitator can clearly see which students need more assistance or what skills are not performed adequately. The teacher is accessible to address questions and make rounds to various groups while students continue to engage each other in their assigned activities. The result is high student participation as the students become more independent and ultimately increase their speaking time.

Enhancing Individual and Collective Growth

A large part of developing community is through encouraging student collaboration that in turn creates a more student-centered class. Collective activities can increase student performance, boost motivation, add variety, raise interest levels, and enable teachers to alter instruction to target students' needs, interests, and aptitudes (Slavin, 1995; Julkunen, 2001; De Grove, 2012; Sadeghi & Sharif, 2013). Cooperation in games enables students to value varied gifts and abilities and recognize the contributions from students who might not typically be noticed in academic settings. Rather than the brightest students doing most of the contributing, people with various abilities can be included and recognized. Unlikely consorts can work together to achieve a common goal. For example, consider a tall athlete, who is not particularly scholastically adept, excitedly assists his team through using his physical speed to amass word cards. Imagine an autistic student with severe communication inhibitions bringing his group to victory in a spelling bee through using his photographic memory, or the most non-communicative member of the class breaking an encrypted message in a game that leads her team to find a hidden prize. These three examples illustrate how a varied pool of strengths can enable anyone to be a contributing member of a group. Certain skills and abilities are exposed that would be unlikely to surface in other activities such as lectures, group presentations or projects.

Student to student interaction is essential to language development, and games provide various ways for every member of a class to conjugate. Peer exchange helps the learner to become more involved and socially adept. The social aspect of learning entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person (Little, 1995). Learners must, therefore, develop and practice the ability to interact, engage, and derive benefit from a classroom that is not entirely dictated by the instructor. To do otherwise can stifle their independent, critical thinking. Through interactivities, students collaborate to share what they learn both linguistically and rationally, joining student independence with interdependence. Furthermore, they use their thought processes to apply what they learn from texts and instruction to communicate in real-life situations. Consequently, they all share in the learning process. If one person is uninvolved, it affects the entire group. Conversely, if all participants contribute, the classroom becomes a brighter place with greater participation.

Another social benefit from the use of games is that students have a degree of accountability to each other for learning. Higher engagement can be achieved because a body of peers, more often than not, will instill better incentive to participate than one teacher alone. Both individual and collective growth occurs for those who are

willing to take on specific tasks and challenges to exercise or increase their knowledge. Through socially interactive games, the learner's desire to give and contribute can rise to new levels. Such collaboration transforms into heightened vigor for contributing to the class, facilitating learning, reinforcing language, and developing social adeptness.

Reducing apprehension and anxiety

An awareness of community increases student motivation, and, therefore, reduces extreme anxiety (Tryofymenko, 2000). Through effective use of games, apprehension among less proficient students can be lessened through interacting and learning through relevant rhetorical and communicative tasks. Enjoyment and Challenge reduce the fear that is a big inhibitor of learning. Games also can lower tension, thus making the acquisition of input more likely (Richard-Amato, 1988). Additionally, (as cited in Spalkova, 2007) the easy, relaxed atmosphere created by the use of games, students remember things faster and better (Wierus & Wierus, 1994). Fun activities are highly motivating and able to give reluctant students more opportunities to express their opinions and feelings because they worry less about mistakes and more about communicating efficiently.

As a sense of ease develops among peers, interaction rises as uneasiness among weaker learners declines. At the same time, stronger students are less likely to dominate dialogue, as their counterparts become active participants in the class. Instead, they can exercise leadership in assisting those who might have trouble keeping up with the pace of the class. When learners have the opportunity to help and be helped by their fellow students, they gain feelings of satisfaction and status which themselves become powerful sources of reward and motivation (Stevick, 1998). Moreover, a spirit of cooperation is fostered, making the learning experience more relaxed and meaningful for learners with anxiety (Carlson, 2015). As a result, the various levels of language competency among the students are blended into one working organism that carries less fear than one working alone.

