



APPLYING JIGSAW-GUESSING GAMES FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING VOCABULARY AT LAC HONG UNIVERSITY

ỨNG DỤNG CÁC TRÒ CHƠI JIGSAW-GUESSING TRONG VIỆC DẠY VÀ HỌC TỪ VỰNG CỦA SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN TẠI ĐẠI HỌC LẠC HỒNG

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ABSTRACT. Many language teachers at Lac Hong University (LHU) were facing with the inactiveness of the students in their English classes. Discovering an appropriate way to stimulate their language learning and teaching is a critical question. An examination was carried out in some classes of non-English majors learnt with a variety of games at LHU. After the examination, most of students showed the wish to learn in a relaxing learning atmosphere with games. During teaching, the writer detected the benefits of using jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games in her teaching at LHU. Therefore, a research was conducted on two classes of second-year non-English majors using jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games to find out the effectiveness of the games as well as the students' vocabulary retention. An action research with tests, questionnaires, and interviews was quantitatively and qualitatively used to help find the results. The outcomes of the study displayed that the jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games could improve students' vocabulary retention and revision and involve the students in their studying with a relaxing classroom atmosphere (88.2%). 72.7% of her students were interested in their learning of English. It is believed that the implementation of games in general and jigsaw-guessing game in particular can assist the writer as well as other language teachers teaching English vocabulary for non-majors at LHU.

KEYWORDS. *games, jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games, vocabulary retention, classroom environment*

TÓM TẮT. Nhiều giáo viên ngôn ngữ tại Đại học Lạc Hồng (LHU) đã phải đối mặt với việc sinh viên không tích cực trong các lớp học ngôn ngữ của mình. Việc tìm ra một cách hay để thúc đẩy việc dạy và học ngôn ngữ là một vấn đề rất cấp thiết. Một khảo sát được tiến hành ở một số lớp học tiếng Anh không chuyên trường Đại học Lạc Hồng, nơi sinh viên đã được học ngôn ngữ với nhiều loại trò chơi khác nhau. Sau cuộc khảo sát, hầu hết các sinh viên bày tỏ mong muốn được học trong một môi trường học tập thoải mái với các trò chơi. Trong quá trình giảng dạy, tác giả thấy được sự hiệu quả của việc sử dụng các trò chơi từ vựng jigsaw-guessing trong công tác giảng dạy của mình tại LHU. Do đó, tác giả đã được thực hiện một nghiên cứu trên hai lớp học tiếng Anh không chuyên năm hai với việc sử dụng các trò chơi từ vựng jigsaw-guessing để tìm hiểu sự hiệu quả của trò chơi này cũng như khả năng ghi nhớ từ vựng của sinh viên. Tác giả dùng phương pháp nghiên cứu hành động một cách định lượng và định tính với các bài kiểm tra, bảng câu hỏi và phỏng vấn để giúp tìm ra kết quả. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy các trò chơi từ vựng jigsaw-guessing có thể cải thiện khả năng ghi nhớ và ôn tập từ vựng của sinh viên, đồng thời lôi cuốn sinh viên vào môi trường học tập đầy thú vị (88,2%). 72,7% sinh viên thích thú học tiếng Anh. Tác giả tin rằng việc triển khai các trò chơi nói chung cũng như trò chơi jigsaw-guessing nói riêng có thể giúp ích cho các nhà nghiên cứu khác cũng như giáo viên trong việc dạy từ vựng tiếng Anh cho sinh viên không chuyên tại LHU.

TỪ KHÓA. *trò chơi, trò chơi đoán từ vựng jigsaw, ghi nhớ từ vựng, môi trường học tập*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching language for non-English majors at LHU is a very tough work because of several reasons. First, they seem inactive of second language. Some say that they dislike learning English; moreover, some believe that English is too difficult for them to study. Secondly, they put more focus on other subjects of their majors, not English. Students tend to be inattentive to their language learning. They are fearful to join in their language learning because of deficiency of background knowledge. Lastly, outdated methods make students become inactive in their studying. Students have few chances to practice in class. During her teaching, she realized that students would like to study in a relaxing learning atmosphere with games. Games are also parts of the lessons in which students could learn some interesting things from games. Most of them showed that they had few chances to work and interact with English in their classes even they were in a big class (about 60). Working in groups was their

preferred learning style. They also stated that they loved to learn with competition in class. This is the reason why learning with games were preferred in her language classes. This research is to prove the effectiveness of using jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games in foreign language teaching and learning. Learning a language has become more interesting and motivating by educational games which are certain to increase pleasure to classroom where students would feel more relaxed and comfortable. Students would get more chances to get into some classroom activities and waken competitive desire inside people (Uzun, 2009). And vocabulary games bring real life contexts into classroom and advance students' use of English in communicative way

