

A Preliminary Assessment of Learner Opinions of Board Games Used for TBL SLA

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Introduction

This paper will present the reported opinions of Intermediate level learners, of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), in an experimental English Communication program applying board games as the medium of classroom interaction. Previously the researcher presented a study of this board game based program in regard to its effectiveness as an intermediate level communication program of study. The focus was on the success of this program in developing learner communicative competencies. The current paper, while using answers on the same set of questionnaires as the former paper, is referencing questions and responses being used for the first time. This newly reported data is being employed to comment on the relative educational value of the different board games used. This paper is therefore concerned with evaluating the games themselves and their applicability to second language acquisition (SLA) as applied in the SLA classroom, as reported on by the research participants.

The program's interest and goal was to apply board games as the constituent of classroom materials. There was evidence through learner evaluations that applying board games did encourage learners to move past focusing on correct grammatical production, to instead focusing on development of communicative competency and fluency (Levy, 2018). Task Based Language Learning (TBL), with a task defined simply as, "an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate et al., 2001), was chosen as the methodology to apply. In particular, the program applied competitive board games as the Task Based foundation of classroom activity. Further expanding on the goals of this methodology for assigning tasks as the basis of classroom activity:

The important thing is, that while doing the tasks, learners are meaning what they say. The main focus is on meaning. They are using language to exchange meanings for a real purpose. They must be free to use whatever words or language forms they want. The games they play, the problems they solve, the experiences they share may not be things they will do in real life, but their use of language, because it is purposeful and real, will replicate features of language use outside the classroom. (Willis, 1996 p. 3)

One of the primary goals of this approach is to encourage the students to forget they are in a classroom, to create a casual environment where they feel comfortable to take risks without the stress of worrying if each utterance is perfect:

When playing most games participants are almost forced into communicating with each other in order for the game to work. The need for communication during games, and the informal setting games provide encourages students to be unafraid to talk, which practices their fluency, a valuable communication skill."(Erlend mál., 2007, p. 6)

Acknowledging the above objectives, there was determination to encourage a language use environment as native-like as achievable. This paper has the particular interest is determining which games best promote this communicative goal. Competitive board games were employed as the medium of study while applying a task based methodology to encourage unrehearsed exchanges with as few confines as possible. Playing competitive board games as the classroom subject matter requires an intrinsic multiple layering of tasks. In addition to preparation by learning rules and operating skills, the participants were expected to always perform with a partner. The compulsory expectation, of working with a partner to make all decisions during play, results in all communication becoming task based. The goal of each team, competing to win the games, establishes the kind of enforced communication activity referenced above. Communication was goal focused as a tool for succeeding at the tasks at hand. In order to succeed at playing, by necessity, the students were succeeding at communication and the task set in front of them. Class time activity required preparation and teamwork with the overriding goal of the shared objective of winning at a board game utilizing English. Five of the six games are fundamentally different in content and structure. This paper will report on, and compare, the perceived effectiveness for EFL study of the different individual games employed for this endeavor.

The Board Games and Usage in Class

The Games

The program utilized six board games; UPWORDS, SCRABBLE, Pictionary Jr., Around The World, Clue, and Monopoly. The descriptions, and observations of subjects' performance of playing the board games, from a previously published paper in this journal, are in the appendix. (Appendix 1)

The following highlighted points were promoted in order to encourage communication between players and teams:

Preparation and Facilitation for Play

Knowing the rules for play matters. In order for activity to proceed smoothly, players must know what to do. Playing each game required learning each games' rules from the original rules included with the game. Mastering each games' rules in their original English, in some cases challenging even for native speakers, was buttressed by providing study questions for each game from which a test of each board games' rules was later formulated. Passing the test (70% or higher) from the provided study questions on each games' rules is required in order to participate. The tests operated as a gatekeeper to participation rather than a goal in themselves.

Phrases for Play

Another issue that can often be encountered is learners not knowing the language needed to facilitate activities. This is perhaps the the most tempting moment for students to shift to their native language to "just get things going". Of course, this is actually very important language to master. According to Hobbs:

A further step towards successful use of tasks, and one that is especially recommended for teachers who find themselves feeling frustrated by learners' use of L1 during tasks, is to make room in lessons for a focus on the interactive lexical phrases that support fluent L2 task interaction. As this is rarely treated effectively in textbooks, learners frequently struggle to keep in English during tasks because they lack the required mental pool of short, simple phrases to begin tasks (*Ok, let's start*), sequence interaction (*Next... / Now let's....*), give feedback (*OK / Really? / Yes, me too, etc.*), agree and disagree (*I think so, too / I don't agree, etc.*), and so on. (Hobbs, 2011, p. 487)

From the first day of play learners are given a running assignment to continually add to their 'Phases for Play' list. If they encounter something they would like to say, but lack the English, they are to write it down, in Japanese, and translate the utterance for homework. 'Phrases for Play' are regularly reviewed. Participants are encouraged to internalize the phrases to use reflexively. As the games advance in complexity the need for clear and specific phrases to support communication with teammates and with competing teams increases, leading to more communicative demands to continue playing. A majority of the phrases were operational in nature. Clarification of actions to take, confirmation of plans, soliciting of ideas, and expressing of reactions to events in the games, were the majority of often repeated phrases.

Performance Control and Interaction

With the exception of Pictionary Jr., which utilizes groups, these games are normally played individually. For example, UPWORDS is designed to be played by up to four participants competing against each other. In order to increase communicative exchanges, as noted above, it

was decided to require participants to play in teams. A role that would normally be performed by an individual participant was changed into a pair of participants playing as a team. Almost all play was done in pairs and when unavoidable (an odd number of players), in triplets. For example, with eight participants there would be four teams sharing four player positions in two-person teams. If there were nine players there would have been three two-person teams and one three-person team playing the same four positions. Seven participants would play in two two-person teams and one three-person team. This change in competitor grouping results in the players needing to constantly communicate, even between “turns”, in order to formulate strategy and actions. The students had different partners as often as the situation allowed. This was in order for the students to interact with as many different partners as possible.

