Entwining Bridging Activities, the EEE framework, and *Coup* in a 6th grade advanced EFL writing class

Mark Rasmussen*

🔖 Item Details

🔑 Key points

- **What is this?** A description of a South Korean 6th Grade Advanced EFL writing class using the game *Coup,* Bridging Activities, and the *Explore, Examine, Extend* framework, including materials used.
- **Why did you make it?** To share materials and pedagogical experiences related to these language learning areas to hopefully bolster other teachers and their efforts.
- **Who is it for?** Language teachers and researchers interested in language teaching materials and the application of teaching models.

Tweet synopsis

Choose teaching theories, practices, and materials that build towards a core pedagogical goal. Give students plenty of opportunities to explore and participate in target discourses. Build conceptual knowledge about those discourses. #llp #socioculturaltheory

View at the LLP Playground:

https://www.llpjournal.org/2020/09/08/rasmussen-entwining-bridging-activities-eee.html

* Corresponding author. *Email address: a.mark.rasmussen@utah.edu (Mark Rasmussen)*

Figure 1. The grounding metaphor for this paper- entwining rope.

This article is a description of a South Korean 6th-grade Advanced EFL writing class. It includes a description of the philosophy, conceptual framework, activities, and materials used. This class was taught in 2016, and most of the student-created materials are no longer available to me, and so not available here as well. As such, this document does not include evidence of development or make an empirical argument for its effectiveness. The use of the word "entwine" in the title, and the image above (Figure 1) are to conceptually ground what I think is the heart of this pedagogical adventure. To entwine is to wrap together such that seemingly separate things or ideas become effectively one thing, and stronger.

I have taken it from Dubreil and Thorne (2017), where they take as a guiding question, "How can we more dynamically integrate the vibrancy of linguistically mediated social engagement outside of classroom settings with the pedagogical efficacy of instructional activity in the classroom" (p. 2). This question is the heart of the adventure I will describe. I'll start this exploration by describing the class taught, then the ideas entwined in that class, and finally describe how they are brought together. This will be followed by a personal reflection on the design of this class. As these lessons were designed on Thorne and Reinhardt's (2008) Bridging Activities (BA), I also use the pedagogical standards they establish to evaluate how well my lessons achieved BA goals.
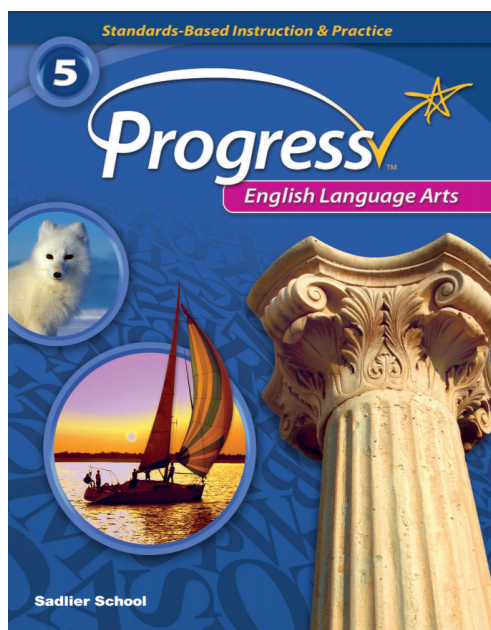
1. Who? - The Teaching Context[1]

When this class was conducted, I was a 5th-year teacher finishing an MA TESOL in South Korea. My teaching schedule included 23 teaching hours a week, of which this particular group of classes totaled 9 hours. I used the *Explore, Examine, Extend* model (EEE; Reinhardt & Sykes, 2011) as a general structural framework for all of my classes and was beginning to incorporate other sociocultural theoretic concepts such as dynamic assessment (DA; Lantolf & Poenher, 2008) through instructional conversations (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994). I view the learning environment as perceptually information-rich and that learners come to perceive and act on that information through exploration and manipulation. Through regular interaction with consistent features of the learning environment, learners discover meaningful differences in language and functions that allow them to act (Gibson, 2000). These actions are taken from social practices of a specific environment, rooted in historical development. The development of learners is a process of passing those practices from the interpersonal, or between people, to the intrapersonal, or within the learner (Vygotsky, 1987; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). A learner determines which social practices are relevant to them through needs-based goal-oriented action and feedback on others' actions (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986).

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[1] Thanks to reviewer Fred Poole for prompting the expansion of this section.

Previous to the class I will describe here, I had never thought seriously about or attempted game-based teaching. My first years of teaching were heavily influenced by my Bachelor's degree in linguistics, and I taught (somewhat unknowingly) from a cognitive perspective. The kind of games I did use then were memory games. Some common activities I enjoyed early in my career were quick partner rotations and increasingly long-delayed recall. I first became interested in game-based language learning and teaching in 2015, during my Master's program. I grew up playing Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, and Nintendo 64 console games, in particular sports games like *NHL 97'* and *Mario Golf*, as well as adventure games like *The Legend of Zelda*. As I entered high school, I became captured by the *World of Warcraft*. I did not, however, play tabletop games growing up. I would occasionally play *Uno* during the holidays with cousins, but I have very few board games memories. My introduction to tabletop gaming then was also at the same time that I began learning about game-based language learning. While I have been more digital in my gaming, when thinking about applying games to teaching (especially in primary schools in South Korea), it seemed impossible. This led me to consider tabletop games.

The primary actors in this class were thirty 6th grade South Korean advanced EFL students. The students came primarily from socioeconomically-advantaged families, and many of them were born or lived in English-speaking countries before moving back to South Korea. This meant that many of the students already had multicultural views and experiences in the world. Many had friends in English-speaking countries and kept up with popular culture in the United States and the United Kingdom. The thirty students were separated into three classes of between ten to twelve students each[2]. I saw each of the class sections three times a week for fifty minutes. "Advanced" was determined by a beginning-of-year assessment, marketed to parents and students as a "placement" test. The use of "advanced" here should not be confused with any normalized, standardized category. It means that the students were, relative to their peers, in the top third on an institution-specific multiple-choice test. Students in the advanced class ranged possibly from near-native to mid-intermediate.

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Figure 2. *Student Textbook and outline of relevant content*

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[2] As reviewer Benjamin Thanyawatpokin notes, the class size is unusually small compared with most teaching contexts (in my experience as well!). While I have enacted a similar curriculum using the same game in another setting (with 20 students per class), teachers would be wise to consider how their class size might make these lessons and materials feasible or not.

The institution that entwined my students and I was a private elementary school in Seoul, South Korea. Because many of the students had experience in English-speaking cultures, the 6th-grade Advanced English classes were meant to be more similar to an English Language Arts (ELA) class in the United States. Students were taught through a Common Core textbook (Figure 2). As an ELA text, reading and writing were the primary focus and it was my responsibility as the teacher to bring in conversational work, done primarily through discussions about the texts.

