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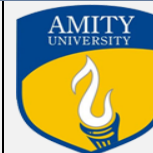
Teaching English Vocabulary to the Libyan Preparatory School Students

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ABSTRACT

Modern English Language Teaching is severely constrained by the spatiotemporalmaterial, and socioculturalspiritual settings of the teacher-learner-administration-material networks in Libya. As a result, students are constrained by: 1. less time to learn: 2.unproductive and non-optimal settings to facilitate quicker learning: 3. incompatible materials to fulfill their demands; 4. inappropriate and inefficient teaching methods; 5. psychologically unreal and atomic methods, 6. experientially not comprehensive and 7. finally, a disjointed learning situation. In such a context, the learning-teaching situation has broken down into a haphazard trial and error method producing unpredictable and uneven results: a few manage to learn well by their contingent plans while many others pass in the process by sheer effort and the remaining fail to succeed. Therefore, there is a need to re-examine the whole problem of teaching-learning from a holistic perspective of the entire gamut of the teacher-learner-administration-material experience. For effective and optimum learning to take place, all such factors have to be interconnected and interrelated in an interdependent network of materials-teaching-learning in the existing spatiotemporalmaterial, and socioculturalspiritual context.

According to KLTA, living is a matter of seeking pleasure by fulfilling one's desires and language is used as a resource to achieve this goal. It is well known that young students like (desire) to play and enjoy but this fact is not explored in the language learning situation. So, if the learning materials can be turned into games, then the learning burden will be reduced and playing becomes an intrinsic type of motivation in addition to the extrinsic type of motivation derived from it in the form of marks, prizes, etc. Language Games is not a new concept but it is not systematically included into the syllabus in Libyan preparatory schools and its value not empirically tested.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to extend the Ka:rmik Language Teaching Approach (KLTA) to tackle the problem of providing an optimal teacher-learner-administration-material network for

facilitating an enjoyable, quicker, and efficient learning of English and in fact any other second or foreign language in Preparatory Schools in Libya.

*Four traditional (*Bab Hadeed, Nageza, Shames Al Qamar and Throw Ball by Bhuvaneswar*) and three modern games (*Dancing with Flippers and Magic Wand by Fatima, and Scrambled Letters and Words by Oumissad*) are selected for teaching English verbs, adjectives, and antonyms and synonyms from the prescribed textbook and they are integrated into the class timetable. A pilot project is being initiated in Al Khalud Preparatory School, Sebha to teach the materials through these games and placards and the results will be compared with other methods.*

I. Introduction

Games are an important technique used in teaching language. However, they are not integrated into syllabus and rarely implemented in teaching programmes in an effective and regular way. In Ka:rmik Linguistic Theory, an attempt is made to integrate them in to the syllabus and give an important place in the learning situation. In an ideal KLTA situation, *the materials, the teaching, and the administration* are in the KLTA paradigm making the teaching *a complete atomic-(w)holistic network*; however, KLTA techniques can be profitably exploited in other methods and approaches also by using them in *partial atomic networks* as teaching aids. In such a partial atomic network, the content of the syllabus in a textbook is incorporated into the KLTA technique and used. For example, the use of games as a technique in teaching can be applied to the teaching of Lessons of the Preparatory 2 English Textbook in the English for Libya Series.

As a test case, six games are chosen to be used to teach English vocabulary to the school children in Al Khalud Preparatory School, Sebha. These games are optional and going to be used as supporting activities to the main programme of teaching English in *a partial atomic network*.

II. Literature Review

Since a long time, games have been considered an important tool in the teaching of languages but they are not seriously taken into consideration owing to so many reasons such as lack of their proper integration into the syllabus, lack of time, lack of culturalization of the games, and lack of facilities. Textbooks are rarely accompanied by tested games to teach the content in the syllabus in a systematic way. However, many games have been invented, developed, and used to teach the students. Mackey (1965: 439-452) makes a methodical selection and presentation of various language games to teach the four skills of language. In his "Appendix B: Language Games", he presents them under four headings: 1. Listening Games (Perception; and Comprehension); 2. Speaking Games (Observation; Guessing; Oral Composition); 3. Reading Games (Recognition; and Comprehension); 4. Writing Games (Spelling; Composition). These

games are Eurocentric and not region specific. Bhuvaneswar (2004) is another attempt to develop some games to suit the Indian context.