Board games as instructors

Recently, there has been recognition of games in academic scholarship. Sykes and Reinhardt (2013) recognized learner agency and the natural way games facilitate player-centered environments. Situational scaffolding emanating from context-based choice, interaction through rich interpersonal negotiation of meaning through game-based player interactions, and metalinguistic learning strategies in order to successfully play the games, are being identified as positive effects of games. They further note correspondence between game-based feedback and comprehensible input. The feedback is seen as providing excellent timely feedback, and specific instruction, based on context for particular learners. In effect, the games at times can act as teachers, and provide an excellent learning and development rich environment. Performance in the games acts as feedback - success and/or failure, are valuable game generated messages that direct and cultivate player-to-player communication and interaction. In fact, the relative degree to which this effect was evident in the games, considered for this study, seemed to correlate with the reported value for the quality of the games for learning.

Discussion

Summary of results and observations:

This paper presents the research subjects' opinions of the six games themselves, and of the effect of playing on particular academic competencies. (For student impressions of the effectiveness of board games as a course of study, and observations of the program in general for the EFL classroom, as mentioned earlier, refer to Appendix 1 which presents the results of a previous study. For participant questionnaire evaluations of the specific games currently being reviewed refer to Appendix 2.)

The games

All games were scored on a 1 (lowest) - 5 (highest) likert scale.

UPWORDS (average 4.2): The enjoyment in the opportunity to approach English from a very novel perspective was evident in the results. Only one other module scored as high. The game-as-teacher value, particularly in UPWORDS where participants can attempt a new play rather than lose their turn when making a mistake (the only game this forgiving), was noted as a good quality in comments by participants. Turn replay with corrections resulting in success is very valuable feedback for learning.

SCRABBLE (average 4.0): SCRABBLE was very highly rated but slightly less than UPWORDS. This may be due to it being less playful in its approach to word formation and requiring more cognitive aptitudes outside of language skill. Compared to UPWORDS, SCRABBLE is less forgiving in that mistakes are penalized by loss of turn. Immediate feedback was provided, but loss of turn reduces the opportunity to immediately correct and improve competence.

Around the World (average 4.2): The other highest scoring module, Around The World, also had a very different score distribution than all the other modules and other questions as well. The number of responses at five - 46% (outstanding), the most by far, was far higher than any other questionnaire total as well. Clearly the nature of the question and answer format and the associated negotiation of meaning required to understand the questions and formulate responses was seen very positively. The game-as-teacher value is also very high. Multiple restatement of the questions, clarification of terms (including spelling-out terms and looking them up if required), and immediate feedback for being correct or learning new information, provided a rich acquisition environment.

Clue (average 3.2): While the full score for Clue was still positive for learning English, it was rated noticeably lower than the other games. It also had the lowest total from all the questions and the only question to garner a poor ranking (1) in the survey. It also relies the least on language skill and the most on logical analysis. The slow accumulation of information, and the active role deception can play in being successful, inhibit the quick feedback game-as-teacher effect for language acquisition.

Pictionary (average 3.8): In terms of fun and excitement Pictionary was absolutely best. The opportunity to encounter a wide range of colloquial and everyday vocabulary was appreciated. The game-as-teacher effect was often in operation. During play it was common for the 'picturist'

to need to look-up new terms and to then attempt to pass-on this information. Colloquialisms and context-specific content were very educational for the participants.

Monopoly (average 3.8): Monopoly is a very demanding game to master yet, by the end of the program, the participants embraced it as a positive challenge. The considerable effort to learn the rules was not a source of complaint. The game-as teacher feedback effect was most noticeable for use of currency/numbers for performing business activities, and performing social functions.

Comparison of the games

In terms of value to learn English, UPWORDS and Around the World were considered the best games with an average rating of 4.2 out of a maximum of 5. It was encouraging to see UPWORDS and Around the World tied for the highest rating for studying English. In UPWORDS the opportunity to change lexical items, by shifting morphemes in an item previously on the board, is a fun challenge for participants. The games are opposites in that UPWORDS reduces vocabulary to its minimum components to then produce a meaningful result, while Around the World moves from simple words and phrases to solving complex macro-information inquiry. The games are extremely different yet they evoked equally strong positive responses. These games best provide the game-as-teacher conditions alluded to earlier. Success or failure in both games is most directly connected to language skills. Success and competence quickly reinforce skills, failure and ineptitude quickly spotlight weakness. Students seem to appreciate this feedback, both positive and negative, in a low-stress non-threatening manner.

SCRABBLE was next with a rating of 4.0. Although very close in many ways to UPWORDS, SCRABBLE is more tactically complex. The more difficult demands brought on by this difference, not language based, was most likely the reason for the difference. The communicative challenges combined thinking of possible lexical items and then moved to sharing ideas for actions of comprehensive response to realized possible abstract conditions and opportunities on the whole board. Additionally, for learning fundamental vocabulary structure, UPWORDS' opportunity to transform words already on the board, again game-as-teacher, is more transparent allowing for more tangible self-realization.

Pictionary and Monopoly both scored 3.8. Pictionary and Monopoly while scoring the same are, like UPWORDS and Around the World, also extremely different. Pictionary is fast paced relying on cognitive and intuitive leaps while Monopoly is slow paced relying on luck, planning, and strategy. Pictionary is very exciting and high paced with performance pressure - there is no value to planning and strategy. Participants are pressured to perform as quickly as possible with reduced inhibition being advantageous. Monopoly incorporates chance, by incorporating dice in

play, but it necessitates planning and strategy to be successful as well. Both games require very different skill sets yet engender equal value for value in developing communicative skills. Monopoly's requirement to constantly use money was very effective in advancing learners' aptitude for using numbers swiftly and accurately. In both of these games the quality of immediate feedback goes beyond language alone and may play a part in their lower ranking for learning. The game-as-teacher standard for these two games can also help explain the lower rating of both. In both games the correctness of language use as the determining factor for success is less critical than UPWORDS and Around the World.