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(Nguyen and Khuat, 2003). Consequently, games in general and vocabulary in particular play a very clear role in language teaching and learning. After an examination of using games in language teaching at LHU for non-English majors, I learn that jigsaw-guessing vocabulary game should be used as one beneficial game in language learning and teaching vocabulary at the university. Students expressed to prefer learning vocabulary in this way. They were keen on learning with the jigsaw-guessing vocabulary game that the teacher planned. It was a useful approach in the process of the lesson revision. This game might eradicate nervousness in class and students might participate eagerly in learning activities in classroom.

2. CONTENT

2.1 Context of the research

With the aim of providing the labor force to the local and international businesses, LHU's syllabi have targeted to business for specialized majors of technology and society. And English courses are offered to all non-English majors as obligatory subjects. The curriculum is framed from the low level to high levels. The teachers just get into classroom and teach by using fixed books which focus on teaching the four English skills. The curriculum remains unchanged to all teachers. They have to finish the books in 11 weeks (for 45 periods) or 15 weeks (for 60 periods) including teaching four English skills, and pronunciation practice part. Apparently, the teachers have to catch up with time teaching the integrated skills at the same time. Most games are used in several classes with the intention of creating enjoyment or time-consuming. At the research time, there are 10 faculties at LHU suggesting academic curricula in both natural and social sciences. Non-English majors will learn English courses within seven uninterrupted terms in the first, second, and third year, chiefly concentrating on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skill because the target of TOEIC scores that students have to achieve is 400 or B-level certificate in English as a prerequisite for their graduation. The fact is that most non-English majors come from diverse regions throughout the country. Many of them come from the countryside in which English is not much common, especially speaking and listening. In the interview, about 95% of the students have never reached them before. Therefore, they have so many difficulties in learning a foreign language when they enter the university, especially learning how to speak English and how to listen English tasks well. They seem inactive and neglectful of learning this kind of language because of the huge difference between the general English at high schools which focus much on grammar and reading comprehension, and the tests at university which are conducting speaking and listening at the same time. Two classes of second-year non-English majors at LHU with the total number of participants 110 were chosen for the research. They come from the Faculty of Pharmacy. Reading comprehension and grammar of English are the two aspects that some of them are good at. Nevertheless, some students expose that English is quite hard and uninteresting. When teachers put them to work in groups, they hope to work groups of their interest and work very well in groups of their choice. However, most of them realize the importance of obtaining a TOEIC 400 or B-level certificate for their graduation.

On the above basis, the writer had attempts to find answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent can jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games enhance students' ability of learning English?
2. Will jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games get more students' engagement in learning English?
3. How do students feel about jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games?

2.2 Literature Review

Review of necessity of vocabulary learning

According to Carter (1992, page 152-153) and Channell (1988), "the need of much more vocabulary to be taught and learnt as separate activities rather than, say, part of a grammar or reading lesson." It means vocabulary should be learnt in a variety of forms. Allen (1983) and DeCarrico (2001) also stated the importance of learning the meanings of words as well as phrases or words in specific situations. Nation (2006) has shown an estimate that a normal learner of English as a second language needs roughly 6,000 to 7,000 word family vocabulary to get understanding spoken situations and 8,000 to 9,000 word family vocabulary to comprehend any reading. In order to get a good learning outcome, vocabulary plays a key role in learning process. (Gu and Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo and Lightbrown, 1999). To be good at communicating a foreign language, learners of that foreign language should gain a large number of words and should know how to apply them correctly (Tavil, Z. M. and İşisağ, K. U., 2009). Furthermore, researches have shown that the degree of learners' vocabulary has a weighty influence on reading attainment (Francis & Simpson, 2003; Qian, 2002) and on language learning upshots more generally (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Kojic-Sabo & Lightbrown, 1999). Gu and Johnson (1996) informed that the amount of words and general language proficiently were associated with their capability to make skilful use of a dictionary and to their willingness to spend time on practicing learned words.