Many learners absorb language very well but experience trouble with giving output. Although they could be fairly knowledgeable in vocabulary and grammar, they often enter a class without any voice. They are hesitant to communicate in a new language, particularly when the focal point of the lesson is communication (Tomita & Spada, 2013). They nervously hope that the instructor will not call upon them lest they are unable to respond properly or volunteer a wrong answer. Games, however, can stimulate interactivity where students can contribute without feeling the pressures of evaluation and scrutiny. They provide a relaxed environment that can take some of the edges off of failure. With games, a variety of interpretations can be acceptable, and wrong answers merely serve as a means of teaching and reinforcement rather than inadequacy. Players can learn from their mistakes; they can safely trial and error again without penalties. The safety and structure provided by the rules and boundaries of the imaginary world of a game are conducive to testing out new knowledge. It explores different ideas, identifying weaknesses and practicing new behaviors. Within the context of a game, players are more open to trying out new ideas and behaviors. "It's just a game. Try it!" (El-Shammy). As a result of increased participation through games, reluctant students can find a voice and to release some of the expression that is confined inside them.

In summary, when a comfortable environment for learning is established, interdependence develops among

students. The repercussions of this are not only social. Through games in action, learners are also compelled to take more responsibility for their learning. This gives rise to their individual meaning and self-worth that in turn reduces anxiety and fear. Additionally, students engage and collaborate as members of a social network of learners where learning takes place authentically instead of through a worksheet or conventional lesson plan (Harris, 2009). The ultimate consequence is that students are encouraged to invest more effort into an inclusive learning process. Furthermore, games reassure, vitalize, entertain, teach, and promote fluency. If not for any of these reasons, they should be used simply because they help students see the beauty in a foreign language and that it is not something to fear but embrace. This reduces anxiety that in turn increases participation and output.

III. Criteria that enhance the use of games

Thus far, this paper has examined the relevance of games in academic learning and advocated the relevance of this type of pedagogy in higher education. It has provided the rationale for the use of game-based learning and highlighted the importance of the games as being an appropriate and effective way to learn. Some instructors may remain hesitant, however, because they still see games as an avenue for creating a disorderly classroom. A good facilitator of games, however, can maintain an orderly, cooperative, and productive classroom. The following nine criteria offer instructors some guidance in conducting games that facilitate meaningful learning without creating disarrangement or chaos.

1. Games should repeat and reinforce language information

As mentioned earlier, games and activities must be based on learning objectives. They are not the only teaching mechanism in a class and should support other teaching methods with a clear aim. Without a focus point to base the development of meaningful interaction, games may not be utilized to the fullest or become inconsequential. The goal of each game is not in conquering and winning, but in getting the students to engage with each other and using target language skills as much as possible. From the start, instructors should not focus entirely on what activities can entertain a class. Rather, they must consider how the student's knowledge can be reinforced through success and failure. Teachers should do their utmost to create strategies for recall and output while gaining strong participation among the students.

2. Activities should be connected to the learning objectives

When it comes to games in education, skills and competencies being developed must be specifically related to the learning objectives and content of the course. Without any connection, there is no focus point for material or skills that were covered in the core lesson. Connections are made, however, when players combine new and previously acquired knowledge to the activities in which they engage. For example, if the lesson teaches students the difference between simple past and present perfect verbs, they could be reusing those newly-forms on a board game with their peers. A game question might ask, "Have you ever seen anything scary or strange?" The student

needs to reply by making a complete sentence using the present perfect tense of the verb “see.” In the previous lesson, the student learned that the simple past form of the word “see” is “saw” and that the present perfect form is “have seen.” Therefore, she or he will then combine new knowledge with previously learned vocabulary to form a complete sentence such as, “I have seen two ghosts in my bedroom.” (See Appendix C.) Through this process, knowledge is reinforced by connecting new concepts to the objective of the lesson.

