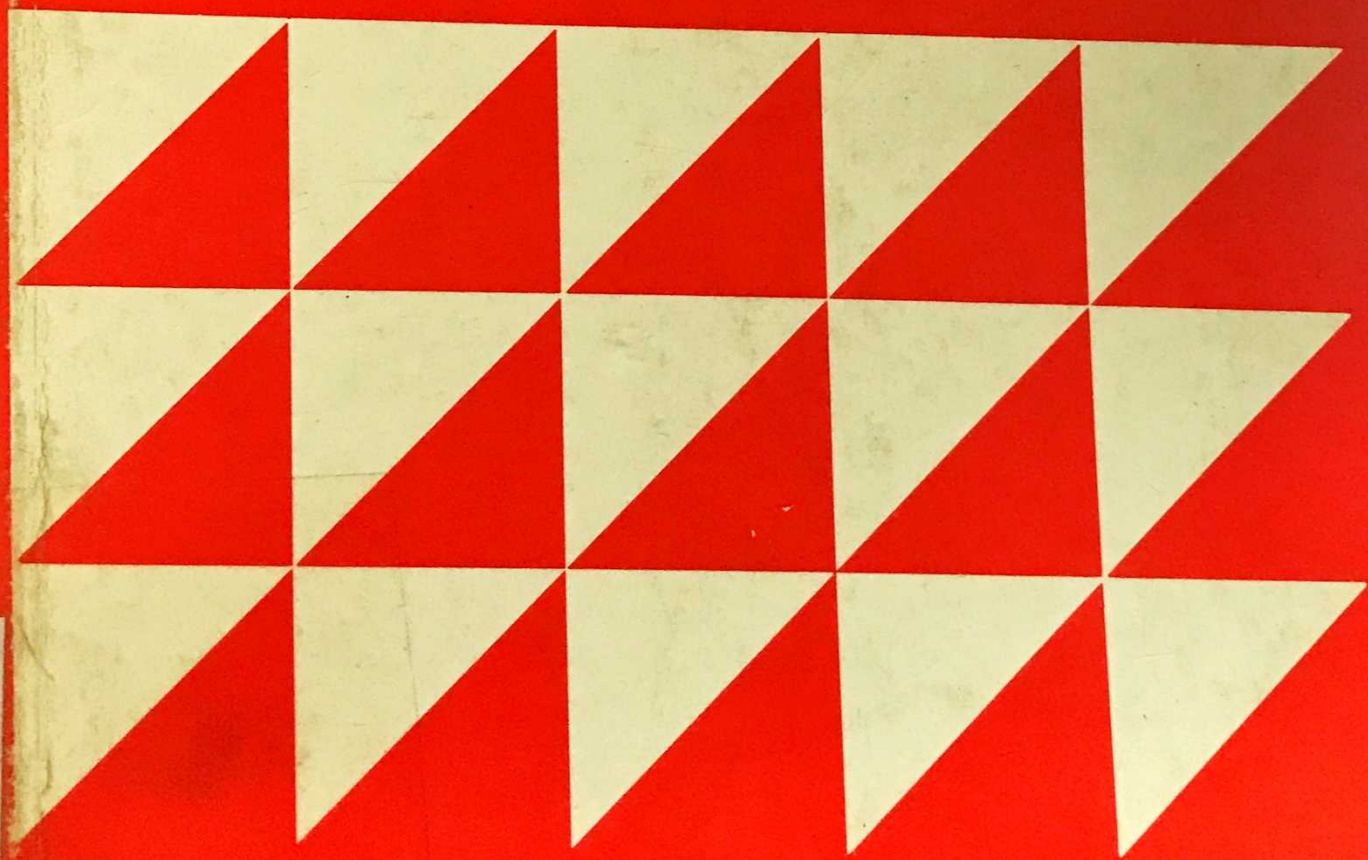


# 101

## WORD GAMES



George P. McCallum



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For Students of English as a  
Second or Foreign Language

George P. McCallum



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G.P.M.



# INTRODUCTION

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## Why use games in the English as a Second or Foreign Language classroom?

There are many valid reasons for using games in the language classroom, not least among them the sheer enjoyment of a moment of relaxation after some arduous drilling, or as a short respite after prolonged deskwork.

When one considers the importance of communicative competence in the target language, a major goal of all language acquisition, and the need for spontaneous and creative use of that language, one recognizes the significant role of word games in achieving these objectives. Students, in the informal atmosphere of game play, are less self-conscious and therefore more apt to experiment and freely participate in using the foreign language. In addition, games automatically stimulate student interest; a properly introduced game can be one of the highest motivating techniques.

Other reasons for including games in the language class are:

1. They focus student attention on specific structures, grammatical patterns, and vocabulary items.
2. They can function as reinforcement, review, and enrichment.
3. They involve equal participation from both slow and fast learners.
4. They can be adjusted to suit the individual ages and language levels of the students in the class.
5. They contribute to an atmosphere of healthy competition, providing an outlet for the creative use of natural language in a non-stressful situation.
6. They can be used in any language teaching situation and with any skill area whether reading, writing, speaking or listening.
7. They provide immediate feedback for the teacher.
8. They ensure maximum student participation for a minimum of teacher preparation.



Having justified the use of word games in the language class, accepting the fact that they provide not only a learning experience but an enjoyable one as well, we may then ask, when should a game be introduced? The logical time is toward the end of the hour—the “dessert” after the main course. However, there is no hidebound rule about this and whenever an instructor feels it is the appropriate moment for a more relaxing activity, that is the time for a game. All this is relative, of course, and it will be the good judgment of the instructor that determines the appropriate time.

## Choosing the Right Game

Which game should be played, once we've decided it is time for such an activity? Many factors enter into deciding the answer to this question:

1. the size of the class
2. whether it is a class of adults or one of children
3. the class level—elementary, intermediate, advanced
4. the structures being studied at the moment
5. the physical space you have to work with
6. the noise factor—will you disturb the classes around you?
7. the students' interests, in and out of class
8. the equipment and materials available
9. cultural considerations
10. the time available for a game

## Teacher Preparation

A game should be planned into the day's lesson right along with exercises, dialogs and reading practice. It should not be an afterthought.

Some games require the use of additional equipment or materials, such as flash cards, small, easily identifiable objects, a bean bag, stopwatch, blindfolds, or pencil and paper. These are noted at the top of each game. In most cases the equipment will already be available in the classroom. Where advance preparation is required for successful game play, it is recommended that the teacher assemble these materials prior to introducing the game.

Certainly the teacher should understand the game and how it is to be played before explaining the rules to the class. With certain