Gaming in Beginning Greek: Taking Advantage of the Six Weeks' Opportunity

Dorothy Dvorsky-Rohner
Department of Classics
University of North Carolina at Asheville

Introduction

This discussion, although focused toward Greek college teachers, offers opportunities to college teachers of that other ancient language, Latin, and to high school Greek or Latin teachers to explore how engaged learning tasks can be used with slight modifications in their classrooms. The following gaming exercises and strategies present variations for these teaching environments. The beginning Greek college student presents a challenge to the instructor in the first six weeks as a modern student's interests work against a "one size fits all" approach. First, students may have signed up simply to fulfill the language requirement, are just curious or desperate to find another class, and a special few are already considering or have decided on a Classics major. The window of opportunity to engage and retain this complex group is very short. There is an inherent hope as well, that the class will entice previously undecided students to consider a major in Classics. The challenge is to keep each student in the seat past the withdrawal date and to have each there willingly and enthusiastically.

This first encounter with an inflected language, a strange alphabet, grammatical terms and uses for which many of our students do not have a secure footing mandates a pedagogical approach which will not only hold the students' interest but excite them to learning. It is a rare student who shows interest in the odd squiggles associated with a Greek word.

To be sure, the gaming strategies that I have incorporated in my classroom are based on cognitive learning techniques and engaged/active learning strategies that derive from scholarly research on why our classrooms are failing.[1] In particular, Boehlje and Eidman in "Simulation and Gaming Models: Application in Teaching and Extension Programs" discuss appropriate models to train agronomists and agribusiness students (987-992).[2] This gaming

[1] As researchers probed the traditional system, "the teacher is the faucet and the student the sponge", new teaching strategies emerged. It was important for me to understand the why behind these new approaches as well as the how. Irving Spitzberg notes three critical conditions for excellence in a teaching environment that were required; student involvement, high expectations, assessment and feedback (464-466). This did not inform my actual teaching practice but reinforces for me the criteria by which to judge my successes and failures. Cognitive studies focus on how we learn rather than the teaching environment. Shuell states that there are three criteria for defining *learning* (a) a change in an individual's behavior or ability to do something (b) a stipulation that this change must result from some sort of practice or experience and (c) that this change *is an enduring one* (412, emphasis mine). A cognitive approach views the learner as being a participant in an active learning process, a process that builds on prior knowledge, and which works within the psychological learning processes. I realized that I needed to include cognitive learning techniques in my classroom if I hoped to improve retention of material by students as well as retention of the student. The bibliography provides sources which I used to explore the development of pedagogical practices. For discussion of educational and psychological research see: Altbach et al.; Chickering, A. W., and Gamson, Z (1991); and Shuell.

[2] See Bibliography below.

strategy assists the learner in notional understanding of the problem and the solution (988). Their suggestions of cooperative learning, drama, role playing, and peer teaching which fulfilled the requirements of active/engaged learning are intended to give each student a feeling of ownership and success in the classroom (988). The use of gaming as an active/engaged activity posed a problem because I had no guidebook. The authors note that "The first and perhaps most important aspect in the successful use of gaming is to determine the purpose (or role) of the game in obtaining educational objectives" (989). Each game must have a specific end product which I must clearly understand before presenting it to the class. The rationale for active/engaged learning using "gaming" as a pedagogical tool for agronomy programs required that I translate the aspects of successful gaming into games for a beginning Greek language course.

Journey to Active/Engaged Learning

In the course of teaching Beginning Greek I have tried many approaches to instill some kind of mystery or excitement about learning the Greek language. My attempts to elicit awe for this ancient language through the discussion of the origin of Greek and families of languages failed to impress. My rigid quizzes on forms and vocabulary worked only for the few who had a serious interest in the language at the beginning of the semester. My decision to treat Greek as a great detective story had some merit as we were engaged in finding clues and solutions. But the detective story had no grizzly question to solve. The first breakthrough occurred when I taught fast track Greek which contains two regular semesters of Greek in one compact and intense semester. The second part of the semester needed to begin with a new look, something that had not been done before. The students were tired. I began with a review of the material for which each student was responsible for teaching assigned chapters to the class. Each student had to be fully conversant with the grammar, and syntax, present each chapter with handouts, appropriate board examples, and be able to answer their peers' questions. I simply observed. I noticed that the explanations given by students to their peers did not always use the language I would have used. And their explanations were somehow answering the grammar or syntax questions in a different way that often lit up little light bulbs in the eyes of their peers. So I thought, if rephrased in a different way, using different language and allowing for student teaching and perhaps incorporating other activities that engaged the students, this approach should improve the learning outcome. I needed to work this approach into my teaching.

Strategies and Methods for Active/Engaged Learning

The recognition that peer involvement in the teaching process had produced a deeper comprehension of the Greek grammar forced me to rethink Boehlje and Eidman's experiential learning model.