Clue was rated lowest at 3.2. Clue, while still enjoyed, was clearly the least enjoyable game to play. It is a very popular game for native English speakers, but it is not dependent on communicative skills in order to succeed. Logical deduction is the most critical skill for success. This demand and the opportunity to use deception, to advance one's chances of success, are not basic communicative skills and perhaps the key factor in the lower ranking of this game. Communicative language skills are not a controlling factor for success. From the perspective of game-as-teacher, Clue is the weakest and as such the lowest ranking is understandable. For the goal of developing communicative competence, inclusion for class time in this program is not justified. In comparison to the other games' applicability to the core goals of the program Clue being removed is appropriate.

Academic Skills Enhancement

Creativity (average 3.6): Clearly the participants found this program to increase their creativity with English. There are many creative communicative needs, in order to succeed, encountered for the first time.

Logical analysis (average 3.3): While still getting a positive rating, logical analysis ranked lower than all other skills. While dependent on communication, logic is not a linguistic skill itself so this is an understandable result.

Ability to work independently (average 3.7) : This is a communication program that required a good amount of preparation and written assignments resulting in strong advancement in this skill.

Comprehension (average 3.5): It is understandable that the structure of the program would result in strong improvement in comprehension. Successful performance is directly a result of comprehension.

Attention span (average 3.6): Playing board games clearly had a very positive effect on attention span. The novelty, excitement, and desire to win while playing board games is clearly a positive factor. Always playing with a partner while planning for actions and strategy required constant attentiveness from the players.

Academic Skills Enhancement Summary

There were five questions related to effect on academic skills from the program of study. The subjects reported on the program's impact on: creativity, logical analysis, ability to work independently, comprehension, and attention span. Four of the skills were closely ranked at the rating of good - excellent; Ability to work independently was highest at 3.7, Attention Span and Creativity were scored 3.6, and Comprehension was rated 3.5. Following with the lowest ranking was Logical Analysis with a rating of good at 3.3.

In a program focused on communication - an activity that requires partners; Ability to work independently ranked highest. This somewhat surprising result most likely reflects the need to study rules and prepare homework assignments in order to be ready for class. The students, aware of the competitive nature of class time and the need to be prepared to play with partners, were inspired to keep pace with the syllabus in order for activities to proceed smoothly. The nature of class also encouraged learners to take control of their performance outcome. It also speaks about the general enthusiasm by the students for the program and the desire to properly perform. The study of rules, and assignments focused on macro and micro aspects of play, certainly support the game-as-teacher paradigm.

Creativity and comprehension were both ranked at 3.5. In the context of preparing for, and actually playing board games, these skills would be essential. Three of the games, UPWORDS, SCRABBLE, and Pictionary, require creative actions to be successful. These games are formulated to rely on creativity to effectively play. The first two necessitate creating crosswords; UPWORDS encouraging creative attention to vocabulary transformation and morpheme shifts, and SCRABBLE encouraging particular creative attention to specific local placement of letters and strategic global placement of letters and words. Pictionary, by design, is an exercise in visual and lexical creativity. Comprehension - visual, written, and spoken, are necessary for performance. Written comprehension is essential for studying and mastering the instructions of the games. The desire to become proficient at the rules, in order to pass the rules tests, and to then productively compete, was referenced by many of the students. Playing the games in partnership, in contrast to playing individually, necessitated constant communication and exchange of ideas - often to express functional and abstract notions.

Logical Analysis rated the lowest with a score of good, at 3.3. While the program still improved this faculty, it is the most abstract and least lexical of the academic skills categorized, and outside of playing Clue, least requisite. In this light, it can be understood why Logical Analysis and Clue were both designated as relatively lowest in their respective categories.

Opinions and Comments

Summary of similar replies provided by two or more of respondents in regard to the effectiveness of the games for study:

Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondents commented that the program was enjoyable and/ or exciting.

Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents commented that their vocabulary skills improved.

Sixty-two percent (62%) commented that their communication skills improved the most.

Twenty-seven percent (27%) commented that their reading facilities improved.

Twenty-three percent (23%) commented that they were able to become friends with their classmates.

Nineteen percent (19%) expressed gratitude for having this class.

Fifteen percent (15%) expressed a desire to be introduced to more games including other than board games.

Twelve percent (12%) considered this to be the most interesting class they had taken to date.

Twelve percent (12%) considered writing reports as challenging but good.

Twelve percent (12%) appreciated that they could only use English during class time.

Twelve percent (12%) noted that they gained knowledge.

The following responses, both positive and negative, expressed by eight percent (8%) - two respondents each, are as follows: using the games I could speak English naturally, the quizzes were good and necessary, writing skill improved, listening skill improved, stamina improved, ability to think - particularly in English improved, homework should have been more thoroughly reviewed by the whole class, the instructor should speak more slowly, it was difficult to communicate with the lowest students in the class, and it was difficult to learn new game rules in one week.

Summary of Opinions and comments

The vast majority of self-assessments and comments were positive. The program was roundly enjoyed by the students. There were reported gains in multiple facilities - particularly in vocabulary and communication. Many considered the class to be the best they have taken. Many were pleased the class atmosphere cultivated deeper relations between students, as compared to

a typical class, resulting in friendships being formed. A significant number of participants expressed appreciation for the course to be available. A significant number would also like to be introduced to more games. Many considered the written requirements to have been beneficial. One reason for this may be that the assignments were focused on self-assessment and improved competencies as well as the games. Subjects may have enjoyed the challenges of producing a detailed and a metacognitive perspective of their activities. Many also appreciated the requirement to conduct classroom activity only in English and the amount of new and varied information they were exposed to and learned from the different games. This point may be most directly linked to the 'game-as-teacher' quality of this approach. For a small number the pace of work and the level of class were a difficult challenge. It should be noted that there was a small contingent - two or three subjects (by the researcher's estimation), who's English competence and commitment was really not up to the demands and expectation of the class and the other participants. There were different remaining comments offered once each by participants. The majority were positive and ranged from listings of specific individual competencies most improved and feelings toward content and activities.