For each section, the text presented three or four models of a specific kind of writing (informational, narrative, process, etc.). Each section focused on 1) developing domain-specific vocabulary, 2) developing structural awareness of text, and 3) reading comprehension. At the end of each section, students were asked to write an example of the specific genre in question. As the teacher, I was required to teach this textbook and assess the students through the textbook's writing tasks and a final exam based on the material. The first semester of this class covered the sections on narrative and process writing. Throughout that semester, I recognized that many students were already engaging with more authentic English language texts such as novels and music outside of the class. I had more than one class try to derail a lesson plan by talking about Taylor Swift[3] and, in my heart, I wished they could have more opportunity to engage with English-speaking culture instead of with their ELA textbook; which contained simplified and less emotive language, and only rarely included content the students were interested in.

During that same semester, I learned about game-based language teaching in my Master's classes. The first half of my classes were devoted to examining games, in my case *Coup* ("Coup - Indie Boards and Cards," 2020) and *Hearthstone* ("Hearthstone Official Game Site", 2020), for their usefulness in second language teaching and learning based on the framework developed in Sykes and Reinhardt's book *Language at Play* (2013). The second half was devoted to designing lesson plans, using a game we had evaluated, EEE, and BA. In doing those assignments, I used the 6th-grade students described above as a hypothetical teaching environment to organize. However, after the semester ended, and considering the experiences I had had teaching those students, I decided it would be a useful addition to the textbook material to implement the curriculum I had designed. This required getting permission from my department head and informing parents. I was required to use the textbook and teach the concepts in it but was permitted to use the EEE/BA lessons that I had developed. This then became the first real challenge and entwinement-- How do I fit a game into the textbook material and an already busy semester? I decided to do this by integrating *Coup* and community-created texts around *Coup* into the textbook section on informational writing. This meant that students first read the opening sections of unit 3 (see Figure 2), and read one of the texts in the book. The second text was substituted for the game *Coup* and its attendant community.

2. What? - A Pedagogy of *Bridging Activities*, *Explore-Examine-Extend,* and *Coup*
2.1 *Bridging Activities:* A theoretical guide

A primary curricular area that I felt could be improved for these classes was how the students interacted with English-speaking culture and texts. While the use of an American ELA textbook was meant to provide a more culturally-authentic English learning experience, it failed to acknowledge who the producers of culture are, or who uses language to enact culture-specific actions that students would recognize. It did this by. BA was identified as a guide for creating activities that would promote student engagement with and critical analysis of English language discourses and their textbook. Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) note that BA was conceived of with advanced language learners in mind, who are likely beyond basic instruction that textbooks provide and beyond basic vocabulary that is more constant[4]. Instead, BA seeks out communities where language is less permanent, changing, and

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[3] Derailments were generally permitted in my class!

[4] Reviewer James York notes he has designed and used BA for non-advanced learners. I also used a similar EEE/BA curriculum with a mixed level class a few years later.

fluid and asks students to sit in those environments, analyze, and then participate. BA views the internet as a fertile medium to allow students access to these communities.

BA then is an attempt to retain the strong analytic learning students may have in traditional, literature-focused classes, and combine it with a "teacher-mediated language awareness framework" (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p. 562), that asks students to actively contribute to the classroom by collecting language and text that they feel relevant to themselves. Language awareness here is an awareness both *of* and *about* language (Reinhardt & Sykes, 2011). Awareness *of* language is related to experiences that actors have in specific situations, such as saying "hello" in a marketplace. Awareness *about* language then is the analytic aspect that users of language use to know that saying "hello" to the clerk at the supermarket is different from the "hey" they say to their best friend at home in culturally-important ways. This view of language is well-suited to a functional grammar approach (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004), where language forms are analyzed by the function they perform. BA attempts to use the situated experience and natural learning potential of games and the attendant communities (e.g., websites and forums) around them to build language awareness in learners by asking them to collect, analyze and use situated language.

For my classroom then, BA serves as the pedagogical core for this entwinement with the students' textbook content. The specific textbook goals (see section 1) set the foundation for what aspects of the game and community texts the students would be experiencing and analyzing. In particular, students would be examining the game for 1) domain-specific language (what words are used in the game and community and how are they used differently there), 2) structural awareness of how the game is organized and flows as well as how texts in the community are organized and 3) game and community comprehension through playing and writing.

2.2 *Explore-Examine-Extend:* Practical classroom organization

I structured BA principles in lesson planning through Reinhardt and Sykes' (2011) *explore, examine, extend* model. Like BA, EEE is a model premised on situated language learning. It acknowledges that all language learning is learning to *do* some thing and attempts to move students towards that *doing* by noticing and collecting language forms, analyzing them for their social and linguistic power, and then utilizing them in reflective or active participation-- or to *do* the thing.
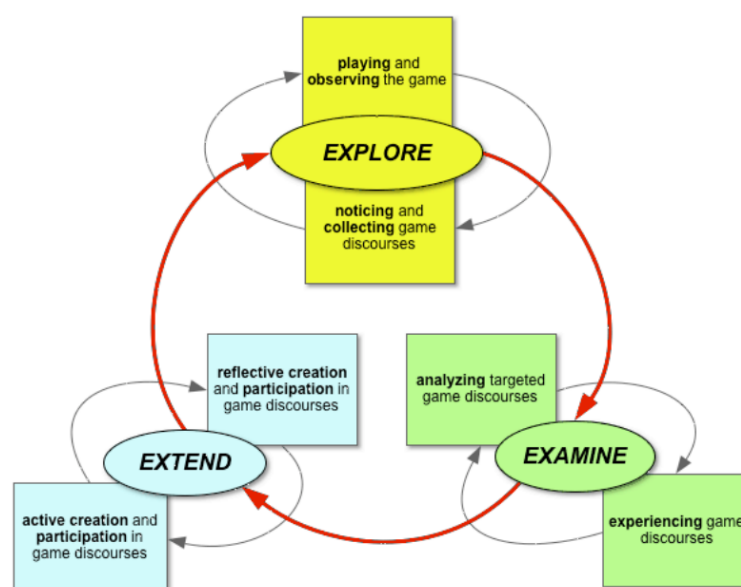

Figure 3. The Explore, Examine, Extend *Model*

Figure 3 shows the conceptual model of EEE. The model was built with game-based language learning in mind and using games as texts. Games situate language within a socially-bounded world with specific rules for interacting in that world, which means that games are discourses that students can learn to participate in. EEE then is a framework for guiding students from exploring a game to participating expertly in-game and attendant discourses. The model has three *sequential* stages that build off of each other cyclically. Each stage has both experiential and analytic features (i.e., knowledge "of" and "about" discourse), which are organized in the model as being inside the main red circle or outside. The *explore* stage, for example, builds knowledge *of* texts and language by playing and observing**.** It builds knowledge *about* the text and language by noticing and collecting discourses. While each stage is distinct in its emphasis, learners are expected to both experience *and* analyze a text in every stage in some way. The *examine* stage focuses on comparing texts and tying discourses within a specific genre to other discourses in other genres (e.g., How the word "tax" in *Coup* relates to real-world government money collection and why that would be utilized in a game like *Coup*). Finally, the *Extend* phase asks students to participate in game discourses and in attendant communities (e.g., game forums) and reflective, analytic activities such as personal blogging, journaling, or post-game debriefing.