Previous research on the effectiveness of using games in teaching and learning vocabulary

Yip and Kwan (2006) indicated that "vocabulary building is a long process. If the games are fun, relaxing, motivating, and confidence boosting, the learners' interest is more likely to be aroused". Yip and Kwan pointed out that games bring students "a sense of achievement" have retained students' interest and ensured learning effectiveness. According to Tavil and Isisag (2009) games might be a thorough practice and at the same time both students and teachers feel relaxed. Games are valuable and more fruitful than other approaches of vocabulary presentation and review (Uberman, 1998). Vocabulary games are a "memory enhancement device" Chen (2009). Chen (2009) did a research using language games as a vocabulary learning strategy. 46 students of a language college in Taiwan spent a 20-hour English vocabulary training program. During the program, the students were grouped and regrouped according to the nature of the game. The students had similar proficiency test scores. In a study of using games, Mongillo (2010) suggested that "educators can and should use the skills students already possess to make content area learning accessible through the addition of a little fun in the curricula". The importance of educational games, games that

educate by combining fun with goal-setting, challenge and competition, has been noted by a number of educationalists (Cookall, Oxford & Saunders, 1987; Hadfield, 1990; Shie, 2004). Elliott M. A; Sutton-Smith, B. (1971) believes:

The main reason why games are supposed practical learning aids is that they spur motivation and students get very engrossed in the competitive features of the games; moreover, they try harder at games than in other courses. Naturally, when playing games, students have attempts to win or to defeat other teams for themselves or on the behalf of their group members.

Jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games

This game originates from responding some quizzes. Questions or statements are included in the quizzes. In the game, students are grouped into three to five. Their duty is to find the final group word of their own group. Firstly, each group has to look for the answers to some particular quizzes. And then, they have to pick the first letter of each answer and reorganize the letters to build up a group word of that group, which has the same meaning of the suggested ideas for each group word. When all the answers and the group word are found, that group will be the winner group. Players will show the answers on the board and write the answers down on a piece of paper. Nevertheless, the game will be ended if all the group words are uncovered. Lastly, when all groups have their group words, they keep on taking the first letters of the group words to find out the **final group word**. To find the answer to each quiz, players need to figure or anticipate different words, yet they need to pick single word which gives the appropriate letter to form the group word.

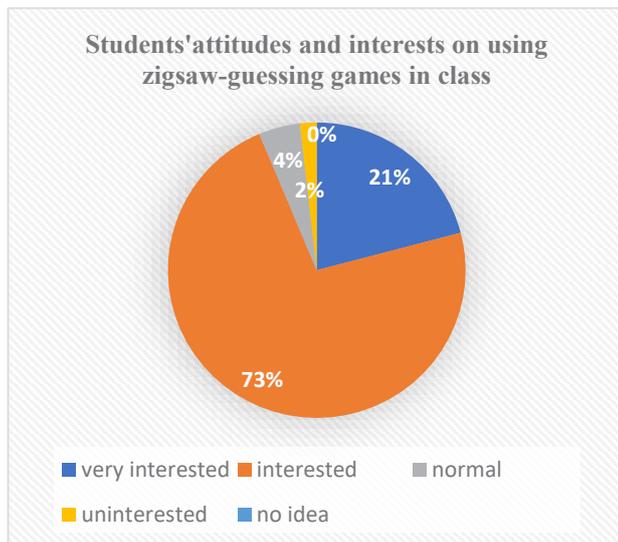


Figure 1. Students' attitudes and interests on the jigsaw-guessing games

2.3 Research methods

This research applied a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approach. So as to gather the data, tests, questionnaires, and interviews were utilized.

Tests

Two tests were implemented in both classes. The first test was carried out after students learnt for the first five lessons with the purpose of finding how much the students could retain the new words without using the jigsaw guessing games. The second test was employed after the students

finished their next five lessons with the use of the jigsaw guessing games for the same purpose. Since then, the writer could make a comparison to explore the effectiveness of using the games.