3. Games should develop relevance to new concepts

A “good game” is anchored in the real world (Sanchez, 2011), and games can lose some of their relevance when they not applicable to real life outside the classroom. Research shows that focusing on repetitive tasks that foster real-life language increases accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Bygate, 1996; Robinson, 2001). Connecting language to real-life situations is of utmost importance, and games provide some of the best positions for which to do so. It is helpful sometimes to provide scenarios that are as realistic as possible. Simple ways of doing so are to have students finish sentences, conjure up stories, ask open-ended questions such as, “What did you do during the weekend?” and conduct role-plays and simulations. For instance, if a lesson in the text teaches vocabulary and phrases for shopping, the lesson could be followed up by a shopping game in which students use play money to buy items in certain stores around the class. Shoppers compete to see who can buy the most items with a limited amount of currency while sellers see who can sell the most items amongst themselves. (See Appendix B.) Throughout the activity, students are using real language and critical thinking skills that can be applied to shopping in the real world. Not only does it recycle useful vocabulary, it also allows room for creativity, independence, and higher order thinking. Such tasks have communicative meanings that bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world.

4. Provides a safe, peaceful environment

When competing in any context, there is the possibility for some students to become emotionally impassioned or cause disorder in the class. A vibrant classroom environment is filled with “good noise,” but some actively engaged students can become overzealous. In schools with other classes nearby, it is unacceptable to cause disturbances for others who are engaged in quiet study, discourse, or testing. Some teachers are naturally good at facilitating “controlled chaos,” but others are not inclined to do so. For this reason, four basic strategies are recommended to maintain an orderly environment:

1. Game time should be treated as a critical part of the regular classroom experience rather than something special. This implies that the same norms for behavior during all other parts of a class apply to when games are being played. Facilitators must clearly explain accepted behavior at the start and make sure that it is observed from throughout the procedure. Rambunctious behavior during games must never materialize, for it is possible that it will carry over to the rest of the class time.

2. Facilitators must not relax and refrain from interjecting when needed. The goal of games is to have students make connections between the activities and class material to improve their understanding. It is

acceptable to halt a game to control tension, highlight something that the students accomplished, or to assist those who might struggle.

3. Stronger, dominant members should be encouraged to hold back at times, but they can be encouraged to assume roles of leadership and peer assistance. Through the act of channeling their energies towards helping others, they tend to stay more focused, inclusive, and less likely to over-assert themselves and cause disruption.

4. Teachers must ensure that there are no hazards or possibilities of injury during a game. Additionally, roughhousing should never be tolerated. Games are not an endurance contest, nor are they meant to cause physical or mental exhaustion (El-shamy, 2001).

5. Students should understand that failure is a means of learning, and not a loss of face and embarrassment. Less-experienced teachers need to avoid inadvertently setting up situations that might embarrass a student who is not able to perform up to a certain task. Rather than destroying a learner's confidence, failure and missteps should be treated lightheartedly and as an opportunity to teach and learn. Facilitators should ensure that no one is ever humiliated.

5. Provides purposeful challenge

Whitton (2012) says, "Learning activities should be collaborative or co-operative, purposeful, personally relevant to the learners and authentic so that the learning from the activity is transferable to the real-life context" (p. 82). Games within an academic setting should be constructed to incorporate useful language and reflect the environment in which students should be able to function at the end of learning. Additionally, learning activities should be anchored to the overall content of the class. This does not mean that fun activities such as icebreakers and energizers are illegitimate, but students should be able to make the connections between the games and content and feel that they gained something from the experience.

6. Incorporates inclusiveness and cooperation

It is the responsibility of the facilitator to deal with the diversity of student needs within their classroom. She or he must adapt or prepare the content in a way to meet the needs of as many students as possible so that they can realize their potential. Balancing the passive and active, the astute and the slow is challenging. Some learners are less adept than others in either language ability or social adeptness, so it is important that they have an equal chance to engage in all activities. Through the use of support and scaffolding from both the instructor and fellow peers, weaker students can make a greater effort to contribute to their learning through action and hands-on endeavors. They should not, however, continually pair up with the same strong students who tend to carry their weaker counterparts through each game. Facilitators should mix and arrange groups and pairs as equally as possible to diminish unfair advantages. Stronger students grow by assuming a role of assistance and leadership while the strugglers gain from their support. At the same time, more demanding questions and problems can be addressed to the advanced students to keep them challenged.