Together, BA and EEE share a commitment to both experiencing actual, in-the-wild, language as well as maintaining strong analytic pedagogical components. In my teaching practice, then, I use EEE to sequence-specific BA tasks within the classroom. Importantly, however, neither BA nor EEE requires games and can be used for many other communities and activities. The choice to use games then is contingent, though hopefully not arbitrary.

2.3 *Coup and Attendant Communities:* **Language and cultural content**[5]

I chose to use games (as opposed to some other discourse-- music, reading, and so on) for this specific class for two primary reasons. The first (and foremost) was that I was *learning about* game-based teaching as a Master's student. I was very motivated to use what I had been learning and saw an opportunity in this class to do so. I will emphasize here that I don't find this a very compelling reason and *do* find it somewhat arbitrary. The second reason was to contrast the reading-heavy organization of the class up to this point. Students rarely moved around in the classroom; they spent most of their time reading and writing heavily structured texts. In many traditional reading and writing classes that I had observed and taught, learners generally approached the text from a specific direction (or mode). They would look through new vocabulary, look up those words, read the text, and then clarify comprehension through questions in the textbook. In my Gibsonian approach, this is a perceptually impoverished environment by relying mostly on visual and auditory information (and generally not even at the same time) and ignores the embodied reality of learning by asking the students to absorb abstract concepts through linguistic activity alone. Playing a game is an information-rich learning environment. Students have clear needs and goals, as well as actions that achieve those goals. Students are asked to speak (on their turn), listen (to challenge effectively), and read (using the game components) within the same communicative event. The risk and reward of fail-states in the game imbues the event with emotion and a desire to perform actions strategically (and not just simply).[6]

In analyzing the game and their play-experience, students' ideas of what a "text" can be are expanded. In my class specifically, students recognize that domain-specific language is more than just academic reading and writing but is included in every communicative event and depends on who, where, and for what purposes we communicate. By examining a written text outside their textbook, students can see

how structural differences in how people write in-game discourses for interested communities are similar or different.

The game I ultimately decided on using in this class was *Coup*. *Coup* is played as a turn-based, deception card game. In the tabletop version, *Coup* is played between 2 to 6 players who are given two cards face down. Each player's goal is to eliminate the cards of the other players primarily through collecting coins by deception and launching "coups" against opponents. See here for a video description by *Geek and Sundry* (Dalton, 2020). Players use forums like *Boardgamegeek.com* ("Coup", 2020) to discuss strategies, rules and give their opinions on the quality of the game. My choice to use *Coup* involved a process of experimenting with a variety of games. I came across *Coup* the year before this class was taught while I was looking for short, conversation-focused board or card games that I could try with students during the periods of time after final exams but before winter or summer breaks. I had played *Coup*, *One-Night Werewolf (Games*, 2020*), Dixit* ("Dixit – Libellud", 2020*), Sushi Go! ("Sushi Go! | Gamewright"*, 2020*),* and *Bohnanza ("Bohnanza - Rio Grande Games"*, 2020) with students ranging from 1st grade (5 or 6 years old) to 6th grade (11 or 12 years old).[7] Those teaching experiences could be described as pedagogically-unfocused, or as deHaan (2019) describes, "[ignore the] fundamental purposes and processes of education" (p. 4).

Figure 4. *The components included in a game of* Coup. *Top to bottom: coins, character cards, player reference cards*

While I think all of the above-mentioned games are excellent for teaching, I chose *Coup* for a few reasons. Foremost, a pedagogical choice was made to not have the students choose their own games (and game communities). This was primarily a function of both the teacher and the students' unfamiliarity with BA, a lack of tabletop games at the school, and the age and maturity of the students. I decided it would be necessary to keep the students on the same page in terms of games and communities, but allow them more freedom to explore what kind of language they would choose to learn, within the social boundaries of gameplay and community participation. Future iterations on this

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[7] I will also note that my selection of games was necessarily limited to these choices because I was using my own game collection which was (and still is) quite small. *Coup* is also a relatively cheap game, and I did need to buy a second copy.

BA/EEE method would involve allowing students more and more choice in the selection of games and eventually whether or not to play games at all.[8] As a small-box game, *Coup* fit well within the institutional constraints of the class as well. Each game of *Coup* can take as little as 5 minutes and has an upper limit around 30 minutes, with most games finishing in about 15 minutes. This contrasts with the excellent *Bohnanza* or *Dixit,* which generally takes at least 30 minutes to play and can easily go over an hour. Within a 50-minute class, this leaves plenty of time for explicit instruction, class discussions, and multiple playthroughs on some days-- an important aspect, as students could not be asked to play or do anything outside of class time. While it is a competitive game, the short gameplay-time limits the hurt feelings and disappointment that children especially face.[9] The limited number of actions and clear flow of the turn-based play allowed students with less gaming experience chances to breathe, watch others, and take their time during the game. This contrasts with games like *One-night Werewolf* where night-actions actions are time-limited, and day-time conversations are both time-limited and simultaneous, raising the stress (and often the fun) level. In contrast, actions in *Coup* are simple to perform (simply declare it, "I will take tax."), with no time-limits, but strategy can still be quite complex (e.g., lying in a second language). While I do not think "social" games (i.e., games that require verbal communication as a mechanic) are necessarily superior to other games for teaching, the culture of the school I taught strongly emphasized verbal communication in the classroom. Students, parents, and other teachers expect a lot of opportunities for *talking*. And as this was the first time game-based learning was to be attempted at this school as part of the standard curriculum, I prioritized a social game over something like *Sushi Go!* Which does not require speaking mechanically. Of all the games in my collection then, *Coup* entwined with the constraints I was working within for this particular class best. It included speaking mechanics, was simple to play with complex strategy[10], and short enough to fit within a 50-minute class.

> ◺◿⊡ **TEACHING TIP**
> Plan specific amounts of time within the class to play the game. Then situate other mediating activities to guide students' experience of the game. Don't *only* play the game.

3. How? - Entwining the Teaching Context with the BA-EEE-*Coup* Pedagogy

One of the primary pieces of work for assessment in these classes is the end of unit writing pieces. As I am entwining *Coup* into the section on informational texts, the students' new writing task was to produce an informational text around *Coup*. Initially, I had considered allowing the students to write on any subject (e.g., a game review, a rule guide, a strategy guide, creating a game variant). However, because the students did not have independent access to the community via the internet, I had to collect relevant examples of community writing for the students to explore. Due to this constraint, I chose to have the students create a strategy guide[11]. In this case, a *strategy guide* is not a formal,

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[8] Reviewer Evan Bostelmann comments: "[this section] sends a good message to people that are new to language learning + games. To me, the implicit message in this choice, as you outline in the sentence that follows, if you want to use games in your classroom, do so, but include them insofar as they can help your context and don't force them into curriculum if they don't work."

