

## **Have them move, see and speak!**

**Jerry Istvan Thekes**

Director of studies

IFF Language Academy, Hungary

[www.jerrythekes.com](http://www.jerrythekes.com)

[jerry@jerrythekes.com](mailto:jerry@jerrythekes.com)

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to show that the 21st century modern TEFL classroom has to provide entertaining, visual and kinesthetic elements for the language learners. Four different TEFL games are presented in order to prove that total physical involvement of the students aided by visuals help teaching and language acquisition. The description and the presentation of the 'Sandwich', the Kali goddess', the 'Traffic lights' and the 'Luggage', the 'Scales' and the 'Swatch' game all serve the aim to justify the necessity of students' moving and being given plenty of visuals during the lessons. The need to physically involve the students is supported by such respected professionals as Scott Thornbury, Michael Swan and Mario Rinvolucri. The academic support is also aided by the two greatest TEFL experts on motivation, Dörnyei and Csizér

**Key Words:** visualization, grammar games, kinesthetics

### **Introduction**

In this article, I will present the description of six grammar games which will be described. By grammar game, I mean an entertaining activity involving learners in order for them to comfortably acquire the grammar point. I will try to argue for the importance of teaching grammar through fun.

Constant explanation of grammar rules and decontextualizing grammar are a quick way for the teacher to demotivate their students and unfortunately a lot of non-native EFL teachers still fall into the comfortable trap of presenting grammar through rules as they saw it done to them when they studied a foreign language. This fact is supported by Xiao-Yun (2010) who asserts that "traditional grammar teaching is often associated with the dry memorization of rules and the equally dry prospect of applying these rules in fill-in-the-blank, pattern practice, substitution transformation, and translation, which cause negative feelings." A further support on this opinion comes from Krashen (1987), according to whom "language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill."

Throughout this article, I will use the terminology 'grammar McNugget', which will stand for the particular grammar points. This denomination comes from Thornbury (2010), who says that "an enthusiasm for compartmentalization, inherited from grammars of classical languages, has given rise to the elaborate architecture of the so-called tense system – including such grammar McNuggets as the future-in-the-past, and the past perfect continuous, not to mention the conditionals, first, second and third – features of the language that have little or no linguistic, let alone psychological, reality." As I give a description of games, I will indicate the grammar McNugget that the teacher is supposed to teach with that particular game. Thornbury's notion of grammar McNugget is also supported by Michael Swan (1985, 76) who posits that „the role of 'grammar' in language courses is often discussed as if 'grammar' were one homogeneous kind of thing. In fact, 'grammar' is an umbrella term for a large number of separate or loosely related language systems, which are so varied in nature that it is pointless to talk as if they should all be approached in the same way. How we integrate the teaching of structure and meaning will depend to a great extent on the particular language items involved." The teaching of six grammar points, these loosely related language systems, will be presented in this article.

I firmly believe the conveyance of grammar usage needs to be carried out in a demonstrative and entertaining way for the students to be receptive to the learning content of the lesson. Using the phrase 'learning content' I refer to Medgyes' terminology, who has differentiated between the two main targets of an EFL lesson: "...foreign-language teachers have no direct body of knowledge available in the sense that physics or history teachers have. Or rather they have two different sets of content to teach: the grammar of the foreign language and the topics which serve to present and to carry to specific items of grammar. Littlejohn (1992) calls these two sets the

learning content and the carrier content (paraphrased in Medgyes, 1995).” The main target will be the teaching of grammar in this article. I will not use Medgyes’ terminology-learning content- but I will use the one of Thornbury’s quoted earlier: Grammar McNuggets.’ In order to motivate students to learn grammar, teachers need to fend off the tension the learners usually are under. If it is proved to them that the acquisition of grammar structures is an enjoyable pastime, they will be more willing to proceed in their EFL studies. When I use the term ‘motivate’, I always have Dörnyei’s and Csizér’s (1999) research in mind. They have asserted that it is important to create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere and to make the language classes interesting. I believe grammar games such as the ones described here assure that the learners are entertained. Richard-Amato (1988) also supports the view of a relaxed classroom atmosphere by stating that “it appears that a lowered anxiety level is related to proficiency in the target language.” The ‘Sandwich’, the ‘Kali goddess’, and the Traffic Lights’ games- the ones described below - are a key to achieving a lowered anxiety level.

