

# Kinesthetic Learning: A Case Study of Slap, Domino, and Rubik's in Mixed Age EFL Contexts Focusing on Motivation, Vocabulary/ Grammar, Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

Learning other languages is not easy, so teachers, need to adjust their teaching styles to the students' learning styles for the maximum learning in fulfilling curriculum outcomes, there are many learning styles. Kinesthetic learners use body movement and interact with their environment because kinesthetic learning, sometimes called tactile learning, is learning by doing. For many, if not all, kinesthetic learners, physical actions are required in order for a lesson to be learned. Also, the more senses involved in learning process, the easier it will be for kinesthetic learners to remember the lesson learned. The purpose of this study to examine the effects of kinesthetic learning in mixed-age English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Laos. The study explores how these activities improve student motivation, engagement, and vocabulary and grammar learning, drawing on 15 years of teaching experience. The Rubik's Cube promoted spelling practice in an enjoyable and tactile way; Domino supported logical sequencing and grammatical application through collaboration; and the Slap game promoted quick thinking and attention in vocabulary and number identification. When used in academic institutions and community learning environments, these activities fostered an inclusive atmosphere that encouraged students' emotional engagement and decreased their anxiety. The findings support the notion that kinesthetic exercises are effective means of enhancing comprehension, encouraging teamwork, and connecting abstract ideas with practical applications, even if they are not directly related to learning style theory. By making language learning more dynamic, engaging, and learner-centered, this study demonstrates how incorporating movement into courses improves all students, not only kinesthetic learners. These teaching methods reinforce their importance in contemporary language instruction by encouraging independence, critical thinking, and joy in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Slap-Domino, Rubik Games, Kinesthetic, Motivation, Vocabulary/Grammar's Teaching

## What is Kinesthetic Learning?

Kinesthetic learning is a type of learning wherein learning takes place through physical activity, rather than through listening to a lecture or watching demonstrations. Learning styles such as the notion of a "kinesthetic" learner, for example are no longer strongly supported by research, but teaching in ways that allow students to be active and move in their learning is considered extremely beneficial; Kinesthetic learners thrive on hands-on experiences and physical activity to grasp new concepts. Effective teaching strategies for them include incorporating movement, using manipulatives, and providing opportunities for active participation, engaged students to work in team help each other to solve problem.

Kinesthetic experiences are a wonderful way to foster deep understanding through direct, active involvement. These include teaching methods such as empirical experiments, situational role play, model building, and interactive simulation that learners engage in bodily action and thus have direct experience with abstract content. Action-based approaches, such as purposive gestures, broad body movements and the manipulation of objects, provide potent pathways between abstract knowledge and concrete, practical uses.

Kinesthetic activities are particularly effective in promoting deep comprehension through active, experiential engagement. Such strategies ranging from scientific experiments and dramatic role-plays to model construction and interactive simulations enable learners to activate motor skills while directly interacting with abstract concepts. Movement-based methods, including the use of purposeful gestures, expressive body language, and

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the physical manipulation of learning materials, offer powerful avenues for bridging theoretical understanding with tangible, real-world applications.

Kinesthetic learning emphasizes physical activity to deepen understanding, offering powerful bridges between abstract concepts and real-world application. Though learning style theories lack strong empirical support, movement-based methods such as experiments, role-play, and tactile games remain effective. Drawing from 15 years of teaching in Laos PDR, I've found such techniques especially impactful for reluctant learners.

Learning styles play a significant role in shaping how students absorb, process, and retain information. Each student has unique preferences and strengths when it comes to learning, and understanding these styles allows educators to tailor their teaching methods for more effective learning outcomes. The concept of learning styles is based on the idea that students learn best when they are taught in a way that aligns with their natural preferences, often categorized into the 'VARK' model: Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic. Especially, when learning other languages are not easy, so teachers, need to adjust their teaching styles to students' learning styles for maximum learning in fulfilling curriculum outcomes, there are many learning styles. Some professionals consider there are 4; some consider 7 and some 8. For this presentation, the presenter will consider four learning styles:

- Visual learners who prefer images and graphs, spatial understanding,
- Auditory learners who learn by listening,
- Read/Write learners who learn by reading and writing,
- Kinesthetic learners who learn by doing.