Questionnaires

Pre-questionnaire was handed out to students at the first class meeting with the aim of helping the researcher have further insight into the students' interests on games as well as their attitude on learning with games and in groups. Ten statements/questions are consisted in the pre-questionnaire which helped the researcher have an overall view of students' preferred learning style, their attitudes toward games, or their hope. After learning the English course with the use of jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games, the post-questionnaire was delivered to get to know more about students' attitudes towards the course. The questionnaire included 6 statements/questions which showed students' feelings toward the new innovation as well as their learning wish. In order to make sure the understanding of the students, the statements/ questions on both questionnaires, were typed in English and Vietnamese. To make the statements/questions comprehensible to all respondents, terminological words was evaded. The questionnaires were controlled to the participants straightforwardly and were gathered right after being filled in. This guaranteed that none of the questionnaires were unexploited. (find the questionnaires in appendix 1 & 2)

Interviews

For profound understanding and stronger endorsement of what the writer consolidated from the questionnaires, separate interviews were carried out with the participation of six students who were really into the games or performed differently from their classmates during learning English with the games. Some questions in the post-questionnaire were picked out to ask the six subjects. Open-ended questions were used (appendix 3) and the numbers of the questions were dependent on how much the researcher would like to achieve from the respondents.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, all the students who took part in the jigsaw guessing games showed their eagerness to answer all the statements/questions of the quizzes. 20,9% of the students were very attracted in learning English with the jigsaw-guessing games. 72,7% of them found attracted. However, 1,8% of them felt uninterested in learning with these games because of lack of knowledge and vocabulary. All the students were working on the games in a very close and comfortable atmosphere. Of course, key words or terms used in the games were taken from what students learned from previous lessons. Day by day, learning with the games became a kind of routine in their classes, and they asked the teacher to play the games if the teacher did not implement them. Normally, the students in these classes often kept silent every class meeting. They depended on the teacher's instruction and guidance, then they silently did the tasks. It seemed that the students forgot what they had learnt in the previous lessons. The students forgot most of the meanings of words as well as the key points of the previous lessons when the teacher reviewed them. From the individual interviews, the researcher found out that the engagement of the students and the classroom environment changed after

using these games into class. First of all, she could take advantage of letting students to work in groups. Students realized that they got more fun and felt more interesting to play the jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games. 92,7% of the participants loved to play the games in groups. Secondly, because the intention of using the games was to engage students into classroom activities, so the shy and poor students found that it was not a big problem when they gave their ideas in their group. And they showed the ability of retaining the new words effortlessly. 88,2% of the students said that they could remember and review vocabularies more easily. In brief, the use of jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games could bring a big change in encouraging students to learn English and attract them into their learning. However, a minor group of students still neglected their learning. In the interview, they truly said that they were uninterested in the games because they found nothing new from the games, and that the same structures of the games made them bored. They did not want to play the same game every class meeting. Honestly, they felt keen on playing the game in the two first weeks; however, they gradually got bored in the next weeks. Some students stated that the content of the games was carefully-chosen to suit students' level. Yet, 97,3% of the students confirmed that this kind of game should be employed in their English classes.

Noticeably, the researcher witnessed the thorough improvement of students in retaining new words after the eight - week experiment on the implementation of jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games. The experimental class showed their better vocabulary retention than the control class. In addition, students were more motivated in participating the lessons. They were keen on the games not only getting the prizes, but also challenging themselves in acquiring a language. Gardner (2006) argued that people have multiple intelligences and that the big challenge coping the disposition of human resources 'is how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences'. Consequently, the classroom environment had been upgraded. The inactive students showed 'their presence' in class, and the lessons went efficiently and easily.

It can be avoided that it was very challenging for teachers to manage a big group of students in the classroom. Games are somehow fruitful in retaining new words, but the other aspects of language learning could not be measured, especially in large classes. Too many new words to remember, but games only conveyed words in limit. Not only would all students like to join the games, but did the teacher have a chance to understand her own students in her undertaking class. However, there were still some students who refused the effort of the teacher in motivating her students. They remained quiet and did not care of what their classmates were doing. They contributed nothing when they were in groups. The study was carried out on two classes of pharmacy major. So, the results might be more reliable if the research is conducted on other majors with a larger scale.

In conclusion, with the use of jigsaw-guessing games, students freely show their own ability and intelligences in their learning. Thanks to the games, students are happy to learn in a relaxing learning environment, which was proved in the interviews.