[9] Reviewer Benjamin Thanyawatpokin asks, "Did you see any of this with your students? Do you think this impacted participation/engagement at all?" I did have one instance in particular where a couple of kids picked on another kid by using a strategy where, in a single turn, they are able to remove a player from the game entirely. It was crushing, especially because it is perfectly legal in *Coup*. I dealt with this particular case by expliciting describing to the kids in question what they did, why it was hurtful and then established a "no knock-out rule" for that class, where a player could only be eliminated once all players were down to a single card.

[10] The board game reviewers at *Shut Up and Sit Down* recently described *Coup* as, "a stone cold classic" and that their appreciation of the game continues to "grow and bloom", speaking to the complexity of what is a mechanically simple game.

[11] Reviewer Jonathan deHaan wonders, "did students ever question… 'strategy guides already exist… why are we writing another one?'". In reflecting on this question, unless students are devising new strategies (which my students mostly did not), would they have even felt comfortable rehashing strategies on the forums? Would they have wanted to post their guides to the

game journal style of guide. Instead, the goal is to produce content similar to the posts found on *Boardgame Geek* or the boardgame subreddit. These strategies are often smaller and focus on specific aspects of the game, and not a "whole-game" strategy. For example, a popular strategy is to claim the *Ambassador* card first turn. We called this the "ambassador play". Ambassadors allow the player to look at the top two cards of the "court deck" or the character cards that are not currently in play. This gives that player more information about who has what cards. Additionally, by playing the ambassador first, you don't collect any coins, making you appear to be less of a threat to other players. Writing this kind of forum-style strategy guide allows students to differentiate their writing from their peers (by focusing on different strategies) as well as to try their strategies through play every week. To help the students get to that point, a repeated BA/EEE cycle was developed. The first iteration of the cycle can be described as *game-focused* and the second iteration as *community-focused*, though each iteration involves interacting both with the game and the community.

The game-focused cycle took three 50-minute class periods to complete (one week in this context). Students begin by *watching* and *noting* the rules and strategies in a high-quality video of *Coup* and playing a tutorial game with the teacher. Next, the students examine *strategic differences* between the players in the video and then explicitly decide on a strategy to use as the class plays a second game. The final class period asks the students to *reflect* on the strategy they tried in the previous class and share ideas with each other about the best strategies. Students then play at least two games (more are possible).

The community-focused cycle takes considerably more time, around three weeks. Students are provided with written strategy guides for *Coup* and asked to identify the structure of the guides using their background knowledge from their textbook about what informational texts should include. They will be asked to compare them to the structures of the video guides they had watched from the previous week and examine them for important structural similarities and differences. Finally, students create a written guide. Students are still able to play *Coup* about once every week during this phase for a total number of 6 days of play, with a potential number of games around 12 in this cycle. Both cycles together took four weeks of class time.

While Reinhardt and Sykes (2011) emphasize that each stage *should* include experiential and analytic activities, in practice, I chose to conceptualize each stage as itself having *explore, examine,* and *extend* activities. In the following table, I have organized my BA/EEE cycles in this way. First, by organizing them into their "grand" cycles (game or community-focused) and then by a pedagogical focus (the left column). Each pedagogical focus can describe a single class period (as in the game-focused cycles) or multiple class periods (as in the community-focused cycles). Within each pedagogical focus, I then organize the specific classes into *explore, examine,* and *extend* micro-cycles with their activities. Each phase of the micro-cycle is described, and then the specific class experience is recounted, including any materials used.

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community? This is a missed learning opportunity (for me) as the students didn't have the opportunity to experience the feeling of communicating with the actual community and I am unable to answer either way here. Not being able to access the community on their own is a very limiting factor when considering student choice in how and where to participate.

Game-Focused EEE cycles

	Explore 1	Examine 1	Extend 1	BA principles
Explore Cycle (1 50min. class)	**Watch** others play *Coup*. **Collect** words used by players.	**Compare** your collected words. **Negotiate** any differences.	**Play** a tutorial game of Coup. **Plan** to use collected words.	Collect language **interesting to them**. No predetermined language target. **Students choose** the forms to use in game.

Description: This class begins with a tactile experience of distributing *Coup* cards to the students and asking them to collect any language on the cards as an activation activity. I passed a character card to each student and pointed out that there were interesting visual and linguistic components. Students then used the video worksheet to transfer linguistic information from the card to their own personal player reference card (see Figure 4). This prepared students to focus on something in the video. When watching the video, I showed one round of the game. Students wrote down *anything* they could, but were tasked to look for the card and language they collected. I allowed the students to share with each other as a form of mediation, then watched again. Students were in constant negotiation to check if their classmates heard what they heard or how it was different. I mediated these negotiations using DA.[12] The class ended by asking the students to choose *an action* from the game that they will use. Students planned the words necessary and then were guided through a special full-class game where I closely watched and helped. Students played in pairs so that they could help each other. In all gameplay and class discussions, students were encouraged to use English when they could, but to never be afraid or ashamed to use Korean. If a student wanted to say something during a game, but couldnt in English, I encouraged them to use Korean and then after the game discuss how it could be said in English.

Video: Geek and sundry - Tabletop
Materials: Video Worksheet, Pre / post game reflection

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[12] A typical DA protocol in my classes looks something like this: Students are given specific viewing tasks and to write down specific information. I explain that the video will be normal speed, I won't stop it, and that it is ok to not understand very much (especially the first few times). After viewing, I usually ask the students if they had any questions about what they saw. A student would mention some bit of language and I would locate where that was in the video. I ask them to listen for the language again. This is a level 1 mediation in DA. I then focus the video down a bit and ask them to re-listen. I have them compare with a partner again and then check to see if they got it. If they don't get the language quite right, I say something like, "this part that you wrote is correct, listen before/after again". This is a level 2 or 3 mediation. They listen again, check again. If they don't get it, I say, "listen for this word right here." (level 4ish -5) and play again. If they don't get it from here, I will usually tell them the language they should listen for and explain what it means. See Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) and Lantolf and Poehner (2008) for more information on mediation levels.

	Explore 2	Examine 2	Extend 2	BA principles
Examine Cycle (1 50min. class)	Re-watch - focus on **form/function pairs**.	**Compare** and negotiate. Plan to use a specific **function**.	**Play a game** using your plan. **Reflect** on your plan.	Develops **metalinguistic skills** by tying strategy to language acts. Students **analyze language** to achieve goals.