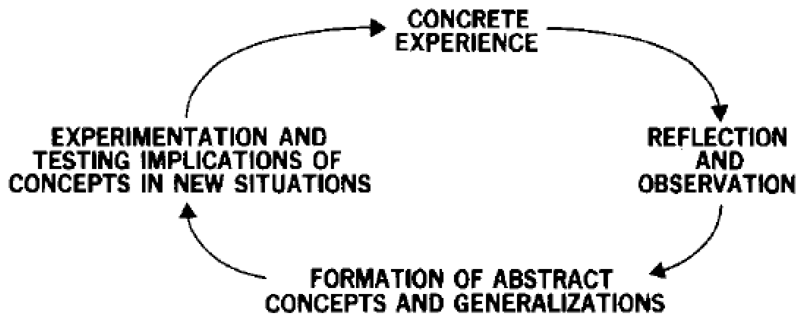

Figure 1. The experiential learning model

Boehlje and Eidman. (Fig.1, 988)

This model provides an example through which we can discuss an active/engaged learning activity for beginning Greek. The process of learning described in the diagram provided a rationale for introducing gaming and mandated that I create activities that would follow this process. Each gaming activity must build on prior learned material. The first step to reading Greek for every student is knowing the Greek alphabet. Therefore, to know the Greek alphabet is a concrete experience. First by identifying the *concrete experience*: "I know that I know this, the Greek Alphabet," the student is then able to move on to the second process. The student has this concrete experience through the "Alphabet Game". Second, using *reflection and observation* on this knowledge of the alphabet, the student observes the alphabet as it forms the word, "I begin to recognize the letters that make the word; I understand the word." The student acquires knowledge of the Greek vocabulary through games which reinforce the use of the letters in the words. This reinforcement is combined with games which practice and challenge each student's knowledge of case, gender, verb conjugations, etc. Third comes *formation of abstract concepts and generalizations*: "I understand how the word works in a sentence, what case means." The student has acquired the abstract concepts and generalizations of syntax and grammar and is able to recognize the Greek grammar system's formulae. This process proceeds as students have built on prior knowledge and now have the competency to look at a Greek sentence and see how the words interact. The fourth process culminates in the empirical knowledge that the student now owns, that of *experimentation and testing of implications of concepts in new situations***.** This step in the process of learning is the most exciting. After building on each bit of prior knowledge, reinforced by gaming, the student is now able to work with the concepts in games which give confidence and ownership of the material. The games at this level prove to the student that each is capable: "I can work with these Greek letters in new situations. I CAN READ GREEK."

Boehlje and Eidman see gaming as a positive strategy for informing students in agriculture and agribusiness: "The use of games accelerates the active experimentation and concrete experience phases of the learning process so that additional concepts can be introduced within a given time frame" (987-990). In other words, through gaming, Greek basics can be constructed one by one.

An activity must be created which will involve students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing. Gaming provides this model. Thus any game devised for classroom use must contain these educational goals: 1) the transfer of facts, 2) an increase in analytical abilities/logical reasoning, and 3) an ability to integrate the facts from a variety of disciplines. For our purposes we define disciplines to be: case, verb formation, declensions, etc. Each game must be formulated towards these goals very specifically and with great clarity. Students must know why they are playing the game and what they can expect as a learning outcome. The protocol for each game must be clear to them. The instructor introduces each game with the format having been established on the first day. Gaming builds in complexity just as the material to be learned builds on previously acquired knowledge.

Students simply grow to accept gaming as a part of the classroom environment. The biggest hurdle is to convince them that the effort and strangeness of the engaged/learning activities actually produces learning. Students come into the classroom with preconceived ideas as to how a language class will be taught. Two groups of students are most likely to reject this as a productive and worthwhile activity, serious students who are comfortable in the traditional classroom and students who feel they are threatened by the requirement to interact with their peers in unfamiliar ways. The first class then presents the most critical challenge. Will I be able to convince the class that this approach works?

The first impression of the Greek language must be seen through a lens different from the introduction of paradigm charts, syntax, and rules of accent. We need rose-tinted glasses to introduce the student to the learning of the Greek alphabet. The educational objective of the game is clear. Each student will learn the Greek alphabet within one class time period, fifty minutes. They will leave that first class knowing that they know it. This self-knowledge, the knowing that one knows, must always be evident to a student after playing any game.