In the case of Libyan educational system, no comprehensive research is conducted to develop language games for Libyan school children using the folklore. Bhuvaneswar, Fatima, Nura, and Khadija (2010a) is one such attempt that identifies about 50 Libyan games and suggests ways and means to integrate them into English Language Teaching syllabuses and textbooks; Bhuvaneswar, Fatima, and Oumissad (2010b) is a pilot project initiated to integrate games into the teaching situation using the KLTA.

There are some Libyan games that can be used to practice English language vocabulary, and syntax. Among them are Bab Hadeed, Nageza, and Shames - Qamar which can be used to teach words and sentence patterns. So far – as far as the authors know – they are not used to teach English on the one hand and not integrated into a syllabus to teach the syllabus contents on the other hand. In this article, an attempt is made to do so.

III. English Language through Libyan Games:
Learning Verbs, Adjectives, and Antonyms and Synonyms

A. Introduction
According to the Ka:rmik Linguistic Theory, all action is generated, specified, directed, and materialized by dispositionally impelled desires. *The Principle of Desire for Pleasure* (*sukhe:chcha* in Samskrit) is the most fundamental desire in all human beings – any activity that brings in pleasure is welcome and any other activity that begets pain is unwelcome. Thus, pleasure is a great motivator for pursuing action and pleasure-seeking is a fundamental trait in the disposition of all kids as well as all others.

In the case of ka:rmik language teaching approach to school children, this *Principle of Desire for Pleasure* is taken into primary consideration owing to the following reasons.

1. Children by nature (disposition or svabha:vam) are inclined to have fun and play for pleasure.

2. Learning a language is by implication a burden on the kids when it involves boring lessons, strenuous reading, and rigorous time-schedules. It is difficult to engage their fleeting attention, sustain involvement, and improve the learning situation. In such a case, the only alternative is to make learning a language fun so that children enjoy the learning process.

3. Introduction of games into the syllabus in *an atomic-holistic and network-within-networks* is offered as a solution to one such problem of motivating the children to learn a language via the lure for games and sports.

4. When language is introduced into games, these games will become purposeful teaching aids which will reduce the learning burden, mask the teaching process, increase the motivation, and turn it into a pleasant and attractive pastime but at the same effectively contribute to the realization of learning objectives.

When a syllabus is prepared, it should be learner-friendly and amenable to play – *Let's Teach English* should become *Let's Play English; Let's Learn English* should be *Let's Enjoy English.* Therefore, what is *selected, graded, and presented* in a lesson with immediate objectives and in a syllabus with overall objectives should facilitate playing *selectively* in *a graded manner* as it is *presented* for playing*. In addition, what is played should be culturally appealing, intellectually stimulating, and physically entertaining. The game activities should harmoniously blend into the teaching-learning-administration network and act as a catalyst to the learning process in atomic-holistic functional network.

In the ka:rmik linguistic theory, *learning activity* is superimposed on *playing activity* and it is apparently transformed into a lingual playing activity (for learning) – language game:

(1) Lingual Activity ⟹ Learning Activity ⇩ Playing Activity ⌣ Language Game

[⟹ becomes the object of ; ⇩ superimposed on; ⌣ apparently transforms into]

However, for the child it becomes the other way round – the playing activity is superimposed on the learning activity and the *learning activity* becomes the *playing activity* and hence he is enticed *to play* the *learning activity* as a novel and interesting game.

(2) Lingual Activity ⟹ Playing Activity ⇩ Learning Activity ⌣ Language Game

The *teaching materials* chosen will become the *playing materials*. For example, the words *go, went, gone* taught in a class from the lesson are *the teaching materials*. When they are used in playing *Nageza al Kelimath*, they become *the playing materials*. As they jump and pick up these words, they become *the learning materials* and finally as they play the game by jumping into the squares in which they are placed and reading them and picking them up, they learn the words and *learning* takes place unconsciously. By a few repetitions, the words will get into their long term memory. In other words, teaching is done via fulfilling their desire to play.