In satisfying kinesthetic learners, teachers' goals are to get students more active and motivated in their learning. Teachers want them to assume responsibility as they become better learners. Kinesthetic learners use body movement and interact with their environment because kinesthetic learning, sometimes called tactile learning, is learning by doing. For many, if not all, kinesthetic learners, physical actions are required in order for a lesson to be learned. Also, the more senses involved in learning process, the easier it will be for kinesthetic learners to remember the lesson learned.

### Significance of Learning Styles

While some studies question the effectiveness of strictly matching teaching methods to learning styles, incorporating diverse strategies can still be beneficial. By understanding how students learn best, educators can create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment, potentially improving comprehension and retention.

One of the most significant issues in learning to learn is an individual's taking the responsibility for his/her own learning. The individuals should know what their own learning styles are and what characteristics this style has and they should thereby behave according to this style. In this way, the individual can acquire the constantly changing and increasing amount of information without need for the assistance of others. When

the learner takes the responsibility of his/her own learning, s/he attributes meaning to the process of learning. She / he develops an understanding of his/her own form of learning style and becomes much more satisfied with the environment s/he interacts with. Every opportunity for learning is a chance for him/her. It is in the learner's hand to use different ways and develop the learning styles to some extent (Coffield et al, January 2004). Learning style is important for many reasons; however, there are three vital ones. First of all, people's learning styles will vary because everyone is different from one another naturally. Secondly, it offers the opportunity to teach by using a wide range of methods in an effective way. Sticking to just one model unthinkingly will create a monotonous learning environment, so not everyone will enjoy the lesson. In other words, learning and teaching will be just words and not rooted in reality.

Thirdly, we can manage many things in education and communication if we really recognize the groups we are called to. Of course, we may not know every detail; however, being aware of our students' learning styles, psychological qualities and motivational differences will help us regulate our lessons appropriately and according to the conditions (bbas Pourhossein Gilakjani et al, December 2011). Effective teaching recognizes and utilizes different learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual learners benefit from images and diagrams, auditory learners from listening and discussions, and kinesthetic learners from hands-on activities and movement. While some research questions the effectiveness of strictly adhering to learning style theories, incorporating diverse teaching methods can enhance comprehension and engagement for all students.

The Purpose of this Research is to Share the Idea and Technique

- To examine the effects of kinesthetic learning in mixed-age English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Laos after use (slap, Dominos and Rubik) in teaching and learning.
- To explore how these activities improve student motivation, engagement, and vocabulary and grammar learning by having fun while getting them or individually to achieve curriculum learning outcomes.

### Research Questions

- Why is classroom motivation essential, and how do students typically feel after participating in activities like the Domino, Slap games and Rubik?
- What is the significance of classroom motivation, and in what ways do students' attitudes and emotional engagement shift following interactive activities such as the Domino, Slap games and Rubik?

### The Advantages of Identifying Learning Styles

Learning style has an important place in the lives of individuals. When the individual knows his/her learning style, s/he will integrate it in the process of learning so s/he will learn more easily and fast and will be successful. Another advantage of the identification of the own learning style by the student is that it will help the student to become an effective problem solver. The more successful the individual is at solving the problems s/he faces, the more control s/he will take over his/her own

life (Giron Kamonja, Yan Liang, Muhammad Tayyab Sohail, Shahzad Ahmad Khan, April 25, 2014). It is important that individuals receive education in areas suitable for their learning styles. A person educated in an area having no relationship to his/her learning style may lack confidence and she/he may be less successful; s/he may as a result become frustrated.