Each student may make an appraisal of the course prior to the first day of class by accessing the web for the study guide and/or looking at the required text. These discoveries form the first impression of the class. In order to set in place an environment geared toward active/engaged learning, I need to present the material to be covered in the study guide as simply road signs of learning. The road to learning needs to be seen as doable for the first few weeks. A detailed study guide or syllabus, when first viewed, can be an intimidating experience. Too much information is off-putting to the student whose interest may only be in finding a language class that is not filled and who only wants to fulfill the language requirement. I must offer information that is not what scholars often call overload. My study guide for the first six weeks does not include exercise numbers or detailed information about the class setting. The study guide gives the date of the class, the chapter we will be reading, what road signs we will be looking at: the Greek alphabet, getting friendly with Greek verbs, the article as your best friend, game of "who has the right case, or dative singular, dative singular come right on over." The Greek study guide states that each student will choose a Greek name by the second class period. This is their name for the semester; I reserve the right to be Athena. The study guide informs the student that cultural days will be a component of the course. On the first cultural day, each student presents to the class information on the chosen name. We enjoy food and conversation about the Greek culture. Cultural activities are a part of most teaching environments whether it is high school or college and form a positive reinforcement for the language.

It is my practice to give out a very detailed weekly study guide each Friday noting the exact exercises we will cover, which ones we will do in class and which ones for homework. This weekly study guide includes grammar or syntax points that we will be covering with explanations of more difficult items. This detailed guide also includes the format for any game we will be engaged in. The game and the material are linked through the study guide, giving the student an opportunity to become familiar with what will be expected of them. This detailed study guide does not get into the students' hands until at least a week has passed giving me time to establish an environment not based on assignments and expected performance of a student in any traditional way. High school teachers may consider presenting the students a similar study guide week by week containing simple instructions or road maps to learning. For example, week two of Latin Class (whatever level) is expected to follow the first conjugation road where the teacher then lists important points of first conjugation. If gaming is to be introduced, the game should be described so that the student is aware of expectations. Assigning exercises can be given on a daily basis in class with full explanation of material covered.

The second impression is the first day of class. A student sitting in Beginning Greek on the first day must be fully engaged with the material or the student will soon falter. Given the general lack of respect for the ancient languages that has pervaded our society, the student who willingly signs up for or stumbles into a Beginning Greek class is a treasured human being. The traditional methods of rote learning, rigorous memorization will soon dull the senses of our modern student who is bombarded with MTV, reality shows, and whose constant companion is Walkman, iPod, or instant messaging cell phones. How in heavens' name can Ancient Greek be seen as worthy of focus for their minds? I am competing on that first day with this cultural background.

My goals for the first day are these: 1) to create an environment where making mistakes and being silly is appropriate; 2) to establish a learning space where all were forced to participate whether they were willing or not; and 3)to teach them something tangible so that they could say I know something Greek—most importantly *not* to present accents, diphthongs, *not* to give a lecture on the development of the Greek language, *not* to assign exercises immediately, and *not* to attempt to explain an inflected language, all of which I did previously. I focus on the one thing that they need to know before they could take one step farther: the alphabet.

This activity must show that the class is a unit, that we need each other, that successes are applauded, that mistakes are praised as a learning tool, and we must on this first day come away knowing something Greek. Each student must come away knowing that they can be successful in this class.

Introducing Gaming

The first day proceeds as I term it, *the first encounter*. The class time period is fifty minutes. The minute I walk in I know that I am being assessed by my voice, what I wear today, what someone reads on the net about me, eye contact, my ability to say their name, etc. I begin the class exactly on time with stragglers finding themselves in an awkward position as I've already arranged the students in a tight circle with no available seats separating them. There are two reasons I use this arrangement: Each student learns that this is a serious class, and it informs the student that we act as a group. Students are not isolated, sitting behind another student, locked out of eye contact with the instructor as well as their peers. As I check the roster I walk around and ask each as I call their names and they identify themselves, where they are from, what their home state is. When I am finished I introduce myself. I face them all and state that I am Dr. Dorothy Dvorsky-Rohner and then sing out in the loudest voice that I can muster, "*I'M FROM IOWA, IOWA THAT'S*

*WHERE THE TALL CORN GROWS***.**" This is accompanied with some playacting as if I were on stage. Needless to say I have the attention of each student. The criticism of this approach, that of making a fool of myself, or seemingly to place myself in a position of possible ridicule, hence losing that aura of authority in the classroom can be addressed in the following ways. I state after this introduction that I am Athena, and Athena rules. I use voice modulation for directives in the game to follow, which indicates to the student that my voice is to be listened to. I call out, "Let's move faster here", or "Good job, what's the next step." I step in and out of instructor and participant roles on this first day.

The message given to students after my song rendition is that I don't fit in a box and I am not afraid to make a fool of myself in the classroom. No one can be a bigger fool than I; I am not afraid to be seen as silly. No student has ever walked out because of this approach. Curiosity and perceived weird behavior by an instructor will keep them engaged for the day: "What else might she do?" The second most important activity is to convince them that they can learn Greek and they can learn something in Greek that very day. The Greek alphabet is what we set our sights upon.

I explain that everything we are going to do today is based on proven pedagogical studies related to active/engaged learning strategies. I first inquire if they know how they learn best. Some do. I explain to the others what the kinetic, visual, and auditory learning styles mean and that what we do today will cover all three. We are doing this to help our brain accept something totally new. Today we will learn the Greek alphabet.