Allowing students work with their closest friends every class can be counterproductive. Although some of

them might collaborate very well, there could be a tendency to exclude others unconsciously. Often, their discourse promotes more small talk than language usage. In the experience of the author, it is best to offer students the opportunity to work with every other student in the class. Therefore, rotating as often as possible serves well to promote an inclusive environment.

7. Allows diversity and autonomy

Instructors should diversify games to appeal to various learning styles and to avoid monotony. As with any pedagogy, many students lose interest when the same procedures are excessively repeated. Variation not only benefits students; it extends the teacher's ever-expanding repertoire and skills. Through trial and error, teachers become more involved in the learning process and improve themselves. At the same time, the level of difficulty needs to be adapted to the skill of the learners and can be increased as they meet success (Malone & Lepper, 1987). By doing so, both the instructor and class remain more deeply engaged in the teaching and learning process.

8. Gives feedback and reflection

Sanchez cites in his article, Key Criteria for Game Design, that research in Game-based learning demonstrates that students do not develop declarative knowledge without reflection and debriefing (Garris, Alhers, & Driskell, 2002; Sanches, 2011). Debriefing and review are essential for maximum, or even correct, learning to occur (Redemeir & Greeblat, 1981), but many instructors overlook the fact that reflection is an important part of utilizing games. Some lessons might finish with a follow-up game only to conclude with, "See you next week!" All too often, activities end without confirming the vital connections made between the lesson and the game. Feedback does not necessarily refer to taking a moment to offer praise or criticism. It includes the need for instructors to validate the learning experience and see what outcomes follow the activities. It is often the case that students do not even realize that they are recycling terms, reinforcing vocabulary, or coming up with new concepts through critical thinking. Therefore, instructor need to highlight such connections and offer any other insights that they get from observing the class. Finally, giving a short, verbal quiz to see whether the students retained the vocabulary is also a good indicator of how well a game went. Not only does it show the instructor if the class was successful, but the students also validate their progress or lack of it.

9. Provide a supplement and not a replacement for teaching

A valid concern among game critics is that games and activities can become such compelling tools that teachers may believe that they no longer need to lecture. Kebritchi (2010) suggests that instead they may "rely on the game and use it as a teaching replacement and not as a supplement" (p 11). It is important to remember that games are powerful additional teaching tools and teachers must not use them disproportionately during a course.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has examined and provided a rationale for the relevance of games being used as an effective teaching apparatus for people of multiple learning styles and intelligence. Through skillful facilitation, games provide reinforcement of language, review of key terms, and offer opportunities for collaborative problem-solving in authentic contexts. Although they are not meant to be the core of a lesson, they are a powerful way to fortify language acquisition and retention through deliberate learning tasks. Proper use of games in the classroom provides a way for learners to engage actively in their individual construction of knowledge and apply what they have learned in meaningful ways. Moreover, games are a practical medium for creating an inclusive community where participants are individually and collectively invested in what they learn. Students with disparate levels of language and social capabilities can actively take part with the support of facilitators and peers. With less anxiety and greater participation, an environment is created where learning becomes a communal process that is enjoyable, unrehearsed, and purposeful. As a sense of community is created, the classroom strengthens higher motivation results. Consequently, the educational climate is inclusive, enjoyable, and progressive. Rather than relying only on the instructor's teaching methodology, learners accept interdependence in the learning process.

Games vitalize the senses with energy, anticipation, colors, sights, sounds, laughter, drama, and action. The real pleasure, however, is in the heightened level of involvement, interaction, and the building of skills and community. Games are not the only answer to all the challenges of teaching and learning pedagogies, but they provide a rich medium to enhance student involvement, reinforcement and build community. In short, passive learning becomes involved learning; better learning has higher involvement and input in processed into output. The ultimate outcome is a student-powered, interactive, communal process where students realize their capacities to learn, participate, and mentor.

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Appendixes

Appendix A – “A Race with Directions.”