Knowledge of learning style also provides information to the student as to why she/he has learnt in a different way than others. It helps to control the process of learning. It is vital because one of the most important signals in learning is to learn to be autonomous, that is, for the individual to take responsibility for his/her own learning. Because of this, s/he should know what learning style is. This has to be part of the learning process to enable the individual to obtain knowledge, which constantly shifts and changes, without any help from others. Briefly, confidence in learning will consistently rise when learners know how to learn.

Learning to learn and grasping knowledge in a suitable manner will lessen the need for an overbearing control by teachers. At this point, teachers guide the students. The students take responsibility for their learning, they are at the center of the process and everything is under their control. They search answers to the problems and benefit from their unique performances and preferences in their learning styles. Those people will identify their aims; unlike those whose learning style preferences are not identified. They know what they want to learn and "how." This awareness will change their perspectives on learning new things (Suleyman Dogan, 2010.)

### Improved Memory Retention and Application

Kinesthetic learning has also been shown to contribute to improved memory retention and the practical application of knowledge. When learners engage in hands-on activities, they develop a stronger connection between the conceptual understanding and the physical experience, creating a more robust and durable memory trace. The creation of muscle memory through kinesthetic techniques, such as role-playing, simulations, and learning-by-doing exercises, can enhance the learner's ability to recall and apply the acquired knowledge in real-world contexts. This approach helps kinesthetic learners to not only understand the concepts but also develop the skills and confidence to put their learning into practice.

### Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Kinesthetic learning also fosters the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By engaging in experiential, hands-on activities, learners are encouraged to explore, experiment, and adapt to the demands of the learning environment. This process of active exploration and adaptation promotes the development of cognitive flexibility, spatial awareness, and manual dexterity all of which are essential for navigating complex, real-world challenges.

Furthermore, the problem-solving nature of many kinesthetic activities encourages students to think critically, analyze information, and devise creative solutions. This heightened level

of engagement and intellectual stimulation can lead to a deeper understanding of the subject matter, as well as the development of essential 21st-century skills.

By recognizing and capitalizing on the benefits of kinesthetic learning, educators can create more engaging, effective, and inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of their students. This approach can lead to enhanced academic performance, the development of essential life skills, and the overall enrichment of the educational experience.

### Motivation

Motivational constructs, particularly in the context of learning, exhibit a range of interpretations. According to (Wini Mulya Apridani et al, 20 April 2022), the concept of learning motivation pertains to an internal condition experienced by individuals, characterized by an intense desire to engage in activities that are directed towards achieving a particular objective. According to the research conducted by (Lin Liao a, December 2015), motivation plays a crucial role in initiating a learner's behaviors and considerably influencing their perception of achievable outcomes. Motivation plays a fundamental role in motivating a learner's engagement and significantly influences their academic achievement.

Motivation is an essential element in the process of learning and holds significant importance in facilitating learners' participation in academic endeavors, as stated by (al, 2017), assert that motivation plays a significant role in driving various actions, hence emphasizing the need to comprehend its significance within an educational setting. Motivation exerts various influences on students' learning and behavior. Motivation serves as a driving force that leads individuals' behavior towards the attainment of specified objectives. Motivation has a significant role in shaping individuals' objectives and thus influencing the decision-making process of students. Motivation has a crucial role in influencing the level of effort and energy used by a student while deciding to do a challenging assignment, either with enthusiasm or a lack of passion. Motivation plays a significant role in the processing and comprehension of information, since it enhances cognitive processing. Consequently, learners who are motivated exhibit a greater inclination towards comprehending and critically analyzing the content, rather than merely engaging in superficial learning.

According to (Zulfikar et al, February 2019), as cited in motivation plays a crucial role in achieving success in the process of language acquisition [1]. Sustaining a heightened level of motivation throughout the duration of the language acquisition phase is widely regarded as a highly effective strategy for enhancing overall performance in the learning activity. Given the inherent variability in individual motivations, it is imperative to ascertain an optimal equilibrium between the drive for achievement and the deterrent of failure, as well as the inclination and the conducive learning environment. According to motivation is considered a significant aspect that requires careful consideration in order to achieve success in language acquisition [2]. Consequently, in the event that students possess

a robust drive, they will derive satisfaction from the process of language acquisition and exhibit a determined effort to master it.

