

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A LANGUAGE LEARNING ACTIVITY: THE DALYA GAME

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Abstract: According to Michael Parmentier (2004, p. 929), the scope of comprehension of the game concept is wide and quite undefined. Currently, game is one of the most debated issues in the educational science. Undoubtedly, there are many techniques which motivate students to learn throughout their academic lives. One of these techniques is the game. Game is one of the techniques that teachers successfully employ in active teaching. The purpose of this study is to explain, how the *Dalya* game was converted into an educational game and how it can be used in elective German courses effectively. In the villages of Anatolia, the *Dalya* game is generally played with a ball made of cloth and with 7 earthenware pots or tiles, in other words with 7 flat stones. Today the traditional *Dalya* game is played in the slum areas. It is possible to play this game in gymnasiums where the floors are dry and clean. The students play this traditional game to make good use of their leisure time. However, there is a possibility to update this game in respect to didactics and use it in teaching/learning a foreign language.

Keywords: *Dalya game, traditional game, educational game, language teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

The game is a spontaneous activity (Böhm, 2005, p. 603). In other words, the game is a series of activities interconnected within itself (Sevinç, 2004, p. 14). In the game environment the teachers observe the children and support their learning process and development. It contributes to the physical and mental development of the children. Games used in teaching and learning are prepared with special methods. Each game has its own specific purpose, structure, and rules. The game,

in addition to teaching new things to the children, is also a technique whereby children can employ what they have already learned and reinforce them. There are games such as the Market game, reading bingo, and calculating domino. Students may learn individually or in groups through the implementation of games. It is possible to purchase hundreds of games prepared previously. However, it is best for the children to prepare their own games (Öncül, 2000, p. 845). This game has multi-dimensional effects. These are physical, psycho-

motor, social feelings and cognizance fields (Sevinç, 2004, p. 14).

Sevinç (2004, p. 18) in referencing the research of Mary Hohmann and David P. Weikart' in (2000) states that the best way of learning effectively is for the child to react with objects, people, ideas, and events in comprehending the new understanding and to create this in his/her own mind. Games enable multi-dimensional relations. The author states that effective learning is accomplished in four dimensions. The said dimensions are the following:

- Gaining experience directly with the objects.
- Thinking of the movements made.
- Intrinsically motivated will to discover and produce.
- Solving problems.

Today, the game is used in various age groups and in various fields. Adults are interested in this game just as much as the children. It is possible to use the game in almost all the branches. One of the fields in which games are used most intensely is in the field of teaching languages. Games are extensively used especially in teaching/learning foreign languages (Dauvillier, & Lévy-Hillerich, 2004). It must be noted that, games, in addition to improving intelligence and memory have the feature of elevating the language skills to the paramount level. The way the game is used shows the participation in the activity, the implementation, trials and successes. Therefore, the game is a functional and problem solving activity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Human movements in the world, tourism, education, economy and the developments in the field of technology made learning of a foreign language very important. The work called *Homo Ludens* by Johan Huizinga was published during the first half of the twentieth century. This work was translated into different languages and was taken as the basis in the development of different concepts. It is possible to

classify the publications on the game from various perspectives. The most popular classification is made manually and digitally. It is possible to classify the publications on the game in the following manner in respect to education and training:

- General publications (Huizinga, translated by Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay Kılıçbay, 2013; Fink, translated by Necati Aça, 2015; Onur, & Güney, 2002; Özdoğan, 2000; Sönmez, 2011, p. 252).
- Publications pertaining to pre-school education (Poyraz, 2003).
- Publications related to language teaching (Özen, Yavuz, Tellan, et al., 2015).
- Publications related to teaching of foreign languages (Dauvillier, & Lévy-Hillerich, 2004; Telatar, & Girgin, 2011; Coşkun, 2006).