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Overview :

This game brings to life the practice of following directions while concurrently building logical thinking and classroom community. It is effective for those who enjoy learning through exploring abstract patterns and

relationships. In addition to reinforcing language, it is useful for bolstering interaction, thinking, and problem-solving strategies that get everybody involved. Through reusing terms taught in class, students build upon their new knowledge to decode and follow directions that lead to a prize. It can be played with levels from beginning to upper-intermediate and played indoors, outdoors, or both. It takes one to two hours to prepare and takes from 30 to 40 minutes to execute in class. The materials needed are paper, marker pens, envelopes, and tape.

Preparation :

Step 1: Starting from the classroom, walk through the campus and mark at least two separate routes with five or six points where clues can be hidden, posted or planted. Write down directions on how to get from one point to the next with the final destination being the classroom or a specific goal. One route should not be longer than the other.

Step 2: Rewrite the directions in various codes. Some examples are :

- a. Changing the alphabetical order of each letter and word. For example, if each letter of a word goes up in order of the alphabet, "Go out the door and turn right" will read, "Hp pvu uif epps boe uvso sjgiu." If a letter of a word goes down in order, the same message will read, "Fn ntssgd cnnqzmc stqmghfgs."
- b. Having a number represent each letter of the alphabet. (a=1, b=2 etc.) "Go up the steps and go past a tree" will look like, "7,15 21,16 20,8,5 19,20,5,16,19 1,14,4 7,15 16,1,19,20 1 20,18, 5,5."
- c. Using scrambled sentences to write and decode. "Go down the hall and turn left" would read as "hall down and go turn the left."
- d. Writing clues or riddles. A hint for landmark such as a flag could read, "I am red and white, and I stand at the school entrance."

Step 3: Determine the number of teams and designate a color or a letter of the alphabet for each. If there are two teams, one will follow the first route, and the other will follow the second. If there are four teams, send two on the first route and two on the second. If there are more than four teams, plan accordingly. A third route could also be created.

Step 4: Insert the coded messages into the envelopes and number six envelopes for each team in progressive order of the course. Make each team's envelopes distinguishable from the other through clear labeling or colors.

Step 5: Place the envelopes in the order of the routes that lead back to the goal before class starts. Keep the envelopes labeled as "Number One" to distribute to teams in the classroom.

Step 6: Prepare prizes for the winners to add extra incentive and a competitive spirit.

Procedure :

Step 1: Divide the class into teams no larger than five to ensure that all members are involved in the process. Inform teams that they must work together to quickly decipher coded messages in the first envelope. Do not give hints on how to break the codes unless necessary.

Step 2: Upon decoding messages, teams will follow directions to several points around campus to reach a goal or prize. The instructor should monitor weaker teams in case they go off track or need assistance.

Step 3: When winners return to the classroom, do not have them idly wait for the other teams to return. Provide a review worksheet or send them out to round up the rest of the class. Once the class has reconvened, give awards and reflect on the activity.

Summary:

This exercise provides language reinforcement while creating an inclusive and spirited class atmosphere. In addition to teaching directions, it encourages full participation and allows learners various ways to approach a problem. Teachers can also customize this activity and come up with other variations and themes to suit their students.

Appendix B – The Yard Sale Game

Overview:

Interpersonal games are conducive to developing the skills students need to communicate and interact with others in everyday situations. The Yard Sale Game is one such way to get students to role-play and model language that enhances their social adeptness while providing them an abundance of phrasal repetition. This exercise works best for beginner to intermediate levels and takes up to thirty minutes of class time.

Preparation:

Step 1: Prepare a list or picture of items that one can find at a yard sale.

Step 2: Copy the pictures along with a worksheet that the students can use for the activity.

Step 3: Print and provide play money as an option, but it is not essential.

Procedure:

Step 1: Distribute the list or picture of the yard sale items along with the worksheet.

Step 2: Designate one in three people in the class to be sellers and the rest to be shoppers. The sellers can spread out to sell their items while the shoppers receive a specified amount of money to spend. (Thirty dollars is recommended.)

Step 3: Inform the shoppers that their objective is to accumulate as many items as they can within their budgets. For this reason, they must buy their items at the lowest cost possible. Conversely, sellers are instructed to make as much money as they can by selling their goods as high as they can. Students keep track of what they sell and buy by using a worksheet like the one below.

