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### TEACHING GRAMMAR THROUGH GAMES

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#### RESUMO:

*O trabalho descreve material preparado pela autora com o objetivo de tornar mais motivador o ensino da gramática.*

*Trata-se de quatro jogos que fazem amplo uso de elementos visuais e que exigem intensa interação entre os alunos. Ao professor cabe o papel de juiz e coordenador. Os jogos são descritos e amostras dos visuais são incluídas.*

My purpose in this paper is to share a project "Teaching grammar through games" which I developed in my E. S. P. Teacher Training Course in Lancaster, 1984.

T. Hutchinson and A. Waters say: "The main cause of low interest in E. S. P. materials is that they are often uncreative"<sup>1</sup>. All of us know that it is difficult for the teacher to motivate the students to learn grammar and boring for the students to always receive the information in the same way - explanation + exercise. I tried to create something different to teach nominal groups. Games and visuals are joined together to teach grammar. Motivation is the most important aspect of E. S. P. teaching and visuals are an extremely important form of communication.

I chose this technique for the following reasons: to teach grammar in a different way, to vary what happens between students and teacher - The classic teacher -to whole pattern of interaction, and to get students talking to one another.

The problems of maintaining the discipline and avoiding noise were solved by preserving the teacher as coordinator and judge of the games.

*First game*

Procedure for introducing the technique:

a - The teacher explains the difference between the position of modifiers in Portuguese and in English. He uses cards with nominal groups in the two languages. He puts them on the blackboard and asks the students to tell him the difference.

E.g.

United Nations

Nações Unidas

I.M.F.

F.M.I.

b - The students receive a paper with twelve pictures (appendix 1).

c - The teacher trains the vocabulary related to the game:

1. an advanced computer
2. a portable cassette player
3. a television set
4. an alarm clock
5. a car cassette player
6. a ladies' watch
7. a sound system
8. an electronic telephone

9. a polaroid camera
10. pocket computers
11. a game system
12. a stereo cassette player.

d - The teacher explains the following rules of the game to the class:

1. the class is divided into two teams
2. the teacher is the guide first and then he calls a student to be the guide
3. the guide describes the pictures using modifiers + noun and the students are supposed to say the number of the picture
4. the student who says the number first wins a point for his team. If he says the wrong number the other team wins the point
5. the game is repeated but now the guide says the number and the students describe the picture.

At the end of the game the students do a written exercise where they have to add modifiers to the nominal groups. (appendix 2).

This game was analysed by a group of teachers during the VI Seminário Regional Norte - Nordeste de Inglês Instrumental and they concluded that the game creates motivation, interaction, fast learning, and fast language retention.

"Games are more widely usable and useful than many teachers at first think"<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Second game*

The difficulty in doing this game is concerned with the material. I went to shops in Lancaster asking for brochures in double. (A solution is to photocopy the picture) I selected the same pictures and put them on different cards which are folded in the middle so

that the other participant can not see what is there. (Example appendix 3).

I chose pictures of radios, cassette players, video cameras, tapes, disc players, and batteries, because I think that university students are very interested in electronic objects.

With this material we can have a game similar to the first.

Procedures:

- a - The class is divided into two teams
- b - Half of the class receives pictures and the other half receives the same pictures.
- c - The teacher has small cards with the names of the objects using modifier(s) + noun.
- d - He says: "Who has a (*give name of object with modifier(s)*)?"
- e - Through the information that accompanies the pictures the student identifies and says: "I have it".
- f - The one who answers first wins a point for his team.

*Third game*

Another game we can do with the material from the second game is "Find your partner". It is a communication game where the players have some information gap at the beginning of the game. Players have to use the language to bridge this gap and get the information they need.

Procedures:

- a - The class is divided into two teams.
- b - A student stands up and tries to find the one who has the same picture by asking the question "Have you got a (*modifier(s) + noun*)?"
- c - A student of the other team answers "yes, I have" or "No, I haven't".
- d - A point is earned when the student finds his partner.

*Fourth game*

It is the same game "Find your partner" with different material (appendix 4).

Half of the class receives pictures of watches and clocks. None of the pictures are duplicates. The other half receives the written names of the pictures (modifier(s) + noun).

This game has the same rules as game three does.

## CONCLUSION

Although our approach at FUFPI is to develop reading skills I used the games with one of my classes and I can state that the students were highly motivated. They did not even feel that they were learning grammar. Later I gave them our traditional lesson about nominal groups and asked them to give their opinion about the two processes. Obviously the preferred the games.