(3) Teaching Materials ⌣ Playing Materials ⇩ Learning Materials ⌣ Learning

B. Selected Games
A few cultural games played in the Libyan society which can be used to practice what has been taught in the classroom are given below. They are *inexpensive, easily playable,* and *do not require any special equipment – only flippers and magic wand require simple items.*

I. Bab Lo:gha: Learning Verbs and Adjectives

[*Bab Hadeed* is a popular traditional children's game which is played by girls all over Libya. This game is played by a few girls, say, five or six. The players form a circle by clasping the hand of the next player in the circle: each player clasps the right hand of the next player with her left hand and forms the circle. A girl will get inside the circle. When the game starts, the girl will try to get out of the circle by saying, "Shall I go out from here?" and all the girls in the circle answer by saying "Ba:b Hadi:d 'Iron door'!" and block her from going out. Each time she tries to get out, the girls forming the circle will block her saying bab hadeed and move around her. She will use her tactics and tries to get out somehow or other.
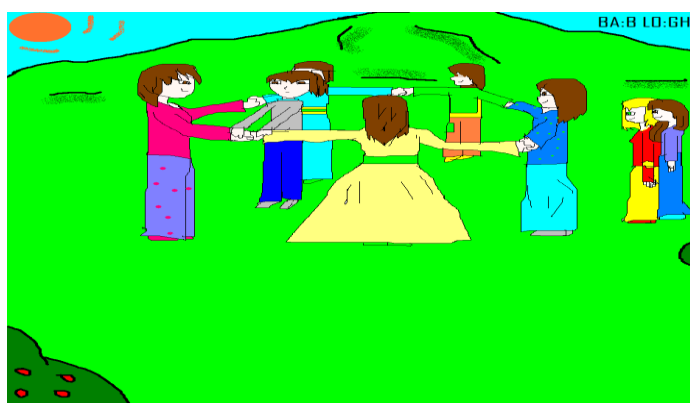
Bab Lo:gha: Elementary

Ba:b Lo:gha is a game inspired from this game and developed by Bhuvaneswar (2007). This is a game that can be used for teaching, words, pronunciation, and even syntax and conversation. There will be two teams A and B. In each team, there can be five or seven players. The players of Team A form a

Figure 1. Question & Answer

(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)

circle by clasping the hand of the next player in the circle: each player clasps the right hand of the next player with her left hand and forms the circle. A player from Team B will challenge the Team A players saying, "Kun al assadu wo kulni" and the players from Team A will reply, "Aiwa! Talli!". One **Figure 2. Break Out after Winning a Point**

player player will get inside the (drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)

circle. One player from Team A will shoot a verb in English and the player from Team B will start with the first two players by saying the present tense of the verb; they say, "OK. Say the past tense". He will go to the next pair and say the past tense of the verb;

the second pair will say, "OK. Say the past participle". He will go to the next pair and say the past participle of the verb; the third pair will say, "You are a lioness. We can't kill you. Go". The next player will challenge in the same way and do his round. If a player fails to say the three forms correctly, the Team A players will capture him to their side - he is out. The competition goes on till the last player is defeated. The last player can challenge the Team A if he wins in the verbal duel.

The Verbal Duel:

A player from Team A will face the player from Team B. He will say a verb, say, **go**; the Team B player will give the other two forms of the verb **(went, gone)** as answer and say a verb, say, **play**. The Team A player will answer in the same way by giving the other two forms of the verb **(played, played) and the verbal duel** goes on till one is defeated. If the Team B player wins, he can take back all the players lost and draw the match.
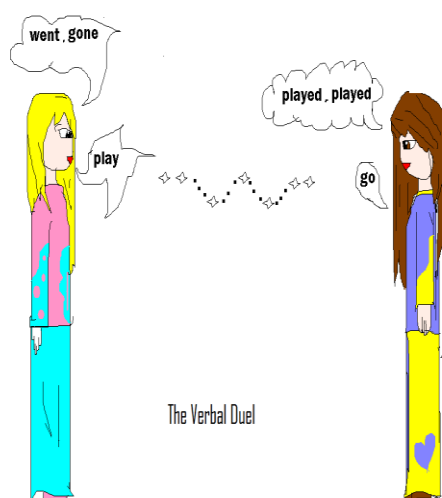

Figure 3: The Verbal Duel
(drawing by Fatima Zahara
Omar Nasser)

The number of the girls should be two numbers more than the number of lexical items to be used for one unit in the game. For example, in learning the present tense, the past tense and the past participle of a verb, say, **play**: *play- played-played*, the number should be five to bring about variation.

An umpire should be there with the list of verbs and their forms. The number of verbs to be used should be decided before the competition starts. The number can be progressively increased from 5 to 50. This game can be extended to adjectives. In the case of antonyms and synonyms, the challenger will give only one answer; the next player will shoot another antonym/synonym.