From the perspective of considering the value and applicability of the games, the comments provide recognition of their effectiveness. Collectively they perform well. This understood, there still are conclusions, provided in the conclusion section, to be drawn in regard to the comparative value of the individual games.

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

It is clear, from the review of the questionnaire, that the board games were regarded highly as an elemental medium for activity. Each game, accepting that UPWORDS and SCRABBLE share very similar aspects, instigates nurturing of differing competencies and skills in order to succeed. Using the 'game-as-teacher' perspective all but one of the games, were very effective at stimulating communicative and lexical skills. The supplementary homework assignments were acknowledged as supportive and enlightening. Students seemed to enjoy the opportunity to attend to their learning at both the level of specific competency development and at the level of meta-cognitive development. This may also account for respondents ranking the program as good-excellent for developing independent working skills. It is worth pointing out that strongly motivating learners to independently pursue learning and study is the ultimate goal of all education. If successive research can further substantiate this result, this approach to learning may have enormous implications for SLA and for education in general. There could be a learning approach based on 'games-as-teachers' for multiple topics for learning at multiple levels of competency. The potential of this concept for language acquisition in particular, and learning in

general, is perhaps the most significant general take-away of this program and deserving of follow-up research.

The open and relaxed atmosphere encouraged by playing games, particularly in pairs, fostered a lowering of the inhibitions often encountered in communication classes. Almost all participants clearly expressed excitement playing games with classmates. Playing time was fun and enlightening. The socially open style of the class resulted in many students forming new friendships with other class members. Large percentages acknowledged strong gains in vocabulary skills, communicative skills and fluency. There were also advances in comprehension and attention span that were impressive.

Considering the program and the games alone, it would be better to remove Clue from the program and to increase the number of classes to play Pictionary (two more sessions), Around the World (one more session), and Monopoly (one more session) in the second semester, or to introduce a new social-performance game into the program rather than increasing play time of the currently used games. If Clue is removed but no new game introduced, the slightly slower pace will allow for students to go a bit deeper into their introspective assignments for the games.

Subsequent lines of research will be into the specific skills each game engenders. There have been a number of lexical competencies identified with UPWORDS and SCRABBLE that lend themselves to further study. Recognition of words from sets of random letters, modification of words with prefixes and suffixes, and the identification of new lexical items through morpheme shifts are apparent. There are domains in phonological cognition that Pictionary lends itself to for further study. Monopoly, with its focus on everyday economic and societal activities, presents interesting opportunities to pursue. The enhancement of the facility to think and plan quantitatively in English is one such proficiency to consider.

The 'game-as-teacher' methodology should be more closely investigated. This quality of self-educating games could produce multiple lines of learning. The potential for interactive learning through game based activities could produce many new and novel approaches in education. The application to learning in environments with limited access to resources and educators could be particularly valuable.

With sufficient resources and research subjects, it would be illuminating to measure improvement of competencies between a cohort of students using the above explained program versus subjects following a more traditional communication program and syllabus. The results could encourage a dramatic expansion in methodology and approaches available for instructors

to avail themselves to.

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Appendix 1

(This appendix section is taken from the 2017 paper evaluating the program for application to students and describes the board games and their use in the classroom.)

Program Module Descriptions

UPWORDS

UPWORDS, a simplified version of SCRABBLE created for children, is a board game in which the participants construct crosswords from randomly selected letters. In UPWORDS competitors create a growing crossword by attaching a new word to a previously made word in the crossword that incorporates one letter from a word on the board, by extending a previously made word that attaches letters to the front and or back of the word, or by stacking different letters on top of the letters of a previously played word as long as at least one letter remains from before modifying the word (ie: “mail” into “tail” or “garlic”).

This last quality, “stacking”, is unique to UPWORDS and provides an opportunity to consider vocabulary from playfully child-like and extremely flexible awareness perspectives that are never encountered in standard language study. In the above example of a “turn” changing “mail” into “tail”, by stacking a “t” on top of a “m”, the player discerned and produced the minimum morpheme shift that resulted in a completely new word from the existing word. This is a sophisticated cognitive process that a young native speaker learning or “playing” with a language might do but would not normally take place in typical study and learning of a language. In the example of changing “mail” into “garlic” the participant recognized points of intersection of letters between two completely different words and by “stacking” a “g” over the “m”, a “r” over the “i”, and the adding “i” and “c” to the end of the previous word made a completely different word. This action necessitates sophisticated vocabulary knowledge perception and cognitive flexibility.

Successfully playing requires focus on cultivating excellent spelling skills in UPWORDS and SCARBBLE. UPWORDS allows players to remove incorrectly spelled words without losing your “turn” which encourages risk-taking, self correction and discussion of words and spelling between partners.

In the UPWORDS module there are prefix study assignments to encourage expanded understanding of word transformations. This is often the first time that prefixes are specifically studied and it is exciting for the students to attempt to apply their new knowledge while playing.

SCRABBLE

SCRABBLE, the original board game that UPWORDS is derived from, is a

crossword forming game. There is no stacking of pieces but letters are assigned different values based on their difficulty of usage and the board also has four kinds of special bonus scoring spaces. There are locations that double or triple the value of the letter placed on them and there are locations that double or triple the value of the entire word containing a letter on the location.

Playing to most effectively integrate the maximum scoring opportunities of placing high value letters on the spaces that increase individual letter scores and playing for words that additionally incorporate spaces that multiply the value of an entire word involve the application of multiple cognitive aptitudes. These attributes encourage participants to deeply consider the global placement of words and letters and the words they can make within such constraints, in order to maximise scoring opportunities.

There is a high level of strategic planning both offensive and defensive through letter and word selection and placement that comes to bear on successfully playing. This quality requires and encourages great flexibility and creativity in conceiving of additions to the crossword.