"By getting students to think about and to play with grammar, the work becomes more fun and students will hopefully lose their fear of it"<sup>3</sup> says Tom Hutchinson in his article "Making grammar work more creative or the sad tale of Grammarella".

To conclude I want to emphasize that teachers have to be imaginative, looking for variety and trying out new ideas in an effort to motivate the students.

## NOTES

- 1 *Creativity in E.S.P. Materials*. (Lancaster Practical Papers in English Language Education, 5, Pergamon), p.100.
- 2 Shelagh Rixon, *How to use games in language teaching* (The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1981), p.5.
- 3 (Anais do VI ENPULI, 1985), p.51.

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

Here you have the nominal groups described in the pictures. We are going to give you words to complete these nominal groups. You should try to use the better modifier(s) to the nominal groups. Some of them can be used more than once. Remember the modifiers are placed on the left side of the noun (headword). e.g. personal pocket computers

M M H

The word "pocket" alone is a noun but "pocket" on the left side of the word computer becomes a modifier.

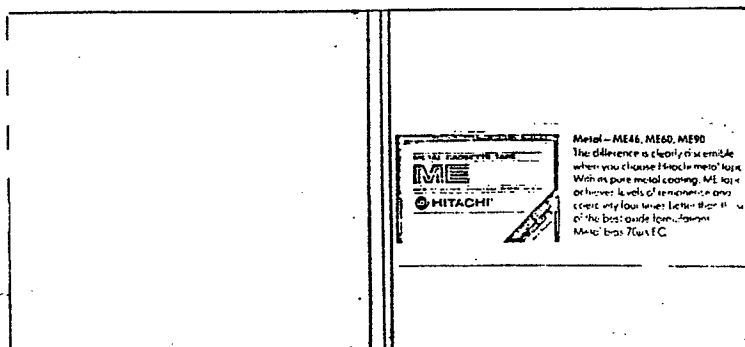
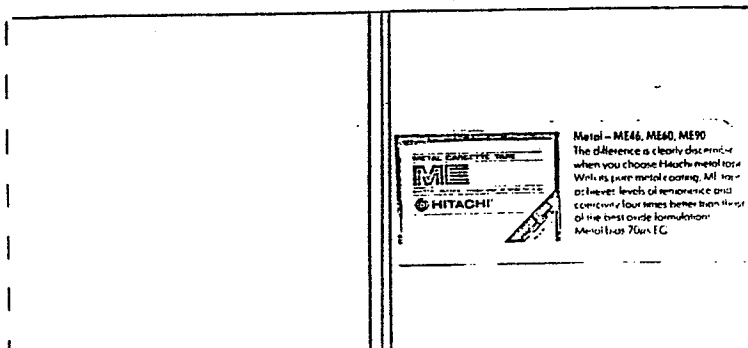
- a ----- sound system
- a ----- polaroid camera
- a ----- television set
- a ----- cassette player
- an ----- Game System
- a ----- portable cassette  
player
- a ----- advanced computer
- a ----- alarm clock
- a ----- electronic telephone
- a ----- ladies watch
- a ----- stereo cassette  
player

personal, full remote control, fantastic Hi fi, half price, Atari television, car stereo, water resistant, modern, low price, melody, memory capability

APPENDIX 3



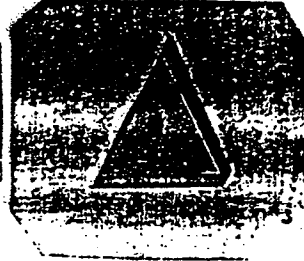
Folder for a pair game



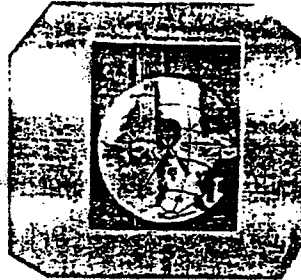


APPENDIX 4

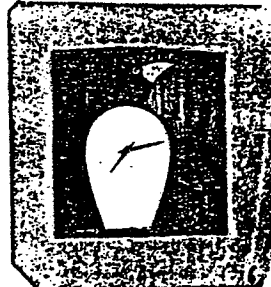
A green pyramid clock



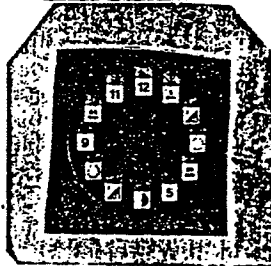
A globe clock



A penguin clock



A teaching clock



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