Bab Lo:gha: Intermediate

At this level, the Team A player of the circle will give the verb/adjective in Arabic and the Challenger will have to say the verb/adjective in English and give all the three forms.

Bab Lo:gha: Advanced

At this level, the Team A player of the circle will give the verb/adjective in a sentence and the Challenger will have to say the verb/adjective in all the three forms in a sentence to get out. Questions/answers; sentence patterns; sentences with verb forms can be practiced at the advanced level.

Placards and Posters

The important verbs/sentences that can be used will be displayed in the classroom three or four days before Wednesday so that the students can look at them and remember them by natural exposure**.**

II. Nageza

Nageza (Jump or Leaping) is another popular game played by girls in Libya. It is played by jumping on to squares in a vertical and diagonal manner. It has two varieties: 1. The Short Nageza (Nageza Sahla); and 2. The Big Nageza (Nageza Wahara au Tuweela). In the short version, there will be usually 10 or less than 10 squares and in the long version, there will be 15 squares. The squares are arranged one below the other. In the first row, there will be one; in the second row, there will be three or four; in the third row, one; in the fourth row, two; in the fifth, sixth, and seventh, one square each. This is the arrangement in *Nageza Sahla*. In *Nageza Tuweela*, there will be 15 squares in eleven rows. The first three rows and the last three rows will have one square each. The fourth, the sixth, and the ninth rows will have two squares each.

Each player will throw a stone into the squares and start jumping from the first row to the row in which the stone is and will pick up the stone and go to the last row. Then he will do reverse jumping and come back to the first row by jumping all the rows in the reverse direction.

Nageza Li Kelimath (Leaping for Words)

Figure 4: Nageza Al Kelimath
(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)
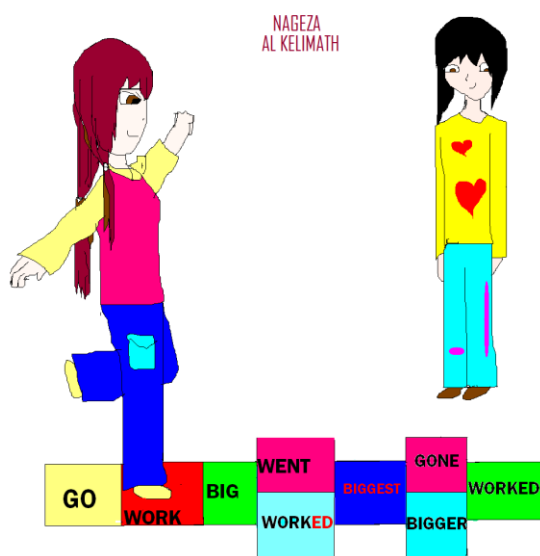
Leaping for Words is a game inspired by *Nageza* and *Tokkudu Billa* (Stamping Tablet). This is developed by Bhuvaneswar (2004, 2007). In this game, the number of squares is flexible. Depending on the type of language items to be played, the number and alignment can be decided. Another variety of this game is played in Andhra Pradesh, India under the name *Tokkudu Billa* (Stamping Tablet) in which the arrangement of the squares is different from the version in Libya. Nageza Li Kelimath is specifically designed from the Libyan version. It is used to teach words, and syntax, and even reading, and spelling.

Elementary Level

At this level, the words that have to be learnt will be placed on the squares. For example, if verbs and nouns are going to be taught, say, 6 verbs are mixed with 4 nouns in a 10 square game; or 10 verbs are mixed with 5 nouns in the 15 squares; if only verbs are going to be taught, sets can be mixed in the squares and the player has to pick up the sets pointed out by the opponents. For example, let us say there are two sets of verbs mixed with the detractor set of adjectives: *1. go-went-gone; 2. Big-bigger-biggest; and 3. Work-worked-worked.* They can be arranged haphazardly and the competing player has to pick them up in a sequence. If he makes a mistake, he will be out. To make the game challenging, wrong forms can be mixed with the right forms: go-goed-goed with go-went-gone; or one word in a set can be left out. In a similar way, the three forms of the adjectives can also be taught.

Intermediate Level

At the intermediate level, different types of verbs such as transitive and intransitive verbs can be played. To make it more complex, singular-plural can be included with other forms.

Advanced Level

At this level, sentence patterns can be played. The player will form sentences from the scrambled words in the squares. The four forms of the verbs can be used for making the game complex.