One of the major problems in gaming is that students are hesitant to invest too much of their personal egos in fear of making a mistake or stepping out of their persona with which they identify. A shy student is fearful of engagement; a self assured student may act out. The instructor holds the pace of the game and the class in control by observing those who may hang back and approaching them quietly to ask if they need assistance. Holding back has rarely happened because the first game does not allow for an individual to stand apart. The alphabet game is designed to introduce students to one another, become dependent upon other students to solve the problem at hand, and to learn the task assigned.

Gaming requires a clear understanding of what the game is about, what is to be accomplished with it. The alphabet game is introduced by stating that the *purpose* of the game is to learn the alphabet, and once this is accomplished, the reading of Greek is possible. I *explain the procedure*, thus allowing students to know what to expect. I provide *time constraints* that let me to set the pace. I make clear the *expected outcome***:** "Each of you will leave this classroom knowing the Greek alphabet."

Learning the Greek Alphabet: The Game

The process is given in detail in hopes of providing a template that may be followed or modified to fit the type of gaming that feels comfortable. The teacher must feel at ease with the game. Each instructor should feel free to adapt the game in order to feel comfortable with it. The process for learning the Greek alphabet is as follows.

First step: I write the English alphabet on the board in segments with spaces in between. As I write the letters I explain that the Greek and English alphabets have much in common. The spaces that are placed in the line of the English alphabet correspond to the Greek letters which will be placed in the line below filled with Greek letters which have no counterpart in English. I instruct the students to have a piece of paper on which to write each Greek letter down as it is introduced.

Aa Bb Dd Ee (Ff Gg Hh) Ii (Jj) Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp (Qq) Rr Ss Ts Uu [Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz]
Αα Ββ Γγ Δδ Εε Ζζ Ηη Θθ Ιι Κκ Λλ Μμ Νν Ξξ Οο Ππ Ρρ Σ ςσς Ττ Υυ Φφ Χχ Ψψ Ωω

After the English alphabet is placed on the board as above, I begin with the introduction of the Greek alphabet. I have not yet written the Greek alphabet on the board. I state that the English and Greek alphabets have much in common, and it is important to remember that we only need to learn eight letters that have no referential point to the English. I point to the English G, L, P, S, as English letters whose Greek counterparts have English sounds but different or somewhat different forms. I begin to write the Greek alphabet on the board with the capital and small alpha, noting the similarity of form to the English Aa. The Greek letter is written below its English counterpart. As I write the alpha under the A I direct the students to repeat : "alpha." The response is always a weak "alpha" at which point I state to the students, shouting: "Repeat…. "Alpha!" The response rarely compares to the volume of my voice. At this point I state, "No….this is a football cheer and we are cheering on our team." I shout alpha and raise my hand as cheerleaders do. I will not accept anything other than a full throated "ALPHA!" from the students. This can be heard outside the closed door but it is acceptable as I am in the Drama portion of our building. This is the first hurdle. The class has decided that it will shout "ALPHA!"

At this point I begin a narrative of the Greek letters which allows for the student to connect the placement of the letter and its sound and form to the visuals I am presenting. Beta is presented in the same format as the alpha. As I write gamma I note that this is our hard sound G. The Greek gamma decided to move into the third position of the alphabet after C left for Italy. Gamma wanted a more upscale house nearer the beginning of the alphabet. I use the name of each letter as much as possible in the narrative that goes with this game. Visually the Greek alphabet has seven segments. Although the introduction of the Greek alphabet seems time consuming, it is important to remember that you are giving bits of information upon which to build the complete alphabet.

At the addition of each new Greek letter, the class first shouts out the letter and then repeats the segment from the beginning. This is the procedure as it occurs verbally:(me-alpha, class-alpha), (me-beta, class-beta), (me-alpha beta, class-alpha beta), (me-gamma, class-gamma), (me-alpha beta gamma, class-alpha beta gamma), (me-delta, class-delta), (me- alpha beta gamma delta, class-alpha beta gamma delta), (me-epsilon, class-epsilon), (me-alpha beta gamma delta epsilon, class-alpha beta gamma delta epsilon). After the first sequence has been written on the board "alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon", the students are asked to shout out each letter in quick rotation, repeating as we go around the circle. I explain that each student will jump to their feet, raise their arms and shout out the letter name. I explain that this is rather like the wave at a football game. The students then repeat the sequence as it progresses around the circle. The sequence is repeated in this fashion at least four times. It is important to gauge the students' knowledge at this point. When the sequence sounds very smooth then it is time to stop and move on to the next step. Each student now repeats the sequence individually and as quickly as possible. The sequence then becomes a verbal sound, the letters melding into one another. I point to the letters on the board as the student says them quickly. At this point the letters have become a phrase, "alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon." āl fă bē tă gā mă dēl tă ēp sī lōn! If a student falters, I say "No matter, this is, after all, just the first day." The student sitting next to one who falters is asked to help that student. This reaffirming of the sequence moves around the circle of students. I take my place in the recitation of the alphabet through this portion of the game.