Description: This cycle is focused on assisting students to make a connection between language forms and game actions, or to connect how strategy is *enacted* through language. Students were asked to examine what players do in the game (e.g., take three coins, lie, flatter, express pity) and what words they said to do so. Students were encouraged to pay attention to body language, gesture, and prosody because they will be saying the words and doing the actions when they play. After collecting a strategy and the words used to do that strategy, students compared their collections with someone who was assigned to watch the same player. They negotiated any difference amongst them and I mediated any confusion. Students then planned to do a specific strategy (e.g. lie about your card) and the specific language, including gesture, they will do. During this class, many game groups are able to play two or more games of *Coup* and to reflect on their use of language and actions in game via the post-game reflection.

Video: Geek and sundry - Tabletop
Materials: Explore 2 Worksheet, Post-Game Reflection

Explore 3	Examine 3	Extend 3	BA in this cycle
Summarize your play. **Read other students' plans** for strategy, **notice and take.**	**Create a new plan**. **Consider** language needed.	**Play and execute** strategy. **Reflect** and plan again. Play again.	**Iterative play** develops a history of language use based on achieving game goals.

Description: This class is focused on developing *strategic* expertise in *Coup* through cycles of planning, executing and reflecting on play. Students were asked to make small goals for each game (e.g., I will steal two times), plan specific strategies (linguistic forms) and then play. After one game, students share with their game group what they tried to do and how. Planning specific micro-goals helped the students focus on specific actions they do every turn and feel like they accomplished something even if their plan failed and even if they lost the game. I encouraged the students to try many different strategies and ways of implementing a strategy while playing.

Students were required to save their pre- and post-plan reflections. I emphasized that they would use these writings later when they write their own strategy guide and that their reflections would be helpful in deciding what is a good strategy and what isn't and why.

Video: Geek and sundry - Tabletop
Materials: Explore and Examine 3 Worksheet, Extend 3 Reflection

Extend Cycle (1 50min. class)

Community-Focused EEE Cycles

	Explore 4	Examine 4	Extend 4	BA principles
Explore Cycle (3 50min. classes)	**Choose** a strategy guide to read. **Describe** the strategies and your experience.	**Compare** and describe your reading. Contrast. **Read** another strategy.	**Write out** a strategy you will use. **Play a game** using that strategy. **Reflect**	Compares **traditional forms** with **community texts**. Embodies them in planning and execution.

Description: This cycle shifts the overall focus from playing *Coup*, to talking about it. Additionally, this *explore focus* took three classes to finish. This was the first time some students had encountered written English in an authentic setting (i.e., outside of textbooks). For this reason, the entirety of the first class and much of the second was devoted to just reading and exploring the texts.

I handed each student a packet of readings on strategy in *Coup* taken from *Boardgamegeek* and other blogs. I gave the students about 10 minutes to skim (a textbook skill) and to choose one specific strategy to read about. I asked them to read and describe the strategy in the guide and their experience with (if any) or thoughts about that strategy. I gave the students 20-30 minutes to work. For the last 10 minutes of class, students shared their worksheets with a partner to explore what other students found and answer any other questions. The second class was devoted to examining and comparing what the students found in their reading and to summarize different strategies for another student. Because students would use the strategies later, they tended to be more motivated to talk about the readings and, as important to me, listen to their partner read. After they shared for 30 minutes, rotating partners every 5 or 10 minutes, I allowed them to continue reading or start reading a different text. The final class started by reviewing the strategies the students had collected and answering any questions. Students were then tasked with writing a paragraph detailing the strategy they would use for the game that day. I prompted the students to describe their strategy in the early, mid and late game and reminded them about the structure of informational texts. Students trade with partners from the other game-group and provide linguistic and strategic feedback. Students then play a game of *Coup* using their strategy and reflect.

Worksheets: [Strategy Guides Reading](), [Explore and Examine 4 worksheet](), [Extend 4 Reflection]()

	Explore 5	Examine 5	Extend 5	BA principles
	Read a strategy guide and **Notice** structures used from the textbook. **Compare** what you found.	**Compare** guides and textbook structures. **Negotiate** what structures are necessary. **Read** again.	**Discuss** structure of strategy guides. **Begin writing** a strategy guide using that structure. **Play** *Coup*.	Develop **awareness of the analytic differences** between textbook and community texts that they observed.

Examine Cycle (3 50min. classes)

Description: This cycle is critical for the class to come together and synthesize their findings about how an informational text is organized in online forums for writing strategy guides. I used whatever framework the class ultimately decided on in order to develop a rubric for grading their final text that would come in the next cycle. This gave me, the teacher, more legitimacy when grading as the standards come from the community itself and the way in which the students understand those standards, allowing students to work within their current ability, but with an ecologically-valid standard. By mediating with me as well, I could guide their intuitions about what was or wasn't acceptable, if needed.

       The first class began by reminding the students what they learned about the structure of informational texts.[13] Students then took the *explore* worksheet and (re)read a strategy guide, looking for examples of the structures they knew. I emphasized that these strategy guides are a kind of informational text, so we might expect our structures to fit them, but that also these strategy guides could be very different from the textbook. Students spent most of this class reading and completing the worksheet, with the last 10-15 minutes spent discussing what the students found with partners.
The second class had the students recall what they found in the first class by sharing with their play-group. They were tasked with deciding on what structures are or are not necessary for writing a strategy guide. After the playgroup decided, the students read a new strategy guide, using their structure as a check-list. The final class began with a class discussion about the structure of strategy guides, how they differed from the textbook and negotiated any differences between the two groups. As a class, the students and I decided on a final set of standards for a *Coup* strategy guide. I explained to the students that the standards were the things they would be graded on when they wrote their guide[14]. The students began writing or planning their own strategy guide. The last part of class was devoted to playing a game of *Coup*. Students were asked to reflect on the strategy they had been writing about and try to implement it in play. In post-play reflection, they were asked to consider what was good or bad about their strategy.

Worksheet: [Explore, examine and extend 5 Worksheet](#)

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[13] The structures from the textbook include: an introduction composed of a main idea and background, a sequence of ideas that was either cause-and-effect oriented or problem-solution oriented. The sequence of ideas should also include examples and quotes. Finally, the text has a conclusion, marked by restating the main idea.

[14] The specific standards differed from class to class as each group of students seemed to focus on different aspects both of what they understood from the textbook and what they recognized in the strategy guides. For example, one class recognized that many of the strategy guides are organized through a "problem-solution" sequence of ideas. Before *requiring* the students to *only* write in a problem-solution sequence, I asked if anyone had found anything different. They noted that some guides didn't seem to follow either a cause-effect or problem-solution sequence. They described something like an "if-then" structure, which seemed to me to be similar to a cause-effect sequence. However, in the end the students felt like it was its own type of sequence, and I allowed that class in particular to use that category in their guides.Thanks to Reviewer Benjamin Thanyawatpokin for this prompt.

