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Game playing in the Primary Classroom

Mandarin Teaching in Primary and
Secondary Schools

A game is:

a form of play or sport, especially a competitive one, played according to rules and decided by skill, strength or luck.

A language game in the classroom:

should give students the chance to practice and extend their language skills. It may or may not be competitive.

Group Brainstorm

- Consider why games have value in the Primary Language Classroom

We use games in language teaching because they...

- make lessons engaging
- naturally encourage the positive involvement of even the most shy or reluctant learners
- force learners to communicate using target language (TL) for a meaningful purpose
- stimulate higher order thinking
- encourage the spontaneous and creative use of language
- can be used to teach all 4 skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing

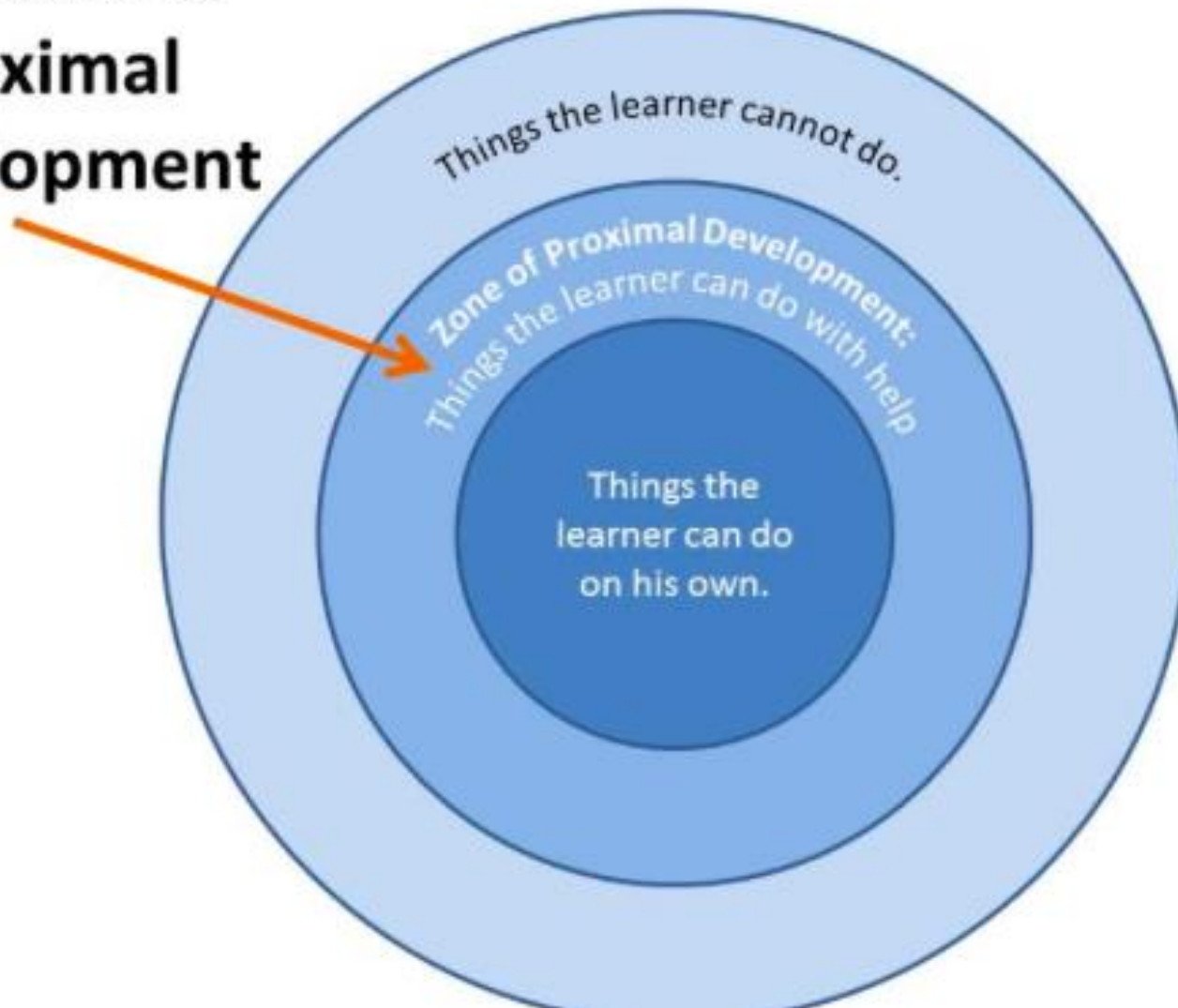
More reasons to use games

- Games include repetition in a fun format
- Good for quick bursts of revision
- Can involve movement (aids learning and helps with restlessness)
- Build teacher-student bond and student-student bonds
- Encourage learner autonomy - student centred, teacher is facilitator

Planning the right game

- When designing a game, think about the **learning objective** and make sure your game type enables the learners to meet the objective
- Then decide which **skill(s)** you wish your learners to practice. Design your game accordingly.