Αα Ββ Γγ Δδ Εε
Ζζ Ηη Θθ
Ιι Κϰ Λλ Μμ Νν
Ξξ
Οο Ππ Ρϱ Σσς-c Ττ Υυ
Φφ Χχ Ψψ Ωω

Each letter group is introduced with a narrative and voice modulation. I write the next three letters on the line after the first segment and under the space left in the English alphabet. We treat this segment as a group and not as individual letters. These are Greek and have no counterparts to our English alphabet on the board. Hence, "Zeta, eta, theta" is repeated as a phrase. Again we go to the class. After I have written the letters on the board the class shouts out "ZETAETATHETA." The same format of moving around the circle occurs but each student is now repeating the phrase zetaetatheta. After the circle has practiced this phrase the class then repeats the first segment with the second segment. We shout out the alphabet from the beginning. Again when you can hear the class as one voice shouting out the letters it is time to move on.

The letters in the third sequence, from Iota to Nu, are presented separately just as in the first group. We repeat the same format which we followed with the first segment; going around the circle, jumping up shouting out a letter, then each student shouts the sequence and then the class shouts the alphabet from the beginning. Again, I tell the story of how H died and came back as a ghost found as a rough breathing mark but we need not meet that ghost just yet. J was upset with the weather and moved to a better climate. The remaining letters conform to our English system. Each time I write the Greek letter under the English counterpart if applicable. Greek letters are placed on the line below the English alphabet in the space which I have left when writing the English alphabet on the board. At this point I tell the students that they have learned more than half of the Greek alphabet.

As Xi stands alone and has no English counterpart, the letter is annunciated in a high-pitched voice as I raise my hands to the sky. Xi is problematic when memorizing the alphabet in a traditional manner. It stands alone and where to put it often confuses. This letter has presented a problem in the past, thus the emphasis on the modulated voice, the raised hands acting as a visual hook to the information. The movement and the vocalization use drama as a method of learning. The sequence of repetition follows as before. The next six letters are learned separately. The final sequence, the final Greek letters, is also approached separately. At this point I erase the Greek letters from the board and the class recites the Greek alphabet without the visual prompt. We shout the alphabet at a normal pace working through each sequence. We repeat it in the football cheer mode with rapid recitation moving around the circle. Again I participate. This portion of the alphabet game does not take as long, nor is it as arduous as it sounds.

The second part of this game appears to the casual onlooker as complete chaos. I now distribute separate letters of the Greek alphabet to each of the students. They receive large 5 X 7 cards on which is printed either a small or capital letter. These cards must be paired with their correct partner. The instructor then states that the letter partners are to be found as quickly as possible and upon finding the correct partner, the students are to write the pair on the board and retire that pair to my desk. The English alphabet has remained on the board as a guide for the students. As students will have more than one letter and size, the milling about and calling out seems to be without purpose. The pedagogical purpose is twofold: students are interacting and using the letters as a means of becoming an organic whole which is critical to the environment for active/engaged learning, and they are learning the Greek alphabet.

After all pairs have been retired and the complete Greek alphabet is written on the board, we recite the alphabet and then I erase the board completely. The students return to their seats where each writes the complete alphabet down. At this point 90% of the students have the alphabet learned. I check each student's written alphabet as the last component of the game. It is most important to encourage those who have missed a letter or forgotten an exact sequence. We go over it again, and I ask them to talk about the letters in a narrative so that their story will follow the lettering sequence. I ask them to e-mail me their narrative so that it will be firm in their minds. The students are tested on the alphabet in the next class meeting by writing it down and reciting it to me aloud. The usual percentage of students who have learned the alphabet is 100%.

It is important that I have clear expectations for the first week of class and that I communicate them to the students: Greek alphabet learned and competency in use of letters in writing simple words and simple sentences with the introduction of verbs chosen from the chapter's vocabulary list. The second class moves into the Present tense of the Greek verb. I allow fifteen minutes at the beginning of the class for students to write verbs listed in the chapter. I encourage students to come to class early and get in extra board work. This gives students an opportunity to write words and visualize the Greek letters in words. They are encouraged to spell the words aloud, and then pronounce the word. This short expenditure of time provides students an opportunity to practice their newly learned alphabet in a meaningful way. Students must become comfortable with writing and recognizing the letters in order to move on to more complex skills. This strategy results from my past experience with students who were still struggling weeks into the semester with writing the letters and an ability to actually see them in a word.