	Explore 6	Examine 6	Extend 6	BA principles
	Write a strategy guide. **Share**. Use a check-list to provide feedback.	**Discuss** feedback. Begin re-writing / finishing. **Share** and give feedback.	**Discuss** feedback. **Edit your strategy guide** to meet community standards. **Play** Coup.	Students **examine their writing** based on community standards. Write a **community appropriate** strategy guide.

Extend Cycle (3 50min. classes)

Description: This final cycle asks the students to synthesize everything they have learned through experiencing *Coup* and the community. The strategies they have learned and practiced, the form/function language they have experienced, and the specific writing structures they have taken from the community come together in a single written piece.

Students started by free-writing for a specific amount of time. When time was up, students shared their writing with classmates by passing their papers in a rotation. They were given a check-list of the writing standards and asked to identify them in their classmates text.[15] They then passed the paper to the next student, who verified the previous student's observations. The paper then went back to the writer and any questions or confusions were addressed, either in small groups, one-on-one or as a whole class. Students were then given the rest of the time to edit and rewrite. The second class began by letting the students review the feedback they had received and discussing any questions as a class. The aim of this stage was to finish a 1st draft so, the majority of class time was devoted to writing. For the last 15-20 minutes, students rotated their papers with different classmates and they gave feedback using the same protocol as in the previous class. Students used the *examine* worksheet to note any language or ideas that they liked and wanted to use in their writing. The final class began with a discussion, emphasizing the grading rubric. I recommended they make sure their writing meets the standards and then allowed them the class to write and edit. When they finished, one other student assessed their writing using the rubric. Finally, a final, stress-relieving, game of *Coup* is played.[16]

Worksheet: Feedback Worksheet

Table 1. A description of my BA/EEE pedagogy

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[15] This peer feedback activity is designed to remind the students of the textbook reading tasks they were familiar with (e.g., circle any domain-specific language, number the sequence of ideas). By doing it this way, students appeared to be less nervous about sharing their writing and about giving "feedback". In previous classes, when I asked children to "give feedback" with or without a rubric, students tended to just give full marks to their peers. I believe this is partially due to not wanting to be wrong and not wanting to harm social relationships. By making their peer's writing into a "reading activity" and not "peer feedback" students are less aware that what they are actually doing is giving feedback (e.g., I found x domain-specific words, I found this structure and so on). When the writer gets their paper back, they are either validated or challenged and their awareness is raised about what they need to do.

[16] This final game could be seen as superfluous and it was not as goal-oriented as previous play. This is also the only game in the cycle that could be described primarily as a "reward" for doing other work. Some of the classes actually did not play the game in the final class, focusing instead on writing.

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4. Reflections

To begin, I will use the pedagogical goals that Thorne and Reinhart (2008) establish for BA in order to reflect on my practice (Table 2). I was able to achieve several important aims in my teaching, and there are several areas that could be improved with the implementation of this curriculum. I will describe these pedagogical successes and short-comings first and then mention some other teaching wins and specific recommendations for improving.

4.1 Evaluation from BA

Pedagogical Standards	My BA / EEE cycles	My Results
1. To improve **understanding** of both **conventional** and **internet-mediated** text genres, emphasizing the concept that specific linguistic choices are associated with desired social-communicative actions.	• Collecting language in gameplay in *Explore* **1**. • Reminding students of the textbook structures in *Explore 5*. • Comparing textbook structures to *Coup* strategy guides in *Examine* **5**.	✔️ Students' experience and understanding of the textbook standards was criticized and expanded through analysis of the *Coup* community texts. 🚩 It is not clear if students know that the differences are due to the social-communicative actions.
2. To raise awareness of **genre specificity** (why certain text types work well for specific purposes) and **context-appropriate language use**.	• Applying different *strategies* in gameplay to achieve different goals through specific linguistic forms in *Examine* **2**. • Creating writing standards based on their textbook and deciding if *Coup* strategy guides are similar in **Examine 5.**	✔️ Students leveraged their established knowledge of the textbook to analyze new texts and discover (dis)similarities. 🚩 There were no classes devoted specifically to understanding why the textbook had different structures (lacking a functional analysis).
3. To build **metalinguistic, metacommunicative, and analytic skills** that enable lifelong learning in the **support of participation** in existing and future genres of plurilingual and transcultural language use.	• Playing the game and reflecting on play in **each *Extend* phase.** • Comparing how language is used to do specific strategies in *Examine 2.* • Comparing differences in structure and language between student textbook and *Coup* discourses in *Examine* **5**.	✔️ Student opportunity to analyze a text and to examine it for its form and function was expanded beyond the controlled language of their textbook. 🚩 Students were not given the experience of actual participation in the community.
4. To **bridge toward** relevance to students' communicative lives **outside of the classroom**.	• Students are exposed to internet materials (*youtube, boardgame geek*) produced in English and given success at interacting with them in *Explore* **1** and **2**.	🚩 Students did not choose the community. But it was a shared interest for many of them outside the classroom. More of a step on the bridge, rather than crossing it.
5. To increase **student agency** in relation to the choice, **content** and **stylistic specifics of the texts** contributing to the language learning process.	• Students collected language from videos in *Explore 1* and writing structures from *Explore 4*. • Students produced play and writing consistent with the observed community in *Extend* **1** and **6**.	✔️ Students determined the kind of language to use while playing and writing. Students collaborated to decide on specific standards for their writing, while being constrained by community standards.

Table 2. A description of BA pedagogical goals and a practitioner-reflection of my design.

As Table 2 shows, this curriculum excelled in expanding the realm of acceptable English for my students, involved a lot more perceived choice, and asked them to analyze language in a new way. The

short-comings revolve around the "bridge" in BA-- students were never truly asked to visit the other side of that bridge (the gaming community) and they were not able to get feedback from the community. While students were able to get feedback from their peers on their writing, it lacked the iterative model that Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) argue for where students participate (e.g., blog, forum, discord chat) in some community, get feedback and then participate again. The standards for their writing assignment, while in-line with many social-constructivist standards (e.g., student negotiated), still revolved around *me* as the evaluator and not the community itself. A solution I think may work is to focus on the "local" game group (the three classes at the school). Playgroups, which consisted of 5 or 6 students could put together a small booklet of writings that would then be distributed to the other playgroups to read and reply to, similar to what York (2019) does with his *Kotoba Rollers* class where the current class creates materials for helping future classes play. The writing in these booklets could be less formal than the final writing assignment, allowing for more frequent booklet publications and more iterations of writing, reading and commenting.[17]