The work published by Christa Dauvillier and Dorothea Lévy-Hillerich (2004) contains theoretical information related with the game and examples obtained from various German language books. The book prepared by Emel Telatar and Meral Girgin (2011) gives the examples to be used in the implementation. These two books are aimed at teaching German as a foreign language. The book prepared by Hasan Coşkun in Turkish, German and English (2006) contains materials in three languages, is theoretical and has subjects studied in teaching a foreign language. This work was prepared with the concept developed by Coşkun. This concept covers the key word related with the subject, 24 words widely used, the texts and practice works. The lesson is supported with word lists and practice materials. Coşkun is working on educational games made of wood for the last 15 years.

METHODOLOGY

This study is an experimental research (Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2006). The first experience with the *Dalya* game goes all the way back to the author's childhood days. The author later, developed this game into an educational material by adapting the game to the educational institutes. The

researcher began to design educational games at the beginning of the 1980's in order to draw the attention of students to lessons and to make sure that they retain what is taught. During this process, this game was developed at the Gazi University in Ankara and tested at the German School on 32 students in Ankara, and some other Turkish and German schools and Universities in Turkey and in Germany. The educational materials developed by the author were presented at congresses and were discussed among the participants (Coşkun, Gültekin, & Seçkin, 2012). The author's latest presentation of the educational *Dalya* game was at the Wroclaw (Poland) University.

The opinions of the experts were taken both during the designing of the educational games and in the implementation stages. Photographs were taken during the implementation of the games, reports were prepared, and notes were taken during the observations. This research was conducted during the 2014/2015 academic year on 36 students who had selected German as a foreign language at the Hacettepe University. Students from the different departments of different faculties attended the lessons. The levels of German of the students varied. The purpose of the majority of the students was to study, for one term, at a university where the education was conducted in German under the Erasmus Program or to undergo training at a company. The purpose of some of the other students was to continue with their study or to work in a country where German was spoken. Although the lesson was elective, the motivation to learn was high. The subject of the lesson was animals. Because the topic of animals is one of the topics most frequently discussed in foreign language lessons (Coşkun, 2006, pp. 96 - 97).

EXPLANATION OF THE TRADITIONAL DALYA GAME

As a concept, *Dalya* has different meanings. In this article the word *Dalya* is the name of the widely played game in Anatolia (Onur, & Güney, 2002, pp.

468-469; Coşkun, 2005, pp. 162-185). It should also be mentioned that this game has different names in the other various regions of Anatolia. *Dalya* is a game played between two groups made up of boys and girls and it is a very active game which requires much running around. One of the groups is a thrower and the other is "it". One person acts as a referee. It is recommended that each group has six players and a referee. The materials of the game comprised of a ball made of cloth and flat stones primarily comprised of broken tiles. Today regular balls and hand sized wooden pieces may be used. In some regions 7-8 stones, and in other regions 12-15 stones are used. The more irregularly cut and shapeless the stones are the harder it will be to place them on top of one another. This makes the game more exciting and fun to play.

At the site where the game is to be played, two parallel lines each of which is 3 meters long with a distance of 6 to 7 meters between them are drawn with a piece of tile or chalk. A 20-30 cm wide circle is drawn next to one of these two lines. The flat stones are piled up on top of one another inside this circle. The turn to throw the ball will be determined by tossing a coin. The members of the team whose turn it is to throw the ball will toss the ball in turn towards the stones which are approximately 6-7 meters distant. The purpose is to topple the stones. Of course, the less the stones topple the easier it will be for them. The more the stones topple the more it will be difficult for them.

The game begins when the ball is tossed and the stones topple. When the stones topple the "it" team will get the ball. (In the event that any of the members of the tossing team fails to topple the stones the "it" group will get the ball anyway and will become then tossing group. The first throwing group will become the "it" group. Those who toss the ball will spread out to the four corners of the area whose limits are determined in advance. The "it" team will try to distract the members of the team and try to place the toppled stones on top of one another. If the game area is to be prepared

as a square the recommended measurements is should be 10 x 10 m, or if it is to be a circle the diameter should be 7 m. The duty of the “it” team members is to hit the members of the opponent team with their ball. There are different tactics that could be used for this purpose.