Each activity for the first six weeks is based on a new concept or new material that students must learn. The instructor presents new material through board work and questioning. Students then participate in an activity focused on that new concept. As the students progress through the semester, more complex games are introduced. I continue using gaming into the second semester. The students who have become accustomed to gaming in the first semester often ask me for a game on some new grammar concept we are learning. One of their favorite activities is the solving of an ancient broken stele which tells the story of an unfortunate city or event.

More Gaming Activities: The Broken Stele Game

In the second semester the students I tell students that the goal is to read Greek and not feel threatened by it. One of the most effective games for students to test out their translation skills is the "Broken Stele" game that I had previously introduced in the first semester. This game helps students to recognize syntactical constructions out of context and demonstrates the fourth process shown in the experiential learning model. These stele games always contain sad and tragic stories of cities or individuals who have crossed the gods in some manner. In the following video we had just completed the study of participles. The class is fifty minutes and the clip from this class consists of short segments of activity during the class period. You will hear a rather awkward translation of the dative of possession which was later corrected by a student.

The story concerns three beautiful daughters, desired by Poseidon, who is rejected by them and who ultimately punishes them. The text is written on large poster board segments. The sentences then are cut into sections, and each section of a sentence is numbered with its appropriate number in the text, 1st sentence, 2nd sentence, etc. The segments of all the sentences are scattered around the table and the students pick up the pieces of the broken stele. As they sort out the sentence's numbered sections, they automatically sort themselves out into groups, each of which will deal with a specific numbered sentence.

I introduce the stele game giving some background to the information to be found on the stele. In this case, Poseidon is involved. The students are shown in the video as they progress in putting the stele back together again and translating its message.

Broken
Stele
Game

To view video of this game, click the rectangle above; you must have QuickTime® installed on your computer and be using Adobe Acrobat Reader 8 or later.

A third activity assigns sentences, two or three, from an exercise to be completed as homework for each individual student to be handed in to me. The student writes the exercise sentences on the board and explains the rationale for the solution whether it be English to Greek or Greek to English. I stand back and allow the student to explain the use of the genitive, participle, tense aspect, etc. After the student has presented the sentence, I ask the class if they all agree. If not, we then go over all issues which may have arisen. This activity informs me of what problems the class has as a whole and if I need to emphasize or reiterate some grammar concept.

How Difficult is Gaming?

The information given on the games and suggestions for an engaged/active learning environment cannot fit all teachers' personalities or classroom situations. The importance of gaming for the retention of learning and the retention of students in the classroom has been proven statistically, so the issue becomes: How might I attempt this if I am completely uncomfortable making a fool out of myself? First, it is important that the process of engagement in the gaming activity not be seen as intimidating or it will fail. Small steps are best, and only the teacher can determine how to introduce gaming appropriately into the classroom. The high school teacher may see this as an opportunity for students to act up or become disruptive. My first suggestion is to move slowly with a game which is easily controlled. The Greek alphabet game is a good example of how one might tweak a game which can seemingly get out of control or one in which the teacher is uncomfortable.

It is important to remember that the basis of the game is to incorporate the three learning modes into one learning experience. The writing of the Greek alphabet under the English is a visual presentation. Each student can be given a piece of poster board on which the student writes the English alphabet as it is written on the board. It is important for the teacher to check how this is done. The student states the Greek letter as it is written on the board and writes it in the proper place on the poster board. The repetition of the segments of the alphabet need not be done with a football cheer, but I can't emphasize more the importance of building on each portion of the alphabet and slowly adding until the students are able to say the complete alphabet without hesitation. The handing out of the alphabet cards need not be totally chaotic. The teacher can have organized the cards prior to class based on the number of students in the class. Each student is given a packet of cards and then asked to find the partner to each letter. The remainder of the exercise can follow the format used above. This game does not require that the instructor become a football cheerleader or a poor thespian. The goal of the game is to give ownership to the student of the Greek alphabet. I guarantee that if even a small change in the presentation of the alphabet is made within the classroom, the students' success rate will rise. I was told, "Learn the alphabet." I was expected to do so on my own and I did. But I did not own it as my students do until much later in my studies.

The following is just one example of how cards can work in the gaming process. High school Greek and Latin teachers or Latin college teachers can use cards as a basis for games which emphasize grammar points or vocabulary. Each instructor must identify the educational goal of the game. For example, in teaching the Greek dative of possession the instructor creates a card game which allows the student to practice identifying the proper endings for nouns and the proper use of this kind of dative. The educational goal has been established that the class needs practice with all feminine declension nouns, the regular eta and alpha feminine nouns and the masculine nouns declined in the feminine declension. One set of cards will have the nominative of a Greek word. The second set of cards will have the dative endings for the noun, singular and plural. This set will have duplicates of the dative endings as the students will need to have access to the proper endings. A third set of cards will have the articles that are needed for the nouns, again with duplicates. The teacher writes on the board a sentence in which the dative of possession appears. The sentence written in Greek or Latin will omit the Greek or Latin noun to be placed in the dative, giving only the English word. Each student looks at the set of nominative noun cards received from the teacher. If that student has the noun required then the student may ask for help from another student to find the correct ending and article for the noun. This is a slow paced game, and the danger is that students not involved will become bored. It is suggested that a number of sentences be written on the board prior to class. This allows for the students to become active immediately.

