

# **Making Learning Engaging Through Interactive Games**

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We will continue to explore the different kind of simple board and card games that is possible in a classroom setting. And I thought of sharing some very nice, simple and interesting games. They span across different subjects, although technically The same mechanics can be used for any other subject. I thought of giving an exposure both from a subject perspective as well as from the mechanics perspective. So, let's go ahead and see some of these games that could serve as inspirations for us to get started. Let's take English grammar.

Language teaching is not easy and more so when it comes to grammar. There's a lot to remember. The spoken language varies a lot from the pure grammatical language. So it's always a challenge for students to learn English grammar.

And here are one or two examples of how we can gamify language grammar learning. Here is a simple board game designed the race to finish mechanism and this is many of these games that I'll be showing are from teachers pay teachers repository and here is one such example so once the topic of interjection is introduced in the class the challenge is to expose the learners to different usages of interjections in sentences. Now, the traditional way is to give a lot of practice examples and try and ask the students to identify, probably give them classwork, give them homework. That's the standard way of doing things. Let's see how this game board adds that fun element and makes the learners play together and learn.

So, this is a board as you can see with the start and the finish and it has a series of small sentences, all of them which use interjections and probably there are about I am guessing around 20-25 cells here where the learners have to navigate and reach the finish point. Now, how does the game mechanism work and what are the prerequisites for playing? So, as you can see the materials are just a coin, one game piece per player, probably about four to five players can play this together and the objective is to be the first player to land on the finish line, that is whoever finishes first. Now, what do the players need to

do? So it says on your turn read the sentence on your current space. Identify the interjection if you are correct. Move the assigned number of spaces based on the rule given below.

The rule that says move one space if the interjection shows mild emotion and if it shows a strong emotion move two spaces. That's about it. So they need to just go to the cell based on the die roll. Read out the sentence, identify the strength of the interjection, whether it's a mild one or a strong emotion and accordingly move one space or two spaces. So, let's take some examples and see how the gameplay goes.

Let's say the first person rolls a one. So, we have here, no, we don't have any tests tomorrow. It's a mild interjection and they get to go one more space and then they pass on the dice to the next person. Let's say the second person rolls a 2. It says, Yahoo! I got an A on my max test.

So, this is an example of a strong interjection and according to the rules you move two spaces. So, already the die roll would have brought them to this cell, now they roll another two and get to the fourth space. Now, we can always tweak the rules around, do we give them one more chance if they fall on another cell or The basic game rules have been spelt as designed by the designer of this game, but it is always the flexibility and freedom of the individual teacher or facilitator to take it forward. Now, there are other cells which actually deplete the points. You can see all these lose a turn cells, which actually bring down the I mean, they put a stop or probably they pose a small hindrance in the progress of the player.

So, if supposing somebody rolls a 3 or let us say somebody got an emotion right, but they actually have to move one space or two spaces and they happen to come to this loser turn, they end up losing a turn and other players have a chance of moving ahead. So, these are very very elementary mechanics, easy to learn, easy to design and easy to play. But the whole idea is as a part of playing this, let us assume that about 4 to 5 players play it. Let us say there are about 5, 6 rounds depending on how many players and how many cells they pass through. So one gets to actually learn interjections in a group.

One doesn't have to probably do it in a traditional homework fashion but you co-learn with other players and there is a fun element and it makes it all the more easy to navigate and learn together. This is one very, very simple mechanism by which this entire interjection or it can be designed for any other grammar topic also can be made fun-filled. So, it does not really sound like a boring grammar class or a class where one has to give assignments and the students have to solve them in the traditional way. A group of students together are now focused on how do I win? And as a part of it, they also

continue to learn. So, this is the beauty of this simple board game.

Here is another variant of it. It is exactly the same concept on interjections, but the mechanics are slightly different. Once again, the objective is to make them practice different usage of interjections in different sentences. Now, Here is a little, I would say a slightly higher order thinking in this game mechanic and a different game mechanic for the fun factor is used. Here the rules are that the game objective is to capture maximum number of squares.

By that they mean by a capturing of a square, let us say this is a square that needs to be captured or this is a square, etc. Now, how does one capture a square? On the player's turn, the rollers roll both the dice and add them together. Look for the sum of the dice in the chart to determine which interjection to use. Let's say you do a die roll and let's say your die roll lands up to, well, let's say number 5. So, we need to figure out Where exactly among these 5 by 5, 25 sentences does well fit in? Okay, let us check it out.