4. CONCLUSION

In fact, jigsaw-guessing games are quite new in teaching and learning at LHU despite the proven benefits of using them classroom. Many teachers might not try using them in their teaching because of some reasons. First of all, teachers at LHU have very little time for their teaching. So, they do not have enough time carrying out the games which are thought as a way of having fun and of filling time. At Lac Hong University, teachers have to "run" with time to complete the course syllabus. Games are hardly played because they will spend a lot of time. Secondly, preparing and designing these games will be very time-consuming. Teachers have to be very careful to design the games which are appropriate to the students' level and the content of the lessons. Finally, the ingrained inactiveness of students seems to stay in every class. Students tend to expect the teachers' instructions and correction. These are the reasons why the researcher carried out the two questionnaires which were delivered at the beginning of the course and at the end of the course to make clear the benefits of using jigsaw-guessing games in learning vocabulary in non-major English classes. Although the results of the research still contain some limitations, jigsaw-guessing games are certainly useful for teachers who are teaching English for non-majors at LHU. The findings have shown that games in general and jigsaw-guessing games in particular stimulate learners to take part in their language learning, and thus create a motivating atmosphere in the classroom, making the lessons more exciting to learn as it used to be. It is believed that the use of jigsaw-guessing games can help the researcher as well as other teachers in teaching English for non-majors at LHU.

5. APPENDIX

Appendix 2

The students' attitudes and interests on jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games

(Total of students who answered the post-questionnaire: 110)
You are going to answer some questions about the jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games which the teacher had employed in your English class. Circle ONE option for each question or state your own ideas (if any). You do not need to write your name on this paper.

1. Did you believe that jigsaw-guessing vocabulary games help you learn vocabulary more easily?

- a) Yes (92/110) = 83,6%
- b) No (18/110) = 8,2%

2. How did you feel about jigsaw-guessing games?

- a) Very interested (23/110) = 21%
- b) Interested (80/110) = 73%
- c) Normal (5/110) = 4,5 %
- d) Uninterested (2/110) = 1,8%
- e) I have no idea (0/0) = 0%

3. Did you like learning with the games:

- a) Individually? (5/110 = 4,5%)
- b) In pairs? (8/48 = 7,3%)
- c) In groups? (97/110 = 88,2%)

4. What did you get from the games? (Choose TWO options)

- a) I learnt a lot of new words.
- b) I could review the vocabulary of previous lessons. (97/110 = 88,2%)
- c) I learnt some new knowledge.
- d) I felt relaxed in learning foreign language. (103/110 = 93,6%)
- e) I found them boring.
- f) I got nothing from the games.
- g) Other ideas:

5. Do you think that teachers could use this kind of game in their English classes?

- a) Yes (107/110 = 97,3%)
- b) No (0/110 = 0%)
- c) No idea (3/110 = 2,7%)

6. Do you think that this kind of games should be improved?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If, yes. State your own ideas:.....

.....

Thanks for your contribution!

Appendix 3

Model of a Jigsaw-guessing vocabulary game

JIGSAW-GUESSING QUIZ

(Elementary level)

Find the answers to these statements. Write the answers on the blanks at the end of each statement.

Group 1:

- a. The part of the body at the end of the arms, including the fingers and thumbs. _____
- b. Your father's brother. He's your _____
- c. No people or thing inside. It's _____
- d. It means "present". _____

→ Group word: Very big or very large in size or amount: _____

Group 2:

- a. Two long sticks that connect the shoulders to the hands. _____
- b. Something is not old. It's _____
- c. She does it when she's bored. _____
- d. His family is not poor, not average, but _____
- e. Something that every football player hopes to achieve. _____

→ Group word: It means "drive someone crazy": _____

Group 3:

- a. This is a letter. It is also a kind of vegetable. _____
- b. _____ here! I'm going to show you something. _____
- c. It's a color. _____
- d. In English, it has 26 letters. _____
- e. I don't know _____ to draw.

→ Group word: A round fruit with soft red and yellow skin and a large rough seed in side: _____

Group 4:

- a. The synonym of the word "jail". _____
- b. You don't want to make any noise. You use them to listen to music. _____
- c. "Like father, like _____"
- d. You use it when it rains. _____

→ Group word: The opposite of the word "pull". _____

Group 5:

- a. The number between twelve and ten. _____
- b. I don't dislike her. It means I _____ her.
- c. The time of life a person is young. _____
- d. Better _____ than never.

→ Group word: It means "to shout at": _____

? The final group word: *feeling or showing pleasure; pleased*

KEYS

Group 1: a. hands, b. uncle, c. empty, c. gift → the group word: **huge**)

Group 2: a. arms, b. new, c. yawn, d. rich, e. goal → the group word: **angry**

Group 3: a. pea, b. come, c. yellow, d. alphabet, e. how → the group word: **peach**

Group 4: a. prison, b. headphones, c. son, d. umbrella → the group word: **push**

Group 5: a. eleven, b. like, c. youth, d. late → the group word: **yell**

→ The final group word: **happy**

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