

In the Classroom

En Classe

This section presents descriptions of teaching techniques or practical classroom activities.

Cette section est consacrée à la description de différentes techniques ou activités d'enseignement.

A NOT SO TRIVIAL PURSUIT

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As long as people have been playing games, people have been laughing and learning. The recent onslaught of trivia based games can bring that laughing and learning into your ESL classroom just as old reliables like *Scrabble*, *Boggle*, and *Probe* do now. However, if you are working with less than fluent native speakers the trivia game questions will present problems, both with the language structures and the fact that their content is too trivial. The material is often frustratingly unfamiliar due to gaps of culture, experience and age.

The solution? Design trivia games for and with your own classes. The benefits are clear. The results will reflect your students' interests and abilities. Developing the questions and answers provides practice in the four basic language skills, the formation of yes-no questions, information questions and statements. The games are easily kept current by altering either the content or the level of difficulty of one or more categories.

Procedure

1. Make a sufficient number of gameboards for your class based on a game design that you are familiar with. Consider *SuperQuiz*, *I.Q. 2000*, *The People Magazine Trivia Game*, or *Trivial Pursuit*.

I recommend eight students per board working in pairs because pair-work necessitates communication through collaboration and diffuses the peer pressure that may accompany a wrong guess.

2. Brainstorm possible trivia categories or offer choices from a prepared list (see samples following). This may depend on the method you choose for developing questions and answers.

3. There are three possible methods for developing the questions and answers:

(a) Assign groups of students the task of writing 15-20 questions and answers for a particular category. You may offer magazines, pictures, textbooks, etc., as resources. Using half of a 3 by 5 index card they then record each question on one side and the corresponding answer on the other.

(b) As a class, brainstorm possible questions and answers for each of your selected categories. Don't do it all at once. Use this as a filler until you've accumulated enough questions and answers for a game (minimum 15-20 questions for each of six categories).

(c) You can prepare all of the questions and answers yourself. However, this is the least desirable method for both you, as it's a lot of work, and for your students. They lose the linguistic opportunities provided by the game preparation and the results may not accurately reflect their interests, which is one of the goals of this game. Of course, if you are working with beginners you will have to decide whether the questions they are capable of writing will be varied enough to be used in a trivia type game.

4. Once the questions and answer sets are complete, divide the class into groups and play following the rules that accompany the trivia game you have selected. Some simplification of the rules may be necessary.

Examples

Here are a few sample categories and questions suitable for young ESL students at an intermediate level.

LETTERS/WORDS	Spell "shuttle."
OCCUPATIONS/JOBS	Who takes care of your teeth?
PEOPLE	What is the principal's name?
MATH/NUMBERS	How many dimes are there in one dollar?
THE BODY	What keeps your feet warm?
SPACE	How many planets are there?

This is a list of sample categories suitable for older ESL students at an intermediate level.

MUSIC	INVENTIONS
MOVIES	GAMES
FASHION	SCIENCE
SPORTS	GEOGRAPHY
RIDDLES	NUMBERS
COMPARISONS	PEOPLE

Other Ideas

To simplify the game, use a traditional gameboard with a series of squares going from START to FINISH. Then shuffle the question and answer cards in a stack and place them on the gameboard. During the game, players take turns rolling two dice and picking up question and answer cards. If a player is able to correctly answer the question drawn, he/she moves forward the number of squares indicated on the dice. If not, he/she remains in the same position.

Other uses for the deck of question and answer cards used in your trivia game are listed below:

1. Self-testing in an individualized learning centre.
2. In pairs, players take turns drawing a card from the deck that is placed between them and asking their opponent the question on their card. If the opponent answers the question correctly, the card is given to that player. Otherwise it is returned to the bottom of the deck. The game continues until all the cards are claimed and the player with the most cards wins.
3. Divide the class into two teams and read the questions "spelling bee" style. The first team with the correct answer gets a point.

These are only a few possibilities. Try them, then come up with more of your own.

FOOTNOTE

All game titles are registered trademarks and copyright as such.

THE AUTHOR

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