### Methodology

The research participants included two different groups: learners from a particular community learning center, and undergraduate learners from the university where I work. The main aim was to find out the impact of kinesthetic activities, particularly the Domino and Slap games, on students' motivation and engagement within the classroom. During the English classes, I implemented the activities and noted the students' reactions, particularly their emotional engagement and participation, as well as the overall classroom atmosphere. As a follow-up, I gathered written feedback so I could better understand students' emotional and cognitive engagement. I encouraged them to express their thoughts on the games, evaluate their engagement level and enjoyment, and make relevant suggestions on how the activities could be improved. This reflective component added rich qualitative data while simultaneously enabling students to exercise some agency over their learning environment by articulating their preferences regarding classroom activities.

This presentation incorporates a form of experiential learning with a kinesthetic learning focus to engage a wide diversity of learners from different age groups. The presenter from Laos with 15 years of teaching experience brought in two physical games, the Domino, Slap games and Rubik, to kinesthetic learners. The teacher set up the class explain how to play then let students play; after the class teacher asked the questions how do they feel then teacher noted on book and records by using smart phone. He used them during formal lectures at the university with students 17-31 years old and at informal learning centers with students aged 7-14 years. The approach draws upon strategies from teaching physical movements as interaction with peers and with materials requires hands-on and meaningful engagement.

Slap, a fast recognition and reaction game, motivates attention and vocabulary. Domino reinforces cooperation in problem solving as well as logic, sequence, and order. The students in this case didn't just think abstractly and mentally, but actively and physically through hands-on game-based language learning. A mix of classroom observations and learner interviews captured the engagement and understanding gaps that were addressed. It is a useful approach to meet the curriculum goals and it is most effective with different learner preferences and needs, in this case, kinesthetic learners.

### Results

This part described the data that had been collected from using the games in class and interviews (students); The researcher transformed the audio recordings by rewriting and paraphrasing the interview results, and then displaying them as extracts for different categories after they play three games.

#### Domino Game

Domino game promoted logical thinking and cooperative learning in addition to strengthening curricular concepts. Qualitative responses indicated that students enjoyed the active, game-based nature and thought they came away feeling more

confident working in groups due to reductions in anxiety and increased collaboration. This student-centered teaching was not only responsive to kinesthetic learners but also provided a multi-sensory "circle of learning" where students were involved experientially and cognitively in pursuit of academic success; and having fun when they participated the class, and engaged with lecturer.

The use of the Domino game in a classroom lesson appeared to be very successful for stimulating cognitive engagement and collaborative learning. As a kinesthetic exercise, Domino promoted essential learning objectives and encouraged logical thinking, sequencing, And teamwork. A game with active involvement, where pupils are required to link words or structures in a meaningful manner and help them internalize patterns of language by using it. Student qualitative feedback and direct classroom observation affirmed that the game-based approach was warmly welcomed. Learners constantly showed motivation and interest in the session, describing the activity as fun, challenging intellectually, and creating a relaxed learning environment. Most students expressed that they gained confidence in speaking the target language; thus, their fear diminished when dealing with grammar points or new vocabulary. This change in attitude goes a long way to prove how much game-based learning can revolutionize classroom dynamics by making academic content attainable and bringing it down to an interactive level.

A very useful game from the perspective of a teacher is Domino Game, especially useful for teaching vocabulary and grammar, in which students seem even more attentive, motivated, and ready to participate in the learning process. The competitive but cooperative nature of the game holds their attention and brings about a lively student-centered atmosphere where learners are physically as well as mentally active.