Successful Gaming

How do I know if I am being successful in my use of gaming as a learning strategy? My journey to gaming was not one of immediate success. It is to be expected that you will introduce failed games. My experience has taught me that the most important aspect of a successful game is to have the educational goal clearly in mind and clearly presented to the students. After establishing that goal, it should be very simple at first; the preparation for the materials for the game must be carefully planned and tried out by yourself in your office, acting as student and going over what you will be doing during the game. Visualize where you will be standing; visualize the board and how you will arrange your materials. Write down the procedure of the game for yourself until you have it memorized. Write the steps on the board before the game or give the steps of the game to the class in a handout in a prior class period before the game is to be played. After students play the game, ask for feedback. You will not always hear what you are hoping for. If students were confused or not certain what they were expected to have learned from the game, then ask for their help in improving it to make it a successful game. Using feedback in this way gives ownership to the student of the material and allows for them to participate in the engaged/active learning environment. We all can learn something.

It is my hope that whatever the classroom, high school or college, the teacher will find opportunities to try a gaming strategy. The active/engaged learning pedagogical approach is only one component of good teaching, as we all know. Gaming provides the opportunity for student involvement, high expectations of learning, assessment and feedback—all requisite criteria given as the three critical conditions for excellence in a teaching environment. To communicate with enthusiasm and excitement that Greek and Latin are not only special but fun gives to our students the opportunity to be successful.

Please see additional gaming activities and bibliography that follow.

Additional Games

Principles to remember:

1. Game must have pedagogical purpose and this purpose must be made clear to student.
2. Games need to be active, social, contextual, engaged, and owned by students.
3. Game must have qualitative results, i.e., the grades will improve.
4. Gaming should present opportunities for peer learning and teaching.
5. Games are presented within structure of class that incorporates traditional teaching methods.
6. Preparation of games is the key to success. Games must be focused. Games must build in complexity. Start with simple games that focus on only one educational goal, for example, learning the Greek alphabet. Consider the logistics of the game. Preparation of materials will take you longer than you expected. Consider the number of students in your classroom. A game which requires larger teams, such as the vocabulary game, will fail if you only have five or six students. Involving too many students at once will confuse and complicate games that require interaction between groups or pairs. Three or four groups with no more than three to four students in a group allows each student to act within a group and each group to interact or communicate with the other groups. Using more than four groups reduces the ability of any one student to benefit from the engaged/learning activity.
7. Self appraisal for determining if gaming is something you wish to attempt is vital. Consider these questions:

   a. Am I willing to fail if my first game does not work out as I had wished?

   b. Am I starting with a very simple game and one with a clear and precise educational goal?

   c. Have I prepared the students to expect a new approach in the classroom by explaining the rationale for the change? Do the students know what their learning mode is?

   d. Are you convinced that gaming might improve the educational outcome for your students?

   e. What has been the most difficult concept to teach to the students? Can you create a game to simplify or reinforce traditional teaching about that concept? If not, are you willing to ask someone for help to create one?

   f. Are you willing to put in extra preparation time in order to include gaming? This is a serious question as high school teaching gives little free time for extra preparation above the already heavy load. In addition, the short time between classes and the distraction of students prior to the class may be another factor in determining the complexity of the game as well as how often gaming should be included.

   g. Have you established a clear method for determining if gaming is in fact improving the overall learning competencies of each student? It is suggested that a file be created for each student in which you record the grades on material taught within the traditional approach and those taught by gaming or combination of traditional and engaged/learning. Determine in advance what concepts will include gaming strategies and which will be taught only by the traditional methods. I suggest that vocabulary gaming is one area which should give you a clear footprint.

Games

1. *Red Rover Red Rover send …… feminine declension genitive singular RIGHT OVER.*

Pedagogical purpose: To assist students in becoming familiar with case endings.

Materials: Cards with vocabulary words in English (Greek vocabulary used first but then change to English as soon as possible).

Method: Class is divided into two teams. The teacher has given each team a set of cards that have nouns used in the game. Each student should have at least two cards. It is advisable to have duplicates of nouns that cause special difficulties. The teams line up on opposite sides of the room. The first person standing in the line of first team holds up a card with a noun, (start with Greek or Latin nouns first but change to English as soon as possible). The student asks for a specific form such as, "Send feminine genitive singular RIGHT OVER." A member of the opposing team runs to the board from the second team and writes the correct noun with the correct ending on the board. If correct, team two takes a member of the first team to the second team's side. Repeat until one team has all members. This game is easily adapted to Latin. I think this would be an effective game for use in high school after less complex games have been attempted. Depending on the maturity of the students and their perceived success in the simple games, such as the vocabulary game, it is possible to judge whether this slightly more complex game will work.