Making language teaching and the teaching of grammar game-like is of crucial importance so as to keep students interested and to create a relaxed atmosphere. Hadfield (1992) says that “affective activities aim to create a positive and supportive group atmosphere in a non-explicit way” As it will be seen, the below-described grammar games are aimed at creating a positive and supportive atmosphere. The notion of making the lesson game-like is also asserted by Rinvoluceri (1995): “Grammar is perhaps so serious and central in learning another language that all ways should be searched for which will focus student energy on the task of mastering and internalizing it. One way of focusing this energy is through the release offered by games.” Games not only engage students’ interest in the TEFL classroom but they also keep them involved. As Rosenberg (2009, 10) asserts we should „focus on the students in the classroom, on keeping them involved, on having them doing and producing rather than passively receiving information.” By involving the students in grammar games, the teacher can achieve his/her goal of having the learners acquire the grammar McNugget taught in the particular lesson.

Teaching grammar McNuggets through games necessarily has an implication of avoiding students’ consciousness raising. A no consciousness raising strategy stands for implicit grammar teaching. The idea of teaching grammar implicitly through comprehensible inputs comes from Krashen and is well known in the TEFL profession. Krashen and Terrell(1983) further elaborated on this idea by saying that “we should not expect our students to be concerned with fine points of grammar while they are speaking in free conversation.”

I will present six grammar games. I will precisely name the level of students, the grammar McNugget of the lesson, the materials and the procedure.

## **Presentation of grammar games**

### **1. Sandwich game**

Grammar McNugget: adjectives+prepositions

Level: intermediate

Material: pictures, loaf of sliced toast bread, duct-tape

Procedure:

The whole concept for this grammar game is that adjectives and governed prepositions are always used with a noun or a gerund. The adjective, the preposition and the noun form a sandwich with the preposition being the inner part.

Prior to the lesson, the teacher sticks cards with adjectives (afraid, surprised, interested, etc.) on them onto one set of slices of toast bread and cards with nouns (spiders, gift, baseball game, etc.) onto another set. In the lesson, the cards with prepositions written on them are placed on the table. Pairs of students are given slices with adjectives on them and they have to find the correct prepositions. An ‘afraid’ slice is matched with the ‘of’ preposition card, for instance.

The pairs present their unfinished sandwiches and as a result of peer-correction, they will end up having the right adjective-preposition chunk. As the following stage of this game, they are instructed by the teacher to find the noun slice in order for them to have a complete sandwich. Such sentences as ‘I am afraid of spiders’; ‘My sister is interested in the baseball game’ are formed as a result of the learners having made their sandwiches. The sandwiches consists of a slice of bread with adjectives, a preposition card in the middle and a noun on another slice of bread.

## **2. Kali goddess game**

Grammar McNugget: Conjunctions (in spite of the fact, if, despite)

Level: upper-intermediate

Material: slips of paper, pictures, duct-tape

Procedure:

Prior to the lesson the teacher has put six different piles of prompt cards on two different chairs in the classroom. On one chair there is a pile of images designating different notions, e.g.: 'have a stomach ache', 'rainy day', 'have a bad car', etc. On another chair, there is another pile of cards with sentences written on them, e.g.: she is working the whole day', 'we are playing tennis outside', 'I am driving all the way to Turkey', etc.

In the lesson the teacher has the learners choose two pictures. Once they have chosen them, they are told to go to the chair with the pile of sentences. They are then instructed to find a contrasting match to their pictures. For instance, the 'rainy day' pictures will be matched up with the 'we are playing tennis outside' sentence.

After all the students are done with their matching, one has to go behind the teacher, who is standing in front of the classroom with a card 'in spite of the fact' stuck on his/her chest with a blue-tack. The student behind the teacher holds up the sentence in his right hand and the picture in his left hand. The rest of the class now sees a fragmented visual sentence which one student has to read out: 'We are playing tennis outside in spite of the fact it is a rainy day.' The other students then take turns in standing behind the teacher and holding up the sentences and picture in the same system as the first has done. As all students stand behind the teacher, By the end of the game the whole class will have looked like the Hindu goddess Kali, who has multiple hands.