Most especially among college students, this tactical performance finds relevance at the level of varied learning preferences even as it simultaneously satisfies the formal learning outcomes. The Domino game was not just a complementary activity but rather an intentional instructional strategy that has been used to connect and bridge theory with practice. As such, it becomes an illustration of how the infusion of movement and interaction into language lessons can enhance not only the retention of content but also student morale and classroom cohesion.

From my observation I could see that some students enjoy playing this game especially the students who are 15 to 31; but students who are 7 to 14 years old dislike because they took so long time to complete this is the reason why they didn't like; Domino is suitable for teaching grammar class.

#### Slap Game

These findings highlight the effectiveness of kinesthetic learning strategies, especially the Slap game, in enhancing learner engagement and active participation in the classroom; the Slap game in promoting classroom motivation and active engagement across diverse educational contexts. The game was implemented in both formal university settings, involving learners aged 17 to

31, and informal learning centers catering to children aged 7 to 14. In each context, the Slap game consistently demonstrated its ability to energize the classroom environment, stimulate learner interest, and encourage meaningful interaction with academic content.

Observations indicated that the Slap game worked especially well during the English lesson focused on number vocabulary. The game's rhythmically engaging and active nature made it easier for the learners to identify numbers, add emphasize number recognition, sharpen focus, and heighten reaction times. Throughout the lesson, students were actively engaged, eager to answer, and surprisingly competitive. This type of active engagement aided knowledge retention and made the learning process more enjoyable and memorable.

A similar engagement level and enthusiasm were noted in the students during the mathematics lesson. The students were actively engaged in the lesson, and the collaboration and competition made the class enjoyable. From the enthusiastic responses noted in the lesson, it is clear that students were highly emotionally engaged and intrinsically motivated the students have more fun in the class. Importantly, the Slap game also contributed to building classroom cohesion. It fostered a sense of inclusion and collaboration, allowing students of varying skill levels to participate meaningfully. As a result, learners developed increased confidence and a more positive attitude toward the subject matter.

Overall, the Slap game proved to be a powerful instructional tool. Its ability to integrate movement with academic learning created a dynamic and learner centered environment that aligned effectively with curriculum goals while appealing to kinesthetic learners and boosting overall classroom energy.

From my observation I could see that some students enjoy playing this game especially the students who are participate the class (age from 7 to 31) really like slap because students can move their body a lot and suitable for many subjects not only English for example math's class, chemistry, but for English it suitable for teaching vocabulary and number.

### Rubik's Game

Rubik's game is good for kinesthetic learners is a colorful and vibrant activity. Almost all students love to play with it, and it can also be utilized to learn English. The Rubik's game could be used by teachers to teach vocabulary within spelling, and to help students memorize spelling. When students use a Rubik's cube, the teacher will write letters or very small words on each square of the cube. The students will attempt to bring the cube into position to make up the full word. By doing this, the students are given the opportunity to practice looking at letters, and remembering how to spell a new word.

It is a fun activity, and it feels like a game, rather than a test. Students can either work independently, or work as a group to solve the word problems. When students work in groups, they can help each other, and talk in English while they practice. This helps students to practice and learn at a faster rate. If students

had to memorize written words many times over, this method can be a much more productive and enjoyable experience. Some students actually learn better when they are allowed to use their hands while touching and moving things. Therefore, the Rubik's game is also useful for kinesthetic learners.

In the classroom, this activity can provide students with a much more fun experience of learning than writing memorization many times that can be boring for students. Students will enjoy the lesson, and will likely remember much more of the vocabulary. In summary, the Rubik's game is a fun and effective way to use to help students improve spelling and vocabulary in English while making the learning process entertaining from my observation I could see that some students enjoy playing this game especially the students who are 15 to 31; but students who are 7 to 14 years old dislike because they took so long time to complete this is the reason why they didn't like; Rubik is suitable for teaching vocabulary, it helped with critical thinking have to plan where should put the right letter.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while learning styles can provide valuable insights into student preferences, they should be viewed as one component of a broader, evidence-based approach to teaching. By embracing flexibility, fostering self-awareness, and prioritizing professional development, educators can create a supportive and responsive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all students. Ultimately, recognizing individual learning differences not only enriches the educational experience but also empowers students to become active, engaged learners in their educational journey.