The members of the “it” team can either hit the member of the opponent team individually or may pass the ball to one of their players closest to the member of the opponent team. Members of the team who are hit by the ball will exit the site of the game. The members of the “it” team may try to ambush the members of the opponent team by staying close to the stones. The members of each team may suggest tactics to one another. This will establish dialogue between the team members. The player may not walk while in possession of the ball. Likewise, the player may not keep the ball in his/her hands for longer than five seconds. The ball and the players must constantly be in motion. Players who are hit by the ball or who cross the lines will be disqualified for that tour.

If a member of the team catches the ball thrown by the “it” team members without dropping it, he/she will not be counted as hit. This opponent team member, in order to let his teammates gain time, may throw the ball far away from the stones, so that “it” team members may not get the ball easily. If the throwing team members can set the stones before being hit by the ball it will get a point. If they succeed in setting up the stones without any of the team members getting hit by the ball they will get two points and will get the right to throw the ball.

If the “it” team hits all the members of the opponent team before they can set up the stones once again they will earn a point. If the “it” team hits all the members of the opposing team with the ball before they can set up any of the stones they will earn two points. The “it” team will earn the right to throw the ball in either case. The team that gets the predetermined score (generally three) wins the game.

THE RULES OF THE TRADITIONAL DALYA GAME

The rules of the traditional *Dalya* game may vary from region to region. It is possible to make the rules more difficult or easier according to the age of the target group and their level of language fluency. The players and the referees must be informed of the rules before the game starts. It is possible to summarize the rules of the traditional *Dalya* game as it is played in the Ankara region as below:

- The traditional *Dalya* game is played outside between two groups comprised of boys and girls.
- The traditional *Dalya* game is played between two groups each made up of six persons.
- One of the groups is called the “it” group and the other is called the tossing (throwing) group.
- Additionally 2 referees, one primary and the other substitute, will be appointed.
- The *Dalya* game is played 3 times.
- The equipment used is one plastic, or leather ball, seven pieces of plain stone and one stick of chalk.
- At the beginning of the game, the groups will take their places on the two parallel lines which are 6-7 meters distant from one another.
- The primary referee will draw a circle with 20 - 30 cm in diameter with chalk and pile up 7 pieces of stones in the middle of this circle.
- The “it” group will stay on the line adjacent to the circle.
- The throwing group will roll the ball from the other line and try to topple the stones (the tower).
- The group whose tower has been toppled will withdraw to where the stones are to rebuild the tower.
- The same group will quickly try to set up the stones once again.
- At this time those in the other group will take the ball and try to hit the group members who toppled their tower.
- The members of the group whose stones

were toppled, will win a point if they can set up the stones without getting any of the group members hit by the ball.

- There is no running with ball. The player must throw the ball from the place she/he caught it.
- The game continues in this fashion.
- The group that wins the most points becomes the winner.
- The referees will place the stones, chalk and the ball inside a box and give it to the teacher.
- The teacher informs the students that he/she will use the *Dalya* game in language teaching next week.
- The students thank the teacher (Coşkun, 2005, pp. 166 - 168).

THE USE OF THE EDUCATIONAL DALYA GAME IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

As stated above, the *Dalya* game is played especially in the rural areas and in the slums of cities. It is possible to use the *Dalya* game in teaching a language at home and in classes. To achieve this, the game has to be modernized and the necessary materials need to be developed. In this section of the article the educational the *Dalya* game will be introduced as an educational material. When the stones are placed on top of one another in the traditional *Dalya* game fashion, they constitute a tower we have named the educational *Dalya* game as language tower (Coşkun, 2006, p. 64). As stated above, it is possible to simplify or make more difficult the rules of the game.