## **3. Traffic lights game**

Grammar McNugget: affirmative, interrogative, negative in any tense

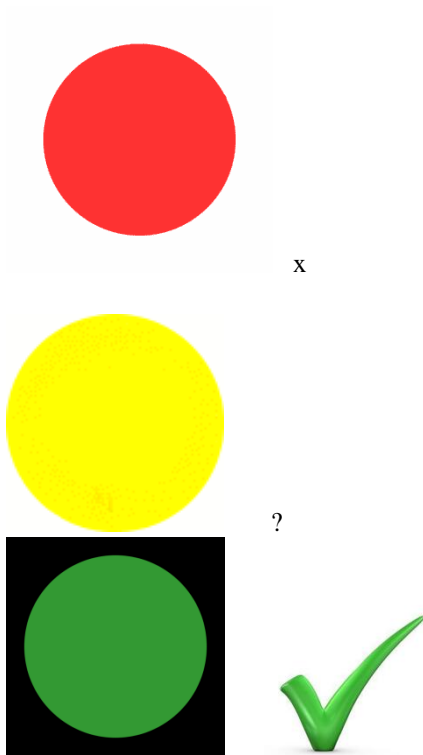
Level: any

Material: pictures, duct-tape, cartons of red, yellow, green color

Procedure:

In this grammar game the teacher is using the simple associative intelligence of the students. The green color will naturally stand for the affirmative; the red will mean the negative form and what we have left is the yellow, which will denote the interrogative form. Students get easily involved in this game since it is quite simple to associate the red color with negation and the green with affirmative statements. Prior to the lesson the traffic lights colors are drawn on the board in the usual order: red, yellow, green. In order to make sure, the teacher might as well draw cross by the red, a question mark by the yellow and a tick by the green. Teacher presents the way present simple in the affirmative is formed. It is done with pictures of daily routine and slips of cards with 'always', 'sometimes', 'rarely', 'never' written on them. Such sentences are presented as: 'I always get up early'. 'I never mow the lawn in the garden', etc. In the midst of doing it, the teacher has a green circle stuck on his/her chest so as to indicate that it is the affirmative.

This is done in the same way with the negative and interrogative with the difference that negative is presented with a red circle stuck on the teacher's chest and the interrogative with a yellow circle. Once the presentation is done, teacher elicits sentences from students by handing out pictures of daily routine and holding up either a green or a yellow or a red circle. For instance if a students has the picture 'have breakfast' in his hand and is prompted with a green circle, then this student is supposed to say 'I have breakfast every day'; if however, another student has 'dust the room' and is prompted with a red circle, this students is supposed to say 'I don't dust the room.' The students pass around the pictures and wait for the teacher to elicit either an affirmative or interrogative or negative sentence with the associated color. Elicitation is achieved through association with colors.



#### **4. Luggage game**

Grammar McNugget: going to  
Level: elementary  
Material: pictures, duct-tape, realia

Procedure:

The teacher sticks pictures of different types of travelers (lonely tourist, family going on a package tour, beach girls, etc.) on the white board. Sentences are elicited from students with questions with regard to where they think these tourists are travelling. After students are engaged in the activity, they are given realia such as Agatha Christie books, tube of sunscreen, lipstick, map, etc.)

The students are instructed to go to the whiteboard with the objects and symbolically put them into the bags. They are supposed to match the items with one type of tourist. The teacher expects them to say sentences with 'going to' and give a reason for their choice; for example: 'The beach girls are going to take a tube of sunscreen because they are going to spend a lot of time under the sun.'; The business tourist is going to take a car rental brochure because he is going to rent a car.'