There are assignments on suffixes during this module that again expand understanding of word structure and grammatical transformations of vocabulary.

PICTIONARY Junior

PICTIONARY Junior, the first module of the second semester of the program, is derived from the original board game PICTONARY. The only difference from the original version is the level of difficulty of the vocabulary used. In this game teams compete to sketch vocabulary items in order to compel participants to correctly guess the item within a one minute time limit. The individual drawing, the “picturist”, can sketch a picture of the actual item or representations of the sound or sounds necessary to produce an utterance of the item. For items that are easily rendered directly, simply sketching the item is effective. For items that are more abstract, sketches aimed at reproducing sounds may be more effective. If the item is “elephant” drawing an elephant would suffice. If the item is somewhat abstract for example, “handsome”, rather than trying to depict “handsome” itself, it may be easier to prompt the players to say the word by drawing the sketch of a hand “+” the sketch of the sun together to produce the sounds. Some items may require a combination of techniques, for example; a pig “+” an upward pointing arrow “+” a truck to form “pick-up truck”.

Competing in this game encourages constructing very creative homophone combinations, intuitive leaps of thought that align with or are English derived and novel combinations of sounds and images. The picturist can not speak, gesture or use letters or numbers - only draw. The pressure of watching the one-minute timer run-down also creates an opportunity to learn to adapt to an environment necessitating creative thinking and generating language output while highly stressed.

The vocabulary used in the game is very broad and falls into many categories taken from all aspects of everyday life that a typical young person in a native English speaking environment would encounter. Many of the vocabulary items proffered are very commonly known colloquialisms to native speakers but would never appear in a typical English as a Second Language or Foreign Language study program.

Any items encountered for the first time and items that competitors could not answer successfully are assigned as homework to study. In the following class the words are reviewed with the students giving definitions, sentences using the word and pronunciation in English along with a drawing, preferably a “sounds” representation of the item.

Around the World

Around the world is a general trivia board game based on world culture. The participants move around a board, landing on one of the four topic categories; Culture and Customs, People and Places, Geography, and Language and answer questions, or land on one of two less frequently encountered categories; World Bank Spaces that provide information about social causes and actions taken to assist them, and World Wonder Spaces that introduce players to some of the world’s recognised wonders and the continents they are on.

When a team lands on a topic, one of the opposing teams is given the question card and must read it to the challenging team. After a team understands the question, which can require negotiation and repeating the question multiple times, the members discuss it together and provide a group answer.

All missed and/or incorrectly answered questions and answers are recorded and researched, in English, and short explanations are written as homework. In the following class the answers are reviewed.

Clue

Clue is a board game that compels the participants to use deductive logic and reasoning to solve a crime. The board comprises nine rooms of a mansion in which a murder has taken place. Each of the rooms is the potential murder scene with six potential murderers that serve simultaneously as the participant’s character playing pieces and six possible murder weapons. There is one playing card representing each character piece, room, and weapon. To start the game one card from each category is removed facedown and placed into an envelope (the case file) and placed in the center of the board. This envelope contains the murderer, weapon, and room where the murder took place. The remaining cards are shuffled together and randomly distributed to the participating teams.

The game progresses by the teams moving the character pieces on the board and

entering the different rooms as they choose. Once in a room the team can ask a question proposing a weapon and murderer with the entered room as the crime scene. The other teams are required to answer in turn until one team can respond to the question by secretly displaying one card to the questioning team that disproves one of the three suggested aspects of the crime, or all teams confirm that they have none of the suggested elements. Through this process the teams attempt to identify the three cards in the envelope.

While the teams are required to provide honest information they can also control the information they reveal and by their questions misdirect the other competing teams. Logical deduction, analysis of information, controlled release of information and intentional deception all play an integral part in the negotiation processes of successfully playing.

Monopoly

Monopoly is the final module and board game of the program. By far the most complex and rules intensive board game of the program, Monopoly requires the participating teams to engage in many communicative and economic tasks. The fundamental premise is the purchase of, negotiation of, exchange of, and development of property in order to accumulate the most wealth while driving the other competitors into bankruptcy. There are also a wide range of common social, lifetime, and financial dealings encountered. The mastering of the content is highly applicable to everyday life and is highly beneficial to improving communicative and social competence in English. The practices of buying, selling, negotiating agreements, and using numbers are of particular utility. The need to plan and execute strategy results in a great deal of communicative activity between team members and competing teams.

The original version of Monopoly could easily take a number of hours to finish, however there has been the addition of the “speed die” which makes it possible to complete a game much more quickly, often within the limits of class time. In a way Monopoly represents the culmination of the series of modules as it is the closest to real life happenings in content. The events encountered parallel everyday situations and social interrelations encouraging very lively and spontaneous exchanges. ...

(Observations of game usage)

... UPWORDS

As noted in the module description many of the skills called upon and enhanced during game play do not fall within the domain of standard English communication programs. Creating or extending words in a crossword is easily understood by participants. Getting the players to transform words by “stacking” often requires demonstration. This is accomplished by playing example “turns” or giving advice while being an active observer. At first many students struggle with word transformations

made possible by stacking but it also becomes clear that the scoring opportunities by “stacking” far exceed simple crossword building. The team that most effectively “stacks” has a much better chance of winning. Often there is a sudden moment when the students really understand the concept of “stacking” and there is a comparable sudden explosion of complexity in play.

The set of skills needed for “stacking” is often more quickly demonstrated by the less academically adept players. From the beginning of the program the participants become aware that they are in a new kind of environment for learning with a new kind of playing field. Early on an atmosphere of friendly rivalry is established and there is more recognition of the ability of the academically lower performing students.

During this module there are prefix study homework assignments. During play there is a noticeable push to recognise and attach prefixes to words.

One noted problem is the reluctance of opposing teams to check if the playing team’s spelling is correct. This was rectified by requiring all teams to confirm the spelling of their play after making it. This same rule is applied to SCRABBLE as well.