The Zone of Proximal Development



Design your game so that adult guidance or peer collaboration moves the learners into the dark blue shaded area

Build progression by designing games for a sequence of lessons

- With each new language topic, make sure your games follow the following order of skill type (4-6 can be done in any order)
 1. Listening drills followed by simple games to introduce new language
 2. Listening games to consolidate new language
 3. Easy speaking games
 4. More demanding speaking games
 5. Reading games
 6. Writing games

Guidelines for designing a game

- Skill level should be just beyond what the average student can manage on their own
- More than just 'fun'
- Involve all children at all times
- Encourage children to focus on the *use* of language rather than on the language itself
- Give students chance to learn, practice, review or manipulate specific language material

Success and avoiding feelings of failure


- Design your game so that everyone feels success as much as possible
- Find the right overall level of game for the learners
- Differentiate the challenge level within the game for different abilities
- Avoid individuals competing against individuals
- No need to make a big deal about who is the 'winner'

Target Language in Games

- Games should be played using only Mandarin, even when giving instructions and point scoring (applies to teachers *and* students)
- In a competitive game, deduct points if a player uses English to communicate
- Teach the necessary instructional and game-play language

Brainstorm

With someone sitting near you, note down the types of words and phrases you will need to teach for game playing



我们得了几分了？

Teacher's TL for game playing

我们玩.....游戏吧

同学们分成三个队，。。。个人一队

。。。队得了三分！

。。。队赢了！

。。。队输了！

对 / 不对

开始 / 停



Children's TL for game playing

不公平！

到我了

我们得了几分了？

我们赢了

我们输了

他们作弊

对吗？

我需要帮助

太（不）好了！

老师，我们可以玩。。。吗



Gentle games and friendly competition

Reception, KS1 and lower KS2

- Children vs teacher rather than children vs children
- Mainly whole class games, or if in groups, adult guidance will be needed for many games
- Non-competitive games work well
- Build a supportive classroom environment
- Start with 3 words for 4 year olds, and up to 6 words for older children. Only add more if they can handle it

Groups and teams

- Whole class divided into 2 or 3 teams (highly competitive and can be very motivating, but be careful - some students may be 'passengers')
- Pair work: fast and easy to organise
- Group work: arrange mixed ability groups if they are competing against one another
- Pick your groups carefully, considering group dynamics

What about mistakes?

- Mistakes are part of language learning
- The biggest ‘mistake’ would be a child not participating for fear of getting something wrong
- Build a ‘supportive classroom’ by laying down strict rules about how children interact with one another, especially when playing games

The teacher's role

- In whole class team games, teacher can be the umpire, although this role can also be given to a child
- In group/pairs games, teacher circulates around groups, or works with a group

Whole class games to play with songs/ rhymes (all ages): listening & speaking

- Instruct children to omit a certain word 这次不要唱。。。
- A child conducts the song using their arms to indicate 小声 and 大声 and uses instructions in Mandarin to tell the children to 停 / 开始
- Sing the song to a different but familiar tune

Whole class games with songs and rhymes (all ages): reading

- Teacher points to Mandarin lyrics whilst children sing. When teacher stops, children stop (*low level of challenge*)
- Teacher sings with children and Mandarin lyrics are displayed. When teacher stops, children independently identify where they have reached on the text (*high level of challenge*)

Further games (all ages)

- Matching or sorting games with objects/flashcards (pairs)
- Mini board games / dice games (groups/pairs)
- Prediction games with objects / large flashcards :
下一个是什么？ 还没说哪一个？ (whole class)
- Role plays (groups/pairs)
- Physical games using the whole classroom/playground (whole class)

Further games for KS2

- Games with flashcards (easily printed off from Quizlet)
- Games using digital learning platforms (e.g. Quizlet, Kahoot) (whole class/ pairs/individuals)
- Role-play games / mini-dramas (groups/pairs)
- For a huge variety of games practising all four skills see 'ESL Game: 176 English Language Games for Children' by Shelley Ann Vernon

Display games on your IWB and let the children get on with it in pairs. Provide mini flashcards printed from Quizlet

- Simple matching, Mandarin to English (second time:race)
- One player removes a picture card. The other identifies what is missing and says it in Mandarin
- Pelmanism: turn cards over and take turns to find matching pairs. If it matches, say “对” If not.. “不对”
- Snap: when you have a snap, say “碰！”
- Invent your own game

Online games

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primarylanguages/mandarin/>
- It would be possible to design a beginner curriculum around the topics covered in this very accessible website.
- Quizlet flashcards (online games and printable lists for creating your own mini-flashcards to use in games)
- <https://quizlet.com/117673685/food-and-drink-yct-1-flash-cards/>
- Quizlet 'live' interactive whole class game.
- Access for players: www.quizlet.com and select 'Quizlet Live'
<https://quizlet.com/117673685/live>
- Kahoot (Kahoot.com) Access for players – Kahoot.it
- <https://play.kahoot.it/#/gameblock?quizId=118b23dd-53dd-4013-9847-07b6663027df>

The value of role plays

- Acting removes inhibitions
- Children are using language for a real purpose
- Prospect of performance encourages children to rehearse and improve
- Opportunity to video and analyse
- Rehearsing includes repetition
- Learner autonomy
- Learner creativity
- Mixed ability groups very effective in role play

Some final tips

- Choose calm / excitable games to suit the class, time of day, stage in the lesson
- Start with easy games, build to harder
- Cultivate team spirit
- Use resources you have to hand (body parts / furniture/classroom props)
- Make sure children aren't waiting long for a turn

More final tips

- Have reserve material ready in case a game doesn't go well
- Always stop the game whilst everyone is still enjoying it
- Use short games frequently to revise topics
- Surprise your class with a new routine
- Good luck and have fun!

Sharing Opportunity

- Which games have worked well in your teaching? Please share your experiences with the group.