

Games I Played as a Child

The Now:

<http://www.learningcircuits.org/2001/feb2001/prensky.html>

It is amazing that by using a game the military is able to train 2-4 million personnel, in addition to 2 million civilian employees. This is a good example of games as a powerful tool for learning. I very much liked the practicality of this game and I think that its success should force people to evaluate the competency of those who are in charge of this training. In other words, the result of this training is a proof that technology and games work and all we need is to familiarize ourselves with using them. Just imagine how long it would take to train these millions of military personnel and civilian employees using face-to-face training. Games help a lot in saving time and making learning or training very practical.

Training people using games has changed traditional, tedious and difficult tasks into something engaging and fun. Dealing with text and long passages is boring compared to games that are full of graphic designs, sounds, motion and bright colors. The combination of all these things together makes the learning process easier and more enjoyable. I love this very much because, as a teacher or a designer, my biggest problem is when the students or the learners become bored with what I am doing. Using games will solve this problem for me.

Another reason for using games in teaching or learning is that it will help cut the expenses of the training process. Let us calculate how much it will cost when employees leave work to attend long hours of training. By using a game, the employees can do their training at any time. In addition to that, training by using games saves a lot of time compared to traditional ways of training/learning. For these three reasons, I highly believe in the value of using games in education.

The Past:

Description of Childhood Games

As a child, I played “Snakes and Ladders”, which is a classic children’s game. The game can be played between two or more players on a playing board with a grid of squares from one to 100. On some of the squares, a number of ladders and snakes are drawn. Each ladder or snake connects two squares together. The game does not need any specific skills. Each player has different colored tokens. He/she starts by rolling a single dice and then moving the token by the number of squares indicated by the number of the roll, from the bottom to the top. In the completion of the move, you have the chance of landing on the end of a square with a ladder. This will move you up to the higher numbered square. The other possibility is when you land on the end of a square with a snakehead; this will move you down to the tail of the snake.

The rules state that when you roll a six with your die, you will have another turn as a bonus. When you are about to reach the final square you must roll the exact number to reach the final square. The winner is the player whose token first reaches the last square of the track.

One of the things that I still remember about playing this game is that I used to play with my young brother and sisters; I hated losing the game. So, when one of them is about to win, I usually turn over the board with die and the tokens to ruin the whole game. We usually ended up yelling at each other.

Although the game is very simple, it still satisfies some of Mark Prensky’s six elements of game, such as rules. The game has specific rules, which must be followed by the players. It has an outcome and objectives of overcoming a hurdle. All players work very hard to reach to the final square before the others to be a winner.

I will try to make a brief comparison between analog and digital games. Both attract kids. Of course, analog games attract kids from an older generation while today’s kids prefer digital. Another similarity is that both types are designed to teach something or to realize specific goals. In addition, both analog and digital games provide the player with

the thrill of doing or winning something. No doubt, they both increase the level of motivation.

- Regarding differences, analog games are built on social concepts. You need at least one partner with whom to play. It is something that helps build social interactions between people.
- In most of the digital games, the player does not need a partner. He/she can just play by himself/herself
- Old analog games are based on chance or luck, such as the “Snakes and Ladders”: the player just rolls the die and uses what he gets. However, in digital games, you need some skill to play the game.
- Analog games are always one version but most digital games have levels that range from easy, medium to hard.
- Kids play most likely analog games, where as kids as well as adults play digital games.

The Future:

What will you do with this?

The most important benefit or value of using games in teaching and learning, in my opinion, are that games make the learning process fun and enjoyable, especially if what is to be learned is dull and boring (such as spelling, multiplication tables, etc). They also increase the motivation level of the learners and prepare him/her to receive more information. Nowadays, digital games are widely used for teaching foreign languages and can be shared among thousands or even millions of learners. They are also used for changing attitudes. A good example of this is sexual harassment training.

The most important concerns or areas needing improvement that companies should think seriously about are:

- Ways to keep players from “game playing addiction.”
- Solve the problem of lacking social interaction by creating games that can be played by more than one person.

- Kids in poor countries who do not have money or facilities for playing digital games.

I highly believe in digital games and whenever I find suitable ones, I usually use them in my teaching. I will definitely use some of them in my prototype. I may use captivate2 to create simple vocabulary reviews by combining videos, audio and text. In other words, I am sure that I will incorporate some aspects of games to improve my prototype and enhance my teaching.