SCRABBLE

SCRABBLE does not allow “stacking” but because the letters have different values and the board multiple special scoring locations, the participants over time come to realize the depth of far-reaching strategies they have available to apply for success.

The players come to recognise and appreciate the opportunities at hand in relation to the potential placement of letters and words on the special scoring squares on the board. There is truly concerted effort and discussion between team members to comb their collective memories for words that can be used to best advantage from the letters at their disposal to produce the best integration of these factors for the highest possible score.

There is value in making moves that limit the possible scoring opportunities of competing teams as well. This calls on very sophisticated planning and strategy skills, and global positioning awareness of words on the whole board. Playing engenders a broad range of communicative exchanges between partners as they deliberate tactical decisions while attempting to use the letters at hand to achieve their goals.

There are homework assignments on suffixes during this module. The awareness of these transformations becomes focused on making the best additions that assist in exploiting special scoring squares as well.

PICTIONARY Junior

PICTIONARY Junior Is highly entertaining and exciting to play. The level of

energy exhibited by the participants is always intense and, particularly as the timer runs down, can become frantic.

Most of the topics and lexical items used are familiar objects but are very often in colloquial form. The students encounter vocabulary that would most likely be encountered during a home stay. An example would be the topic clue “creepy crawlies” which means small animals that crawl or slither and an item from the topic, “daddy long legs” the colloquial name of a very common spider. This would be very easy for a young native English speaking child but very challenging for someone studying English. The participants always enjoy encountering this vocabulary and find the homework assignments on them enlightening.

Similar to the challenges in developing “stacking” skills outlined above, it often takes multiple attempts and demonstration for the students to develop the aptitudes to make and process sound representations of items. It is also a source of genuine hilarity during competition. By the end of the module the students have learned many new lexical items and have developed and enhanced many communicative skills that cannot be directly taught from a textbook.

Around The World

Around The World requires participants to consider and discuss a broad range of topics. The requirement of having a competing team read the question, and often a hint for the answer, is helpful to promote communicative competence. When the questions are of unfamiliar topics or information it necessitates repetition and multiple clarifications while negotiating meaning to understand the questions. Often the topics are unfamiliar so these exchanges provide excellent practice for students that is similar to the experience of using English with other speakers outside of the classroom.

Often the students must engage in deliberation and pool together any knowledge they do have on a topic to arrive at an answer. Educated guessing based on discussion is common.

The homework assignments on missed answers encourage the students to expand their knowledge of the world. Having encountered the topics in the game there is more intrinsic value to the information than if it was just encountered in a textbook.

Clue

Clue relies on deductive reasoning, logic and when possible deceitful cunning. Participants engage in a slow continuous process of elimination of potential answers but at appropriate opportunities can mislead other teams. After one or two playing sessions the participants come to realise the value of intentionally hiding information in their possession. It can also be beneficial to propose questions that are delusive. Teammates decide what information to enquire into and what information to conceal.

Logic and formulating deception become themes for discussion.

Clue relies the least on luck and rewards strong analytical thinking. The participants who stay focused tend to perform best.

Monopoly

The rules for Monopoly are the most long and complicated of all the games. Having a full list of study questions from which the test is constructed gives the students a very fair opportunity to pass the rules test. By the time this module is encountered the participants are adept at studying for and passing the rules test. This represents achieving an impressive level of competence in understanding written rules and instructions.

Game play is embraced with enthusiasm as teams learn the objectives of buying and negotiating for property. The occasion of constantly negotiating costs and expenses encourages the facility of saying and using numbers while engaged in negotiations which is a very valuable facility not regularly encountered in a traditional study course. In short time the players move from difficulty using numbers and “monopoly money” to handling it as easily and quickly as they do actual currency.

The opportunities to chance upon all manner of real life circumstances associated with money exposes participants to the vocabulary of economic activity. Economic planning plays a very strong role in the game and teams engage in many discussions weighing the relative benefits of different team members’ ideas for advancing their positions.

It should be noted that while students do enjoy playing Monopoly very much often they do not pursue the objective of developing properties to drive rival teams to bankruptcy as aggressively as would happen in the original version. This may be due to the “speed die” which expedites the swift purchase of all property and once all properties are sold expedites the swift assignment of increasing expenditures. This forced economic stress is not encountered in the original version without the die. Once all the properties are purchased the board, in contrast to the traditional version, becomes an economically dangerous place to move around without as much extensive property development.

(Levy, 2018)

Appendix 2

New Data From The Survey Questionnaire

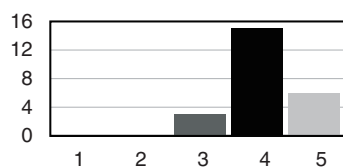
The research subjects were students at a private university in Kyoto that the researcher previously taught at. There were a total of twenty-six participants in two cohorts. Sixteen students were in a class in 2003 which composed the first cohort and ten students in a class in 2004 composed the second cohort. In total there were nineteen female students and seven male students. All responses were voluntary and anonymous. They were primarily third year students enrolled in an elective intermediate communication class in a Cultural Studies Department. The data used in this study was collected by means of a questionnaire upon completion of the second semester of the course. The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions scored on a five point Likert scale (1 = low, 5 = high). On the back there were also three open ended written response questions for students to expand on their thoughts about the program. There was also one additional question asking the students to list the skills they felt improved the most.

The results are given below (1 = poor, 2 = weak, 3 = good, 4 = excellent, 5 = outstanding). For this study the results of eleven questions all reviewed for the first time; six questions (questions 1 - 6) on the effectiveness of each game for studying English, and five questions (questions 7 - 11) on the effectiveness of the games for promoting particular academic skills, are being reported on.

Please rate the games for their value in learning English:

1) UPWORDS

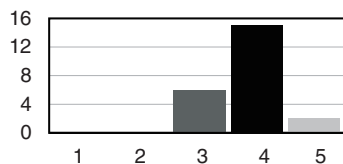
1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 0 (0%), 3 = 3 (13%), 4 = 15 (62%),
5 = 6 (25%) average = 4.2 (excellent) NA = 2.



