

Password Game

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Aim

The principle aim of Password is to encourage students to talk about grammatical aspects of language in a way that makes them feel as though they are simply communicating in a game.

Preparation

The preparation consists of making up a number of sentences using vocabulary and grammatical items that the students have seen in class.

Procedure

1. Divide the class into two groups.
2. Put two chairs at the front of the room facing the class. The chairs should be immediately in front of the board.
3. Explain to the groups that you will be writing some things on the board, and one team member from each group will be sitting in the chairs at the front of the room with their backs to the board. Their teammates will be able to read what is written there, but the two volunteers will not.
4. The goal will be for each team in turn to try to explain to their partner what is written on the board without actually saying any of the words or parts of those words. Each team will have a given amount of time (for example, 30 seconds) to talk to their teammate. After the time has passed and if the teammate cannot guess the what is on the board, the teacher tells the other team that they have the same amount of time to talk to their teammate (who has been listening to the other team's discussion). This goes back and forth until one of the team members guesses the complete sentence correctly. That team gets a point, and the volunteers change places with other team members.
5. Tips: You should tell the students that they must not use their hands to physically describe anything they see, nor can they spell words. They can refer to the words by number (the fifth word is what you do when...), and they can use grammatical terms to help identify parts of speech and verb tenses.

Rationale

Because of the competitive nature of this activity, the students generally get wrapped up in trying to win the game. Even though they are exercising their grammatical knowledge (for example, "put the verb in the present continuous"), it is not a conscious grammar activity. The students see it as more of a challenge to be able to describe elements of the sentence in order to win the point. Also, because of the communication that must take place, it is not a one-way message (as grammatical explanations or activities frequently tend to be) with the student or teacher simply telling the other about grammar. The students who are describing have to make their teammate understand by giving the grammatical label and then examples if necessary. The teammate who is guessing has to listen carefully and be conscious of the grammatical elements in order to understand what his or her teammates are trying to say.