A final critique regards the use of *Examine* cycles. The leveraging of *strategy* to motivate *function* in language use is, I think, effective. Many students are driven by strategy in a clearly goal-oriented way (i.e., to win the game) that traditional form/function language teaching does not attain in my experience. However, by emphasizing *strategy*, many, if not all, of the students' concept of form/function *language* is likely obscured. It is not obvious from instruction that students developed a conceptual framework of how specific linguistic forms are used to perform functions, but instead developed a kind of spontaneous framework that was built on their idea of strategy, used specifically in *Coup*. A main drive of the *examine* stage of EEE is to build up this type of analytic/conceptual knowledge of language that ideally would allow students to draw connections to other contexts. In this description of EEE however, the *examine* stage never goes beyond compare/contrast activities. A more robust concept-building framework would be more desirable in the *examine* stage. McNeil (2020) found in his own use of BA to build language awareness through game community discourse, that students sometimes failed to recognize game discourse as valid. In his view, this was due to a lack of conceptual grounding related to language which failed to orient students to recognize the language forms as transferable to other contexts. His recommendation, which I also echo here, would be to bolster the analytic activities through Concept-Based Instruction (CBI; Gal'perin, 1992; Lantolf & Thorne 2006). CBI attempts to reverse a traditional approach to language teaching where instead of teaching forms and then tying them to meanings (see my analysis of a textbook I taught to adult learners for an example), CBI starts with *meaning* and then leads to *forms*. CBI takes the *concept* as the unit of learning (as opposed to a *form*, or a *task*). Concepts are generalizable and complete, meaning that by examining the concept, all forms of that concept should be understandable. A concept is presented to the student through a heuristic model, or a model that cannot be shallowly memorized (i.e. a verbal definition or explanation), but must be appealed to by the student in order to explain a phenomena. Through multiple attempts at understanding an aspect of language using the heuristic model, the learner moves from the Vygotskian interpersonal plane to the intrapersonal plane (or the mind of the learner) along the ZPD.

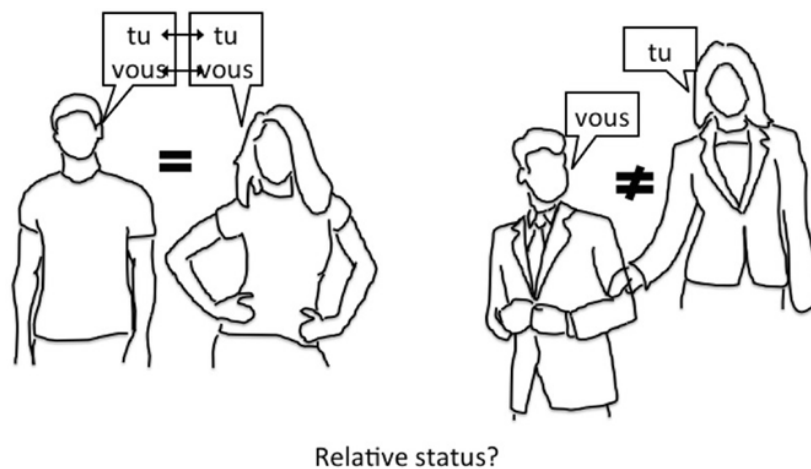[17] Thanks to reviewer Johnathan deHaan for prompting this section.

Figure 5. A heuristic model for teaching L2 French sociopragmatics from van Compernolle and Henery (2014).

While any aspect of language could be approached through CBI, in the context of this paper, one of the important linguistic ideas is pragmatics, or how we know what to say, to who, when and in what way. This would tie into the focus on *strategy* (and linguistic function), by helping the students focus on the function of *lying*, *flattery* and *convincing* through a pragmatic concept. An example of this is van Compernolle and Henery (2014) who utilized CBI to teach French sociopragmatics to L2 learners. Their study focuses on the pragmatics of French *tu/vous* and uses a heuristic model based on casual vs. business attire (formal or informal), lateral distance (social distance) and horizontal distance (social status). An example of their model can be seen in Figure 5. Students use the heuristics to verbally explain how and why a communicative act occurred the way it did, using the model first explicitly and then appealing to it less and less as it becomes internalized.

In my case, it would be useful for the students to examine how the players in the video, and in their own playthroughs, utilize the pragmatics of formality, social distance and social status to enact strategy (e.g., speaking more formally when attempting to flatter, or attempting to be socially close). Given the very short amount of teaching time I had in these cycles, I might change the way I teach the game in the first few lessons by introducing a modified version of a *Coup* flowchart (see Figure 6) created by users at *Board Game Geek*. This might be extended to the internet forums as well, where users have differing (but sometimes obscure) levels of social difference. By examining the pragmatics of both play and community discourse, students would deepen their conceptual understanding of these discourses.
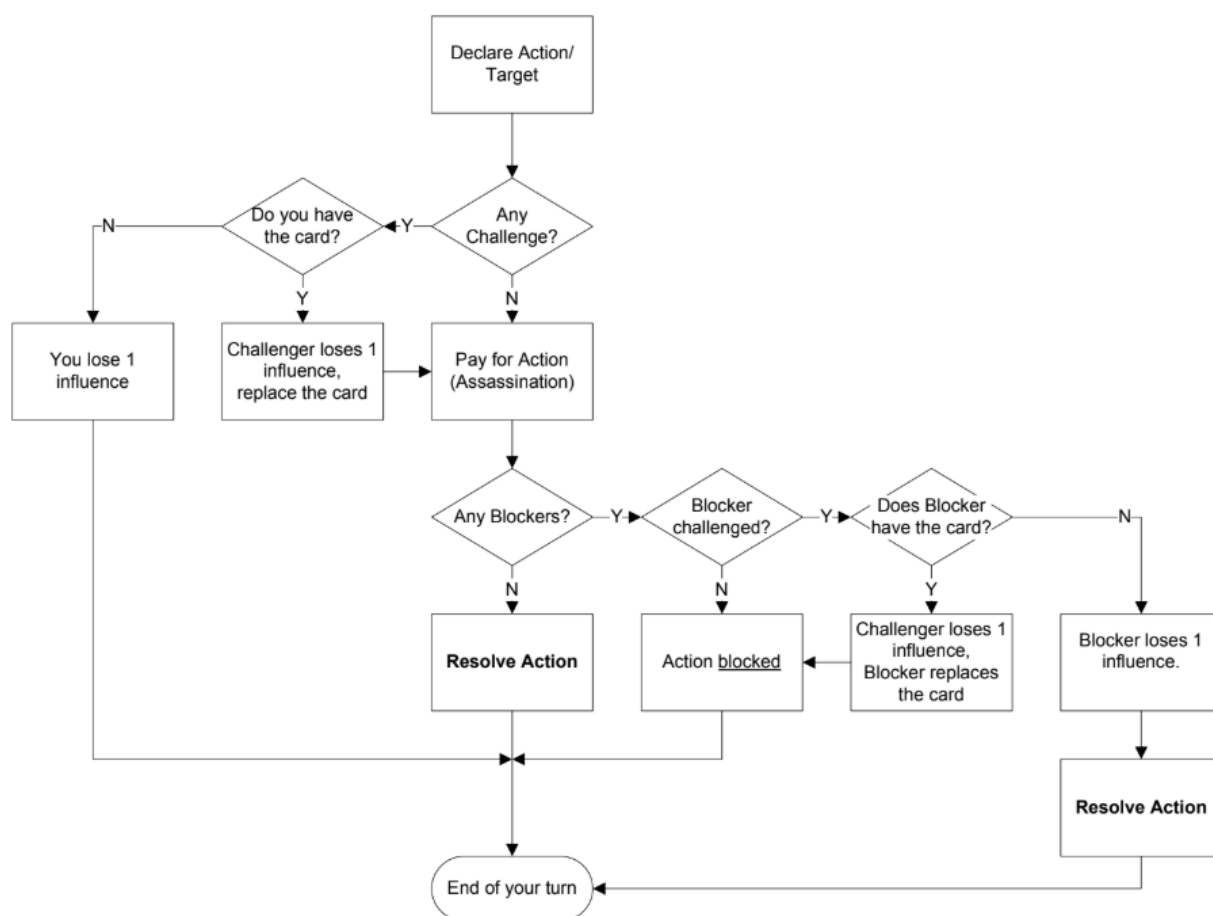
Figure 6. A heuristic model for learning how to play *Coup*, from the users at *Board Game Geek*.