TARGET GROUPS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The educational *Dalya* game may be used in classes, and in covered areas like gardens, in open space in the school yard, and gymnasiums, in activities to be conducted with various groups. From the experiments conducted up to now, it was observed that the pre-school and primary school students found it interesting to touch the

building stones, to take these into their hands, to make shapes by bringing these stones together, to build towers by placing these stones on top of one another, to learn to establish balance, to try to understand the shapes of the building stones. The primary and secondary school students make it a priority to learn a language with this game. For high school students, in addition to learning a foreign language, the design of the educational game and its production are important for them. For the university students, the philosophy behind the game, the plan and design of the game, production and increasing the use of the game is more meaningful. Up to now, this game was applied to the following groups in-country and abroad:

- kindergarten and pre-school students,
- primary school students,
- secondary school students,
- to students who participated in Turkish lessons and the Turkish culture lessons abroad,
- high school students,
- students attending vocational schools,
- trainees attending the public training centers,
- university students.

THE ELEMENTS THAT CONSTITUTE THE EDUCATIONAL DALYA GAME SET

Educational games need to be prepared as a set. This set should contain the educational materials, the rules of the game, and sheets of paper for the students, referees and the teacher. The educational *Dalya* game is comprised of the following elements. It is possible to enrich them according to the requirements of the Target Group.

- The educational *Dalya* game box;
- 25 each game stones;
- One medallion to flip for heads or tails;
- *Dalya* game brochure;
- Sheets of paper for word and sentences;
- One ball (when played in the field);
- One chalk (when played in the field).

TARGETS OF THE ACTIVITY

Students who take part in this activity,

- Will have the necessary information on the educational *Dalya* game.
- Will know the importance of the educational *Dalya* game in learning a language.
- Will know the names of the important animals in Turkish, German and English.
- They may write sentences, and brief texts with the words they have learned.
- They may conduct a dialogue related to the subjects.

Target group: Students of Hacettepe University in Ankara, Department of Elective Courses (German as a foreign language).

Organizer (games master): Coşkun, the author himself.

THE FLOW CHART OF THE ACTIVITY DALYA GAME

In teaching, the planning of the lesson beforehand holds an important place. Therefore, the activities related with the use of the *Dalya* game was planned in detail. The teaching and learning processes for the lesson where educational games are used should be planned in detail.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS USED IN THE LESSONS

Supplemental materials are important for all the educational games, which are developed according to the concept of the author. It is possible to arrange these tables of materials according to the level of the target group or to prepare new tables. Educational games were used in order to facilitate communication in teaching a foreign language. A table containing the proper names, personal pronouns, nouns, verbs, adjectives and expressions used in the games should be prepared. The explanations and lists should be given in three languages for the students to benefit from the languages they know (have learned).



Fig. 1. Teacher: (Hasan Coşkun) and student (Derin Lara Öztürk) gaming with the *Dalya* game. Source: Author.

Preparation of additional materials according to the feature of the subject, and the level of the target group, play an important role in the efficient use of the *Dalya* game in teaching a language. Therefore, tables and texts prepared in three languages were developed to be used in classes. Following are the tables prepared in connection with language teaching:

1. Proper names	2. Personal pronouns	3. Nouns
4. Verbs	5. Adjectives	6. Animals

A table titled Expressions was developed in connection with texts together with the following additional materials:

- A dialogue between two persons;
- Student sheet containing conversation blocks in connection with “Animals”;
- Fill-in the blanks sheet and;
- A practice sheet in which to write the names of 24 animals with articles, in singular and plural forms.

Table 1. The Flow Chart of the Activities. Source: developed by author.