Thirteen percent rated UPWORDS as good for learning English, sixty-two percent rated it as excellent, and twenty-five percent rated it as outstanding.

2) SCRABBLE

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 0 (0%), 3 = 6 (23%), 4 = 15 (58%),
5 = 2 (8%), average = 4.0 (excellent) NA = 2

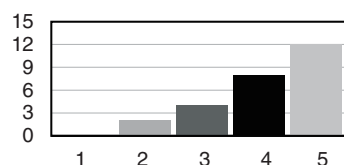


Twenty-three percent rated SCRABBLE as good for learning English, fifty-eight percent rated it as excellent, and eight percent rated it as outstanding.

3) Around The World

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 2 (8%), 3 = 4 (15%), 4 = 8 (31%),

5 = 12 (46%) average = 4.2 (excellent),

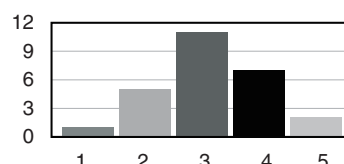


Eight percent rated Around The World as weak for learning English, fifteen percent rated it as good, thirty-one percent rated it as excellent, and forty-six percent rated it as outstanding.

4) Clue

1 = 1 (4%), 2 = 5 (19%), 3 = 11 (42%), 4 = 7 (27%),

5 = 2 (8%), average = 3.2 (good)

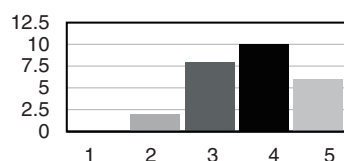


Four percent rated Clue as poor for learning English, nineteen percent rated Clue as weak, forty-two percent rated as good, twenty-seven percent rated it excellent, and eight percent rated it as outstanding.

5) Pictionary

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 2 (8%), 3 = 8 (31%), 4 = 10 (38%),

5 = 6 (23%), average = 3.8 (good - excellent)

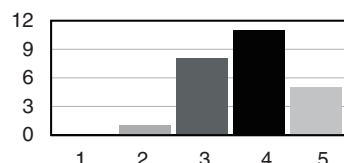


Eight percent rated Pictionary as weak for learning English, thirty-one percent rated it as good, thirty-eight percent rated it as excellent, and twenty-three percent rated it as outstanding.

6) Monopoly

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 1 (4%), 3 = 8 (8%), 4 = 11 (42%),

5 = 5 (19%), average = 3.8 (good - excellent) NA = 1



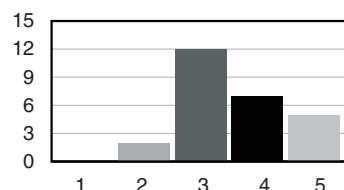
Four percent rated Monopoly as weak for learning English, eight percent rated it as good, forty-two rated it as excellent and nineteen percent rated it as outstanding.

Please rate your improvement in the following skills:

7) Creativity

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 2 (8%), 3 = 12 (46%), 4 = 7 (27%),

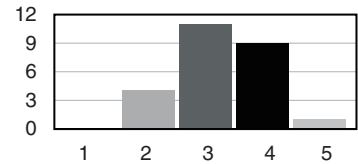
5 = 5 (19%) average = 3.6 (good - excellent)



Eight percent rated playing board games and the study program as weak for improving creativity, forty-six percent rated it as good, twenty-seven percent ranked it as excellent, and nineteen percent ranked it as outstanding.

8) Logical analysis

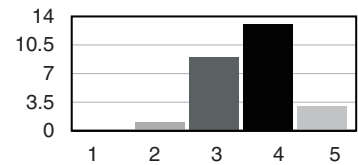
1 = 0, 2 = 4 (16%), 3 = 11 (44%), 4 = 9 (36%),
5 = 1 (4%), average = 3.3 (good) NA = 1



Sixteen percent rated board games and the study program as weak at improving logical analysis, forty-four percent rated it as good, thirty-six percent ranked it as excellent, and four percent ranked it as outstanding.

9) Ability to work independently

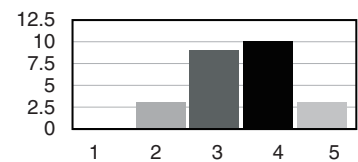
1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 1 (4%), 3 = 9 (36%), 4 = 13 (50%),
5 = 3 (12%), average = 3.7 (good - excellent)



Four percent rated board games and the program of study as weak in developing independent working skills, thirty-six percent rated it as good for it, fifty percent rated it as excellent for it, and twelve percent rated it as outstanding for it.

10) Comprehension

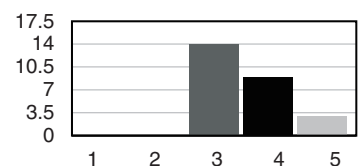
1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 3 (12%), 3 = 9 (36%), 4 = 10 (38%),
5 = 3 (12%), average = 3.5 (good - excellent)



Twelve percent of respondents ranked playing board games and the program of study as weak in developing comprehension skills, thirty-six ranked it as good for it, thirty-eight percent ranked it as excellent for it, and twelve percent ranked it as outstanding for it.

11) Attention span

1 = 0 (0%), 2 = 0 (0%), 3 = 14 (54%), 4 = 9 (36%),
5 = 3 (12%), average = 3.6 (good - excellent)



Fifty-four percent ranked playing board games and the program of study good at improving attention span, thirty-six percent ranked it as very good for this, and twelve percent ranked it as outstanding for it.

Appendix 3

The three open ended questions answered on the back of the survey and compiled summaries of the responses are as follows;

Please give your opinion of this class;

Strong point(s),

There were a total of sixty-eight comments in response:

24, (92%) - Study through games is fun and interesting / Fun and improving skill at the same time / This class has originality so I was never tired of class / Always enjoyed class / I could learn with joy / I was very excited by taking this class.

13, (50%) - I could learn many interesting vocabulary [items] and use them as well.

5, (19%) - Became friends with classmates.