Following CBI, students would be asked to watch a turn in *Coup* and then, with a partner or alone, describe what happened using the flowchart. As the flowchart demonstrates the entire flow of the game, there should be no example in playthrough videos that are not explainable through the flowchart, unless either the model is incomplete or the players break a rule (an insightful event). By introducing the students to the pedagogical idea of a heuristic model in the very first stages of the cycles, they will be ready to accept a second model, based on the idea of strategy and pragmatics. After students have collected language in the explore 2 stage, sociopragmatics related to status, closeness and formality could be tied to strategies like *blocking, challenging, lying, flattery*. For example, when a player says, "yeah, Imma block ya.", (a *block* action), how is that pragmatically similar or different from "Well, unfortunately for your Captain, my Ambassador was there and blocked him from stealing anything." and how does performing the action in either way relate to a *strategy* the player is trying to perform.

> ◹◹⊡ **TEACHING TIP**
> *Strategies* in games can be utilized for teaching language *functions* and consequently the specific language *forms* to enact those strategies.

4.2 Notable Teaching Wins and Improvements
Play, Play, Play!

Being 6th graders, playing a game had the maybe obvious benefit of being exciting for them. These cycles were certainly very different from the instruction they received in their other classes. However, I found it important to give them enough opportunity to play in order to combat feelings of scarcity. If students feel that games like *Coup* are rare events, or irregular, the way they approach the game can change drastically. For example, hurt feelings due to losing can be exacerbated by students using strategies which are solely *intended* to hurt other players because they feel they can't win anyway. In this class however, play was regular enough (at least once a week) that students didn't feel anxious about losing or disconnected from the goal of winning.

The pedagogical goals of BA do not require playing games. Any student interest or communicative need can be approached through BA. Using tabletop games in the classroom however, brought an ecological, embodied exploration to the learning. Students engaged in short, regular events with specific invariant information (the structure of the game), the exploration of which leads to the perception of distinctive features (Gibson, 2000). They engaged in actual socially-bounded (the rules of the game), actions (the language used in the game) which provided motivation for goal-oriented, needs-based linguistic action (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986). This builds expert-like knowledge which the students then leveraged when engaging with the community. While the learning goal was ultimately a writing task, having the students write about experiences they were having regularly in the classroom led to less brain fog when attempting to decide "what do I write about?".

"Feel Free"

By using materials that are above the students' level (by quite a bit), they are able to collect and use language that their textbook would never dream of teaching. Watching the video in this lesson or reading the strategy guides requires more teacher mediation and abandoning the idea that you will watch a full video. I would spend 5 to 10 minutes on less than 10 seconds of video at times. By centering the language around a community that participates in a shared practice, language necessary to perform that practice is abundant and real in a way that is difficult for a textbook or a well-meaning teacher to recreate.[18] A phrase that caught fire in my classrooms was "feel free". This phrase is used by one of the players in the video I show to mean "you may go through with your action unchallenged or blocked". The students were so intrigued by this phrase that I spent some time mediating a discussion about how it might be used outside of *Coup*. This is language I had never taught (and have never taught explicitly after, either). Because the students *noticed* and *collected* it themselves, they were much more willing and excited to use it, both in-game and in the hallways after class.
This specific phrase was notable because of how many students became interested in it and in using it, but the same phenomena occurred at individual levels. Students observed the players in the videos and began mimicking even their gestures and prosody to an extent. It is difficult for me to claim *learning* or development in these cases. It is also difficult to know if the *students themselves* were aware of what they were doing. In a future iteration, I attempted to address this problem by using google docs, game recordings and a dynamic assessment protocol.

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[18] From reviewer Johnathan deHaan: "[this is something] many others at LLP have come to realize... actually engaging students in this difficult texts is DIFFICULT and the phrases that students glom onto are things we can't predict and NEVER would have been a part of a standard textbook."

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5. Final Thoughts

By the time I conducted this curriculum, I was finishing up my 5th year of teaching and about to finish my Master's classes. The class described here then is the culmination, the first entwining, of a coherent philosophical praxis in second language teaching for me. It was my first attempt to take control not only over the activities in my classroom, but specific content and how to assess it. The threads described here include myself, the students, the institutional constraints, the required curriculum, BA, EEE and *Coup*. I had been practicing EEE with the standard curriculum, so the students were familiar with the organizational structure of my class. The students already showed multicultural impulses and interests that were not being fed by the standard curriculum in their school and by entwining an authentic discourse with these particular students, I was able to take advantage of their particular cultural history and experience. By structuring the students' exploration, examination and participation of the discourses through BA, students were given opportunities to bridge towards English language and culture. The institutional constraints around focusing on speaking in class as well as completing the textbook standards through writing and a final exam were addressed by analyzing and comparing their textbook with *Coup* discourses and writing their textbook-required assignments, but towards the *Coup* community.

The rope this pedagogy entwined felt secure-- but incomplete. As Jones (2020) notes for teachers interested in, or just starting-up, using games, iteration on imperfect curriculum moves the practitioner towards better teaching practices. To that end, there were some "loose ends" to my practice that need to be improved. The first is improving the conceptual awareness of students in the analytic activities and the second is the method through which assessment is conducted. By incorporating dynamic assessment and concept-based instruction into the daily work of the students, I would hope to demonstrate to the students themselves how their game and language/cultural knowledge is developing micro-genetically. While I was able, in later teaching environments, to work with much looser institutional constraints, this particular teaching cycle demonstrates how a ludic language pedagogy can be performed in actually-existing primary schools where we cannot have control over many aspects of the curriculum. While I was not enthused about teaching the ELA textbook, or working with the required assessment protocols from the institution, that is not itself a reason to give up on pedagogical theories and tools that we believe help provoke development in students.

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