Steps	Duration	Activities of the games master and the participants	Method / Technique	Medium
1	5 Min.	Coşkun tells the students that today they will try the Dalya game. The subject is animals.		Dalya game and animals posters
2	5 Min.	The participants label their name plates in three languages and fix them on their collars. (e.g.: My name is.....).	Individual work	Name plates, pin and writing mat.
3	5 Min.	Groups of four to five students are formed and the participants sit at desks.		
4	5 Min.	The Dalya game -case is distributed.		Dalya game
5	10 Min.	The Dalya game -case is opened and the stones are put on the game board (desk).	Group work	Dalya game - case and stones
6	5 Min.	The sequence of the players and the referee is determined by using heads or tails. (The party which guesses correctly begins the game.)		Heads or tails
7	5 Min.	Coşkun visits each group and explains the game rules if there are any questions.		
8	20 Min.	The student sheets are distributed. Each group will write, in the words list, the names of the animals on the Stones placed on the tower in Turkish, German and English.	Group work	Student sheets
9	5 Min.	The participants lay the game case and stones on the table. They sit down at the desks and are ready for the plenum. The referees show the results.	Circle / Recitation	Student w sheets
10	20 Min.	The players sit down at the desks. Game master gives Group A the students the sheets and the first 12 flash card pictures. He also gives the students' sheet to Group B, and the last 12 flash card pictures The participants fill in the blanks with the 12 Turkish and English words.	Circle / Recitation	Pictures and student-sentence-list
11	5 Min.	The participants again sit down at the plenum desks.	Circle / Recitation	
12	10 Min.	Each group hangs the flash cards on the clothesline and reads and explains the writing.		Clothesline, clips, pictures and work lists
13	10 Min.	The participants again sit at their desks and solve the puzzle.	Individual work	Puzzle and writing material
14	5 Min.	The participants again sit at their desks for the plenum and talk about the problems of solving puzzles (the solutions are distributed if necessary).	Circle / Recitation	Work sheets for the group work/ individual work
15	5 Min. Total of 120 Min.	The Dalya game is evaluated. The completion of the activity is announced. Coşkun (the game master) thanks them for their cooperation	Circle / Recitation	


As seen in this list, the proper names are the same in all languages and they are generally not translated. Sometimes the phonetic pronunciation of the names is adapted to the related alphabet. In foreign language lessons it is a relief for students, if they recognize proper names in dialogues, texts and so on.

It is believed that every educational game must include a word list that consists of personal pronouns, adjectives, verbs, nouns and simple and detailed speech tools. This list should be prepared by taking into consideration the target group. Below you will see a word list for the *Dalya* game. To give an idea on the words lists prepared by the author, two sections on the subject titled "Animals" are given below.

Table 2. Sözcük Listesi / Wortliste / Word List / Hayvanlar / Tiere /Animals (a).
Source: Coşkun, 2006, p. 96.

Nr	Resim / Bild / Picture	Türkçe	Deutsch	English
1		Arı	die Biene	Bee
...
3		Keçi	die Ziege	Goat

Table 2. Sözcük Listesi / Wortliste / Word List / Hayvanlar / Tiere / Animals (b)
Source: Coşkun, 2006, p. 97.

Nr	Resim / Bild / Picture	Türkçe	Deutsch	English
13		Kedi	die Katze	Cat
...
24		Zürafa	die Giraffe	Giraffe

TRAINING MATERIALS TO MEMORIZE THE VOCABULARY ITEMS

It is possible to teach the names of animals outside of game variations with the use of different exercises. I have developed some training materials for this purpose. Some of these are enclosed in this article as examples. The reading and writing exercises can be added, or the students may participate spontaneously.

The research I have conducted on educational games shows that in order for the students who have selected the German language to have a longer motivation to learn German, this lesson has to be given with active learning methods. Use of the educational games in this manner plays an important role. I had the opportunity to work with the traditional method and communication and action-oriented approach with the students

who had chosen selective German language lessons. In elective lessons, students focus on grammar to learn the language. In the lessons conducted on action-oriented approach, students learn through communication. This method is consistent with the recommendations made by the European Union in learning a foreign language (Ende, Grotjahn, Kleppin, & Mohr, 2013).

Students who have attended the foreign language lessons which focus on grammar had problems during the first 2-3 weeks in understanding the format of the lessons given through educational games and where stress is made on communication. In the ensuing lessons, they did not want detailed explanations on the grammar structures. Therefore, the importance of communication

should be explained to the target groups of the selected German groups within the first 2-3 weeks of the German lessons.