Shoppers

Instructions: You are at a yard sale. Try to buy as many items as you can with the money that is given to you. The person who can buy the most things wins!

List of things you can buy at the yard sale:

jacket	bathrobe	jumper	shoes	boots
shirt	purse	bag	chair	table
book	alarm clock	video tape	necklace	sewing machine
iron	ironing board	stereo	DVD player	dress
hat	helmet	sandals	jeans	toy

Using the dialogue below to try and get the lowest price possible. Write down the items that you buy and the prices below.

Seller: Hello. May I help you?
Shopper: Yes, can you tell me about this _____?
Seller: Sure. It's a (*adjective, adjective, noun*). It's only \$_____.
Shopper: That's too expensive. Can you give me a better price?
Seller: I can let you have it for \$_____.
Shopper: That's still too much. How about \$_____
Seller: Well, that's too low. But I'll let you have it for \$_____.
Shopper: OK. Thanks! I'll take it.

I bought:

I paid:

TOTAL: \$ _____

Sellers

Instructions: You are selling your things at a yard sale. Your goal is to keep your prices high and make as much money as you can. The seller who makes the most money by the end of the game is the winner!

Here is a list of things to sell at the yard sale:

jacket	bathrobe	jumper	shoes	boots
shirt	purse	bag	chair	table
book	alarm clock	video tape	necklace	sewing machine
iron	ironing board	stereo	DVD player	dress
hat	helmet	sandals	jeans	toy

Using the dialogue below, try to make as much money as you can ! Write down the items that you sell and the prices below.

Seller: Hello. May I help you?
Shopper: Yes, can you tell me about this _____?
Seller: Sure It's a (adjective, adjective, noun). It's only \$_____.
Shopper: That's too expensive. Can you give me a better price?
Seller: I can let you have it for \$_____.
Shopper: That's still too much. How about \$_____?
Seller: No, but I'll let you have it for \$_____.
Shopper: OK. Thanks. I'll take it.

I sold:

My price:

TOTAL: \$ _____

Step 4: Set a time limit and propel the shoppers to proceed from seller to seller, looking for the best bargains. The person who purchases the most items within the time and money limits is declared a winner. Additionally, the seller who makes the most money from their sales is also pronounced a winner.

Summary: This game allows students to communicate actively as they bargain with a keen sense of body awareness. Beyond just speaking, they express themselves through body language and voice expression as they plea for favorable prices. It is a productive way of practicing learned language through a competitive, life-like situation.

Appendix C – The Great Chocolate Steal

Overview :

Board games stimulate the senses with visuals to look at, materials to handle, and problems to solve. This game also arouses a festive spirit of rivalry as chocolate or candy circulates the room as the game proceeds. This game works for all levels depending on the level of difficulty prepared by the instructor.

Preparation :

Step 1: Create and form questions on the game board. An example of easy questions might be to require players to state the past tenses of irregular verbs. More advanced questions might deal with idioms or asking complex questions that require giving opinions.

Step 2: Prepare enough chocolate for all participants. Extra game markers and coins may be helpful to have.

Procedure:

Step 1: Split the students into groups of two to four. Players should provide their own markers, such erasers or pen caps, and place them in the starting square.

Step 2: Give each player two chocolates or candies.

Step 3: In turn, participants will spin or flip a coin to determine how many spaces they will advance. The numbered side of the coin indicates that the players move forward one space. The opposite side tells them to advance two spaces.

Step 4: Players will proceed toward the goal as they answer the questions. When they land on the square that says, “Sorry! Give all your chocolates to your partner(s)” they must give up their chocolates to their partner that “steals” them. When they arrive at the square that says, “Sorry! Give *all* your chocolates to the group on your left” the whole group’s chocolates will be passed to or “stolen” by the next group.

Step 4: Those who make it to the end of the game can keep any chocolate or candy that they have acquired. If they have none, they can still hope that some will still be passed to them from another group before they reach the end of their game.

Summary :

This activity can be modified for multiple purposes such as vocabulary or grammar review, giving opinions, spelling, or hypothetical questions. It is flexible and easy to make. Students tend to exert a lot of energy into this game and request it again for future play.