This research-based presentation has underscored the effectiveness of movement-oriented learning through the practical application of two interactive games Slap and Domino. Drawing on 15 years of classroom experience in Laos, the presenter demonstrated how these kinesthetic techniques can enhance motivation, increase student engagement, and support curriculum attainment across both formal and informal educational settings. The success of these approaches, as observed among university students and children alike, highlights their broad applicability and pedagogical value.

The process of acquiring additional languages does not come without challenges considering the fact that learners embody various cognitive and sensory preferences. Consequently, such a situation calls for an adaptive practice by the educator through the provision of flexible methodologies responsive to the needs for variations in learning style. While scholarly debates are still ongoing regarding the empirical veracity of learning style theories, practical classroom experience continues to support the adoption of multisensory strategies- particularly those founded on kinesthetic learning as they serve to enrich educational experiences and outcomes.

The slap game initiated a very keen, active physical response to prompts. It was very successful in activating the learners' attention and encouraging immediate recall of vocabulary or numerical content. Other games which involve deep cognitive

processing and at the same time initiate physical engagement help students internalize learning dynamically and happily. More importantly, it creates an emotional drive towards learning and results in a classroom culture student inclusiveness whereby all students of any ability participate meaningfully. The student interest demonstrated by a request for more extended class time is adequate evidence of the motivational effect of the game.

So did the Domino game, being an organized yet free exercise that allows vocabulary, grammar, and logical sequencing practice. This made learners think critically and work with others while content was presented through a hands-on problem to be solved. Lower stress levels plus more confidence plus higher participation equal a good method. Putting mental effort together with physical manipulation helped students make real and lasting learning out of what were otherwise very abstract language concepts.

Perhaps most significantly, both games empowered students to take ownership of their learning journeys. By incorporating opportunities for reflection and feedback, the teacher invited students to shape the direction of classroom practice thus reinforcing the principles of learner centered education. This democratic approach, grounded in trust and responsiveness, aligns well with contemporary pedagogical frameworks that value inclusivity, engagement, and autonomy.

In synthesizing the findings, it becomes evident that kinesthetic activities such as the Slap and Domino games are far more than entertaining diversions, they are strategic instructional tools. These methods bring learning to life by tapping into the body as a conduit for cognition, helping students to bridge the often-daunting gap between abstract knowledge and real-world application. While not all students may identify as kinesthetic learners, nearly all benefit from lessons that are active, varied, and interactive.

Ultimately, this study affirms that a thoughtful, movement-based approach to language instruction can significantly elevate the learning experience. By embedding physical action within academic content, educators not only foster deeper understanding but also cultivate joyful, engaging classrooms where students are motivated, confident, and ready to learn. Above all, both games empowered students in the process of their learning. By incorporating reflective and assessment time, the teacher encouraged students to steer the direction of classroom practice thus affirming the principles of learner centered education. This trusting, responsive practice is in harmony with contemporary pedagogical theories that value inclusivity, engagement, and autonomy [3-5].

As the findings are synthesized, it is clear that kinesthetic exercises like the Domino, Slap games and Rubik games are more than recreational distractions they are cunning pedagogical instruments. These approaches make learning come alive by accessing the body as a gateway to cognition, allowing learners

to fill in the frequently overwhelming distance between abstract information and actual-world practice. While not all students will be kinesthetic, nearly all students learn more from active, diverse, and interactive instruction [6-10].

Ultimately, this research reaffirms that a thoughtful, movement-based approach to language instruction has the power to significantly increase the level of learning. By incorporating bodily action into course material, instructors establish deeper comprehension, but also foster positive, energetic classrooms where students are motivated, confident, and ready to learn [11,12].

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