#### **5. Scales**

Grammar McNugget: comparative adjectives  
Level: elementary  
Material: pictures, slips of cards, a balance scale, bluetack

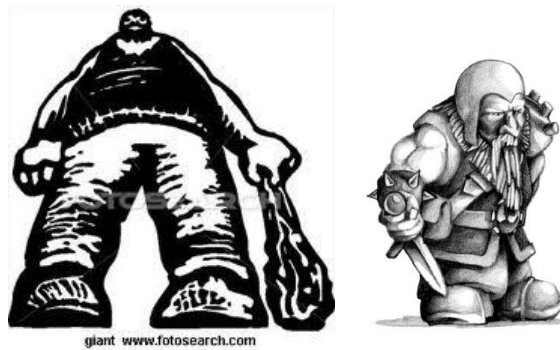
Procedure:

Prior to the lesson, the teacher puts two sets of scales onto one of the tables. These scales need to be a balance scale and not the digital one. Previously they have had to prepare for the lesson with pairs of pictures of objects and people to be easily compared, for example a rocket and a snail; a giant and a dwarf; Mont Blanc and a hill, etc. They have also had to choose adjectives for the students to use as the teacher will have them compare the two things or persons. These adjectives are 'fast', 'big', 'high', etc and are printed on slips of paper.

Before the activity starts, the teacher engages the learners with an easy but necessary game. Two envelopes are stuck on the wall with bluetack. On one envelope there is a picture of a snake, on the other, there is that of a baby shoe. The snake illustrates long, multi-syllabic adjectives whereas the baby shoe denotes short, monosyllabic adjectives. The teacher divides the class into two groups and randomly gives them adjectives on slips of papers such as 'fat', 'interesting', 'heavy', etc. The groups have to decide whether the adjective is long or short and correspondingly place the slips of paper into either of the envelopes.

Once it is done, the teacher presents how these adjectives have to be used in the comparative form by saying sample sentences. Following this presentation, everybody in the class is given pictures of objects and people. They are then instructed to find a matching pair from the pile of pictures that are put on a one of the tables in the classroom. The student that has the picture of a Ferrari needs to find the picture of an old Lada.

When every student has a set of two pictures to be compared, the teacher presents the activity. They stick a slip of paper with an adjective written on it in the middle of the scales and they put one picture into one pan of the scales and another into the other pan. What the students see now is for example the adjective 'fast' stuck on the scales and an image of a rocket in the left pan and that of a snail in the right pan. The teacher deliberately pushes down the left pan so as to indicate the difference and says: 'A rocket is faster than a snail.' Having done this presentation, the teacher has the students take turns in sticking one adjective on the scales and putting two images into the two pans. An example could be 'giant', 'dwarf', 'tall'. The student has to stick 'tall' on the scales and put the two images into either of the pans, then push down the one with the giant in it and produce the sentence: 'The giant is taller than the dwarf'.



## 6. Swatch

Grammar McNugget: telling the time in correct English

Level: beginner

Material: 1-12 numbers on pieces of paper, pictures of a short and a long pan of the watch

Procedure:

As an engaging activity the teacher presents the way of telling the time in English with the help of a toy clock. The below-described 'Swatch' game follows this presentation in order for the students to be activated in telling the time.

The teacher puts the numbers from 1 to 12 printed on A4 papers in a round shape in a formation equivalent to that on a watch or clock. Two students are given the roles of being hands of the watch. The teacher sticks the picture of a short hand on one of the students and sticks that of a long hand on another. The learners stand in the middle initially. Then they are instructed to move inside the circle as they wish.

They have three seconds to do that. After this period of time, the teacher tells them to stop. Wherever they stand they always show a particular time, which one student has to tell. If the 'short hand' student stands with the pointer pointing at three and the 'long hand' student points at 10 minutes then it is 10 minutes past 3. It is a physically involving activity and students enjoy it very much.

## **Conclusion**

In the first section of this paper I have tried to find assertions, views and notions supporting the concept of the importance of teaching grammar through games. I have cited Krashen, who condemns the conscious teaching of grammar rules. I have also used Swan's view, according to whom grammar is only an umbrella term and every point has to be approached in a different way when teaching them is at issue. I have found Thornbury's notion of grammar inevitable in this article. Through the description of six games aimed at teaching grammar McNuggets I have intended to prove that teaching grammar with fun and games is crucial in the facilitating process of teaching the TEFL learners. The 'Sandwich' game has been aimed at showing that any type of realia can be used for the sake of transferring a message to make it comprehensible. The 'Kali goddess' game has been targeted at showing that students acquire grammar easier once they are in motion. The purpose of 'Traffic Lights' game has been to substantiate that the associative intelligence of the learners can be exploited.

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