5, (19%) - Reading rules a good exercise / improved English reading.

3, (12%) - Writing reports was hard but I used my brain / got writing skill.

3, (12%) - We must speak only English and if we don't speak we may lose the game.

3, (12%) - I gained knowledge.

2, (8%) - Using the games I wanted / I could speak English naturally.

2, (8%) - Using quizzes was interesting / necessary.

1, (4%) - I got the courage to speak English.

1, (4%) - I learned a lot of culture.

1, (4%) - Everyone did their best.

1, (4%) - We must speak English well, and can communicate very well.

1, (4%) - Every report made me deepen understanding about the games.

1, (4%) - Understanding games is understanding English.

1, (4%) - Board games are interesting but difficult.

1, (4%) - We studied game instructions, we have to do a lot of homework but its good for us to build English skill.

Weak point(s),

There were a total of fourteen comments is response:

2, (8%) - Hard to communicate when my partner had lower ability.

2, (8%) - It's hard to learn the rules in one week.

1, (4%) - It's hard to study the rules without the game.

1, (4%) - Other students negative toward me when I'm late.

1, (4%) - Tests and homework were not easy.

- 1, (4%) - Some people were late. [Monday first period class / interrupted play]
- 1, (4%) - Communication is difficult but it's my weak point.
- 1, (4%) - Only played games and made reports.
- 1, (4%) - Some games are complicated.
- 1, (4%) - We have to use English more and more.
- 1, (4%) - Too much homework.
- 1, (4%) - I thought many times, "How can I say this situation?" So, we can't communicate each other.

How can this course be improved?

There were a total of eleven comments in response:

- 4, (15%) - Use more kinds of games / not just board games.
- 2, (8%) - Before submitting homework we should explain the contents in class / I want to hear other peoples answers.
- 2, (8%) - please speak more slowly. [Request to the instructor.]
- 1, (4%) - Play some games more long and deeply.
- 1, (4%) - More chances to communicate [play] with the teacher.
- 1, (4%) - Make rule study groups.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding this class?

There were a total of twenty-eight comments in response:

- 8, (31%) - I enjoyed this class all games are good / it was fun.
- 5, (19%) - Thank you / gratitude.
- 3, (12%) - This is the most interesting class until now.
- 1, (4%) - My shyness is less.
- 1, (4%) - I regret being late - I lost knowledge.
- 1, (4%) - Positive thinking is important for this class.
- 1, (4%) - I could study hard.
- 1, (4%) - First, I don't like this class because game is difficult, but now I got a lot of knowledge - it's very wonderful. So, I think lucky meeting this class now.
- 1, (4%) - I want to play games more and more.
- 1, (4%) - I would like to play these games with foreign friends.
- 1, (4%) - I'm interested in English games and I want to learn more than six.
- 1, (4%) - This class is good.
- 1, (4%) - This class is very fresh for me.
- 1, (4%) - You often say, "I'm serious. This class is not a joke.", I feel that the attitude is very

important.

- 1, (4%) - I could talk naturally in English.

There was an additional question asking the students to list the skill or skills you feel improved the most during the year, the responses are as follows;

There were a total of forty-one comments in response:

- 16, (62%) - communication skill / talking / English expression skills.

- 8, (31%) - vocabulary skill

- 2, (8%) - writing skill

- 2, (8%) - reading, reading instructions

- 2, (8%) - hearing / listening

- 2, (8%) - English stamina

- 2, (8%) - The ability to think in English. / Thinking skills

- 1, (4%) - My shy character improved. In the past, I didn't want to talk in English but this class doesn't allow to use Japanese and I can speak only in English.

This opportunity made me improve my shy character

- 1, (4%) - I can think about foreign country culture.

- 1, (4%) - How to use many board games.

- 1, (4%) - My knowledge increased.

- 1, (4%) - Comprehension

- 1, (4%) - The bond with friends.

- 1, (4%) - We were able to use English for fun by taking this class.

Appendix 4

Intermediate Communication Questionnaire

	(low)			(high)	
Do you feel that this course improved your English ability?	1	2	3	4	5
Did you enjoy using board games during class time?	1	2	3	4	5
Please rate the games for their value in learning English:					
Upwards	1	2	3	4	5
Scrabble	1	2	3	4	5
Around the World	1	2	3	4	5
Clue	1	2	3	4	5
Pictionary	1	2	3	4	5
Monopoly	1	2	3	4	5
Would you recommend this class to a classmate?	1	2	3	4	5
Did you learn new communication skills?	1	2	3	4	5
Was making combined reports a good learning exercise?	1	2	3	4	5
Did playing board games improve your English stamina?	1	2	3	4	5
Was making a board game a useful exercise?	1	2	3	4	5
Please rate your improvement in the following language skills:					
Creativity	1	2	3	4	5
Logical analysis	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to work independently	1	2	3	4	5
Comprehension	1	2	3	4	5
Attention Span	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to communicate ideas to others	1	2	3	4	5
Does studying game instructions improve English ability?	1	2	3	4	5

TBL（タスクベースの語学学習）および SLA（第二外国語習得）のために使用される ボードゲームについての学習者の意見に係る予備評価

本論文は、第二言語習得のための研究プログラムとして、ボードゲームの授業への応用を扱った過去の本紀要で発表された研究に基づき、コミュニケーションスキルの向上にあたり個々のゲームにおける特定の有効性について研究するものです。プログラム参加者によって報告された、使用される特定の6つのゲーム（UPWORDS, SCRABBLE, Pictionary, Around the World, Clue, 及び Monopoly）の相対的な長所と短所について調査と報告を行います。

状況による足場作り、有意義な対人交渉、またそれぞれのゲームプレイを成功に導くため使用されるメタ言語的戦略は、研究報告されたゲームの有用性に密接に関連した非常に効果的なフィードバック効果として認められました。

Keywords: UPWORDS, SCRABBLE, Pictionary, Around the World, Clue, Monopoly, Tabletop games, Board games, Task-Based Learning, Learner Agency