Making the educational games and the additional material in three languages, enables the students to participate in the activities more freely and to use the language they had learned up to now. Use of the language of the students learning languages other than Turkish, German and English will give them the impression that their own language and culture are honored. It should be emphasized here that this is very crucial for the immigrant students.

The implementation of educational games should not be limited to the method and techniques created by the teacher. Especially students in primary schools are very creative and tend to use the playing stones for multi-purposes. While the students were asked to build a language tower with the *Dalya* Stones, after a while it was observed that the students were using these materials as domino stones. The author has frequently witnessed such creative ways in the lessons where educational games are used. Therefore, it should be insured that applications are made during the lessons.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Turkey families, the Ministry of Education (Kavak, 2009), the Board for Higher Agency (2007) and foreign agencies are encouraging the teaching of foreign languages. Likewise, great efforts are exerted to teach Turkish as a foreign language. In spite of this, success in the teaching of foreign languages is not at the desired level (Demircan, 2014; Bayraktaroğlu, 2014). In order to increase the rate of success in teaching foreign languages, a series of measures need to be taken. One of these measures is the development of educational materials. Educational games hold an important place among the educational materials. One of the most common games in Turkey is the *Dalya*

game. The studies mentioned in this article were made to convert the traditional *Dalya* game into an educational game.

In order for the educational *Dalya* to be effectively used in language teaching, the game must be integrated with the envisioned subject. Educational games should be more frequently used by the educational institutes for the German language to be selected by more students and for these students to attend the classes regularly. To benefit, at the desired level, from the educational *Dalya* game in the elective German lessons is contingent on the effective use of the said game in teaching the language. Therefore, the teaching-learning process of the lesson in which the educational *Dalya* game is to be used should be planned in detail. For this reason, the compilation and preparation of the educational *Dalya* game is not sufficient for teaching in respect to (special education/didactics). In the planning of the lesson in which this game is to be used as a tool, primarily the target group, the objectives, the justification for the subject, the period allocated for the lesson, the level of attendance of the students, the physical environment, and the languages the students had learned beforehand must be taken into consideration. In relation with the said factors, a detailed lesson flow chart should be developed, the planned activities should be implemented, the teaching and learning process should be evaluated, and recommendations should be made in the light of the data to be obtained.

As mentioned above, the traditional and educational *Dalya* game briefly highlighted in this article was applied to various groups. This study will contain the experiences gained from the educational *Dalya* game applied to the students attending the elective German lessons at the Hacettepe University (Ankara) during the 2014/2015 academic year. The subject of animals was used in the said educational *Dalya* game. The observations made are briefly given below:

- The students showed great interest in the *Dalya* educational game.
- There wasn't a student who did not participate in the educational *Dalya* game.
- While the students learned the words related with the animals on one hand, they were also establishing balance while building the tower.
- More than half of the students learned 24 important words related with animals within three hours of the lesson and practiced what they had learned.
- The students were able to make sentences with the words they had learned.
- The students entered into a dialogue while building the tower.

According to the results of the experiments conducted with this and other groups, there is the possibility that the educational *Dalya* game may be successfully used in teaching Turkish in-country and abroad. As stated above the languages learned by the students should be used in teaching Turkish. For this reason, care should be taken to prepare

the educational materials in multi-languages. As emphasized previously, experiments show that the educational *Dalya* game may be adjusted according to the language levels of the target group.

As we all know, today almost all the countries are affected by the influx of refugees. In order for the refugees to adapt to the society and to be able to benefit from the educational institutes they must first of all learn the language spoken in that country. I believe that the educational games will be beneficial in this regard also.

For the reasons given above educational games should be developed as teaching materials. These teaching materials should be provided to those who are interested. The experiences gained from the implementation should be shared with the other colleagues of the field.

As a summary, it can be said that according to the result of this study, in comparison with the courses with traditional methods (Coşkun, 2015 p. 168), the students were found highly successful in the courses in which the games are applied.

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