I mean, probably I feel that one of the places where it fits in is, well, probably I could stay for five more minutes. So, if we identify this, you can put a line on any one of the four corners connecting any of the two dots. It can be these two or it can be maybe these two and so on and so forth. And the next player continues to roll their dice, they sum up, maybe they land up in a nine, they find out where does half fit in and so on and maybe in that corresponding cell they mark one border. Now, if we manage to mark all the three borders, all the four borders around the box, one gets the position of that cell.

Now, it doesn't mean that the same player has to get the position of the entire cell. The rule says when your line is the last to form a full square around a box, you capture the square by coloring it in. So, for example, player A may color this side, player B may do this side, player 3 may do this side or it could be even the same player. But let's say player D is the one who manages to fit an interjection here and they get to own this complete box. So, that's how you own.

The ownership is based on who completes that cell, the boundary of that square. Now, here again, multiple nice things here. You get to practice the same interjections in different sentences. And again, the players learn together. Once again, the win mechanic there is focus on where do I capture, which cell is going to go for completion, a slightly more involved fashion than the previous game mechanic we saw that is very basic and elementary.

This is a little more involved and one has to apply the interjection in the sentence usage. Here again, if the game is played for let's say 20-25 minutes, they get to learn and

practice a lot of its usage. Of course, there has to be a facilitator to check around to see whether the players are getting it right. There can be probably a log kept where the students mark what they have answered for capturing those and the log can be reviewed even if the teacher is not able to actively monitor every single team. But the essential idea is even if there could be wrong game plays and wrong wins, during the debriefing process, the students enjoy and end up learning together in a fun-filled way a lot of these interjections practice.

So, I thought these two probably these are suited for upper primary or lower secondary depending on the course, curriculum, etc. But essentially a variant of this whichever classes grammar gets taught can be developed easily. Now, this is a third variant This is roll a row of the same thing and here the dice, it's again a dice based game and here the objective of the game is to be the first player to create a line of four boxes vertically, horizontally or diagonally. So, it's like probably like this, like this or maybe like this.

4 boxes. Now, how does one acquire a box? Let us read through that. Choose one of the available boxes in that row you would like to answer after roll of the die. So, essentially you roll a die, let us say you get a 4, you can pick any of these 5, answer the question, If you write the sentence using that word correctly and the interjection given, you can cover that box. Let us say you happen to use this, you get this right, you kind of probably color it and own that box. If you write it incorrectly, you don't cover the box.

There doesn't seem to be any penalty, but you could, for the sake of interest, try to create some penalty mechanics too, if needed. But you can leave it as is too. But essentially, that is how a box gets owned in any given column or row. So, the first player to cover a line of four boxes with their own counters is the winner. So, that's basically the mechanic.

And here is again an interesting variant. Here, the first game we saw was to just see whether it's a mild or a strong emotion. The second one, tried making them identify the usage and this one actually makes them build sentences with a given word and an interjection. So, slightly the order of thinking and usage also goes up and there is a variant introduced in each form in terms of the game mechanics. So, all of these would add a lot of fun to the grammar classes.

Once again, as I said, this was an example for English grammar, but it can technically be extended for any kind of a subject where there can be a correlation. I mean, some similar mechanics can be devised for other subjects and themes too. Now, let us see a few more variations. Here is one very interesting thing that I saw for biology.

This is a board game. It's a part of a board game collection called organ systems which

includes digestive system, respiratory system, circulatory system, etc. There are many such variations available. I'm just choosing one example of a digestive system board. Once again, using the race to finish mechanism. Let's see how beautifully it is designed.

When we saw the earlier race to finish mechanism, where it was simply answering questions related to a usage of interjection in sentences, but that is a simple way and a very popular way too, I would say. Here is a little more involved way and let us see what makes this a lot more beautiful. So, usually when biology is taught, you can just imagine in a typical class, I am assuming a typical school setting where there are not anything beyond a teacher and the standard textbooks. Of course, there are those occasional schools where there is more sophisticated props available to teach the digestive system. I'm talking about a typical school where it's more lecture-based learning and there is a lot of text and a lot of terms that the students have to understand.