2. *Vocabulary Game:*

Pedagogical purpose: To assist in learning vocabulary and to create peer interaction.

Method: Two teams line up starting at back of room. A table in front has two stacks of cards with targeted vocabulary. The first student runs to the table, picks up first card, calls out the word to the team and shows it to them. If a student knows the definition, it is written on the board; if not, the student runs back to the team and consults, then runs back to board to write word. The winning team is the one which has finished its stack of cards correctly. Each team may challenge the other on an incorrect answer. Points are taken off for mistakes. This has proven to be a highly successful game for vocabulary. The game fulfills requirements of engaged learning because students are engaging in all three learning modes, are participating in peer teaching, and have a means to measure their competency. After the game is finished each student lists the words which were problems. Each student also gives me the list of problem words and I use these for the weekly quiz. I have collected little nonsensical prizes which are awarded as the trophy to the winning team. The formation of the teams can be problematic. The class needs to number off by twos but the danger is that the same people constitute the same team each time. I frankly do not know if it is better to have a fierce competition between the teams for the vocabulary games or if it is better to mix the team composition.

3. Stele Game: "The Poseidon Affair"

Pedagogical purpose: Practice in using grammar that students have acquired.

Method: This is one of the favored games. The instructor must be clear in what the stele game should emphasize. The narrative for this game was created to include as many participles and their uses as was possible. Any broken stele game needs to have a story line which intrigues the students. Curious and strange is good. Going to the agora is not. This game is introduced through a power point presentation on the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations, myths of Poseidon, inscriptions from Delphi, and stele examples which have been broken. The game is introduced by setting the context of the stele. Poseidon, earth shaker, is displeased with the rejection of marriage by two beautiful maidens. Other stele narratives might cover the tales of two cities which displeased him. It is suggested that the instructor writes any new vocabulary word on the board, or gives a handout to the students to assist in the translation. The most successful game will have very few new vocabulary words if grammar is the focus. The game can be also be used to reinforce prior learning by introducing new vocabulary based on systems already acquired by the students. This fulfills Boehlje and Eidman's fourth stage of learning, experimentation and testing implications of concepts in new situations. This game has proven to be the most successful and most popular with the students.

Materials: Create two to three sentences with a short sad story. The Greek sentence is broken up between words and portions of words for students to piece together following the grammar. Students are given help by numbering of each sentence so they are not confused. An earthquake has shattered the stele fragments and scattered them in opposite corners of the room or on the table. Students then assemble the stele and read the story. Each team reads the sentence they worked on and discuss the problems they encountered. Caution must be taken in preparation of the stele to insure that sentence fragments have enough information to guide student to appropriate order in the sentence. Punctuation is most important.

Other Suggested Engaged/Active Learning Activities

Gaming is one way in which the class becomes an organic whole and leads to peer involvement in the teaching process. Another technique which gives ownership not only to the material but to the class is "pair" quizzes. This graded quiz tests grammatical concepts that we have covered. Each student pair has the same quiz as the other student pairs. The quiz may be a portion of a text for translation or sentences. The important factor of the pair quiz is that it covers material newly acquired. The pair quiz in another way of reinforcing the information. Each pair works as a pair on the quiz. When finished with the quiz, each pair gives it to another pair for grading. I correct and grade each quiz looking at the original translation and the corrections or comments given by the second pair. One would think that a very good student would resent being given a quiz which in part will be graded on the partner's performance. But surprisingly, I have never found that to be the case. The introduction of "paired quizzes" comes later in the six weeks after students have become accustomed to working together. The familiarity with the procedure and the fact that the weight of these quizzes is much less than the normal tests and quizzes may explain student acceptance. The purpose of the paired quiz is to emphasize peer support and learning. The grading of the quiz is as important as the testing component.

Paired or small group work on assigned exercises provides another opportunity for peer teaching and student ownership of class and material. Numbering off by counting 1, 2, 3 creates three small study groups which engage in doing the assigned homework together. It is possible that a student may hope to slide and let the rest of the group do all of the work. The format is as follows. Each student is assigned a sentence to complete alone. Then the sentences are read aloud and the grammar discussed and each student then has input into the final solution. If there is some argument as to the correct solution, I come to the group and go over the problem. At this point I will ask the whole class to look at the sentence in order to get everyone's input. I try to do this at least once a week for a portion of a class. This game has proven fruitful and a favorite for the students. High school teachers may try it in order to give students ownership of the class because each student is working in a group and not isolated as an individual who must perform.

Dorothy Dvorsky-Rohner
Department of Classics
University of North Carolina at Asheville

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