So, Definitely the teacher would show a diagram and ask the students to understand the different parts by marking the labels or making them see the parts in the textbook. This game board is actually aligned to the diagram which is very beautiful. Because usually the game board will be a square or a path that is independent of the topic being taught. Here they have aligned the game board to the structure being taught. So the game board starts here and ends here.

So it starts here and ends here. Let's see how the game mechanics are devised. So the goal of this game to get the nutrients into the bloodstream. Very thoughtful because that's exactly the purpose that the digestive system serves. So the coins that are being given, of course you can use the regular plastic coins but they are to be visualized as nutrients and they have given examples of a design where the coin or the cardboard card used as a coin is actually a nutrient. It helps in visualizing what's going on better.

So it starts at the mouth, the game starts at the mouth and the coin is in the form of a nutrient and that needs to go through the entire digestive system and end in the bloodstream. That is the sign of the finish of the game. So the alignment part is what is so beautiful about this. So, here they have recommended the play begins with the youngest players selecting the game piece they would like to advance.

That is flexible of course. Now, an opponent or probably a player who is seated adjacent, let us say there are four players and let us say player 2 asks player 1 the question. There are a bunch of multiple choice questions all related to the digestive system that are written there and player 2 asks player 1 a specific question from one of the sheets. A sample snip is mentioned here. Now, if they answer it right, then what happens? The player rolls the dice and then advances the game piece based on the number roll. Let's say

they answer the question right and They are just going back to the game board.

Let's say they roll a 3. So, you go to 1, 2, 3. You place your coin here. Now, additionally, if the player can identify the body part where their game piece has landed. They've given for an example, if it's esophagus, they can advance one more additional space. So, there are two parts to the mechanism. One is, has the student or the player understood the concept or the process? So, that's being checked by the quiz question.

whether the correctness of the answer is there or not and the quiz card itself has the answer. So, the second player even if they may not know the answer, they also get to learn by asking the question and verifying the answer. So, between the students there is a dialogue that is happening. The player one's knowledge is tested by answering that question and the player one's spatial awareness of the part in the digestive system track assessed by the second mechanism. If they are able to get the part right they get additional points or in this case they get to move one more space.

Now if the question is not answered the player's turn is over they'll have to wait for the next turn and in which case it goes to player two and player three asks player two the question and so on and so forth the game keeps going on and on. Nutrients are absorbed into the bloodstream when they reach the dot, the red dot in the small intestine. Let us move to the game board. Here is the red dot. So, here probably red on red background does not, this is the one, yeah.

So, this is how the game progresses. This is the basic part of the game, fantastically designed, aligned visually with how the actual system works. Now, they have also provided a fun extension. I would say it's another brilliant thinking. Let's look at how this has been designed. If a player's game piece lands on a black dot, they need to visit the doctor and the player must roll the dice to determine their fate.

Let's see what happens here. Just to visualize the black dots better, I'm going to the previous slide where two black dots are mentioned. If a player happens to come there, let's see what happens. Let's say you fall on a black dot. The player needs to roll the dice and let's say it happens to be four.

They need to read out what are the symptoms. You have diarrhea, which has caused severe dehydration. You need IV fluids immediately. Move back three spaces. Now, this is true for any of the other options. All of these are, what do you say? They are problems that are faced by humans whenever some component of the digestive system goes wrong.

And as a part of it, there is a backtracking of the digestion that happens in some form. It

can be in the form of belching or it can be in the form of bad gas or whatever it is. So, they have set up a penalizing mechanism wherein the nutrient, instead of advancing further, the player gets to go back. All of these are metaphorically setbacks that can happen in a digestive system. So, in addition to understanding the concepts in a digestive system, in addition to naming of the parts of the digestive system, there is this mechanism of understanding the disorders of the digestive system.

So, if we look at the entirety of the subject and the concept, these are the three components, knowing the parts, the process and the disorders, coupled beautifully and integrated beautifully into the game board. So, this will make the learning super, super interesting, fun and very, very relevant if it is played across, let us say, four to six players post the conducting of the completion of the digestive system syllabus. So, it will be a great revision reckoner plus also visually help them understand and correlate with the disorders. So, I thought this is a great example of a game that was seen in Teachers Pay Teachers. As much as possible, I have tried downloading and showing free games that any of you can login and checkout.

But this happens to be a paid game, but there could be other equivalent games. I specifically chose this because this mechanism was so very beautiful and helps the biology learning process a lot.