III. Shames - Qamar (Skip Rope)

This is a skipping game. It is played by two players or two teams consisting of 4, 6, and even 8 players. Two or three in a team is ideal since the players will not sit idle; four and above is not good since the other players may get bored. Two players will hold a rope at its ends which generally have wooden or plastic handles. They turn the rope (holding it by its ends and swinging it in a circle) while singing **"Shams, Qamar, Najum"** and the other players will take turns jumping it. When it is played as a game, each player is required to move in while the rope is turning, complete the jump, and move out without contacting or stopping the rope.

It is not only played in Libya but all over the world. In the other parts of the world, "there are many types of jumps, including single, double, backward, crossed-feet, hot pepper (twice as fast as usual), quarter turns, half turns, full turns, and two-at-a-time (jumpers); in double Dutch, two ropes (or one long rope such as a clothesline that has been doubled) are turned simultaneously in opposite directions; in criss-cross, performed by one person holding both ends of the rope, the arms are crossed back and forth on alternate turns of the rope (Encyclopædia Britannica 2009)" [see for more details **"jump** rope."

Encyclopædia Britannica 2009].

SUN & MOON

BIG

FOR VERBS : JUMP
FOR ADJECTIVES: DON'T JUMP

Word-Skipping

Word-skipping is a game inspired by *Skip Rope* and developed by Bhuvaneswar (2004, 2007). This is a multipurpose game which can be used to learn and memorize not

Figure 5. Sun and Moon- Standing
(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)

only vocabulary but also grammar, semantics, and even poetry. It requires a minimum of three players and can extend up to two teams with three or four players each. The ideal limit is three. There will be two teams A and B. Two players from Team A will hold the rope and turn it singing the selected set of words. For example, if it is a set of verbs, say, **go, went, gone,** they will say the words one by one. One player from Team B will jump the rope each time a word is said. If he cannot, he will lose; if he can, he will score a point. It is a game which will help both the teams simultaneously. It can be played as a chorus game also. At advanced levels, **Shitthavi** can be introduced to make the game more challenging and interesting.

Elementary Level

At the elementary level, the players from Team B will challenge the Team A by saying "Kun al assadu wa kulni?" and the two players holding the rope will reply, "Taalli…" and the game starts. The Team B player will say 1, or 2, or 3, or 4 verbs and their forms as the Team A players give verb by verb and turn

Figure 6. Sun and Moon – Jumping
(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)

the rope – e.g., Team A players say the verb **go**; then the Team B player skipping and jumping will say **go – going - went- gone;** next, they will say **play** and the team B player will say **play-playing-played-played** while jumping; and so on the game goes for 5 points. If the Team B player says the verbs correctly and jumps successfully, she will score a point. The number can be increased up to 10 (10x 3 = 30) verbs.

Intermediate Level

At this level, different parts of speech can be mixed. For example, verbs can be mixed with adjectives. Complexity can be created by challenging the Team B player to jump for verbs and raise hands for adjectives. Freedom should be given to the students to innovate their own patterns as they like. However, guidance should be there.
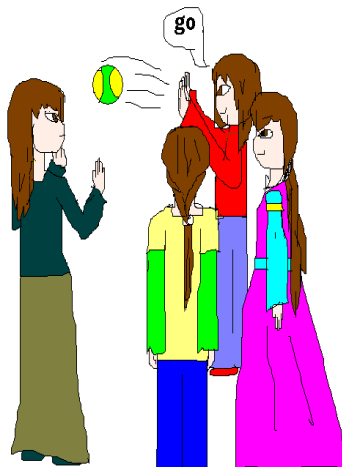
Advanced Level

Libyan culture is rich in folklore. There are many rhymes and songs whose patterns can be adapted to create useful rhymes and simple songs in English that can be used to teach language items at all the levels. For example, in Unit 3 of English for Libya, there are many words that can be practiced through games. Rhymes can be created using these words and they can be played. For example, the words potatoes, onions, carrots and beans can be made into a rhyme as follows:

Potatoes and onions/carrots and beans/ *when we say BIG/ you stop your feet* or *stamp your feet and turn around*; in a similar way, Parsley and water/milk and oil/meat and salt/pepper and pan/*clap your hands / and sing a song*; so also, Peel and wash/ chop and heat/add and stir/fry it gently/ *and taste the soup/with a wooden spoon*

4. Throw the Ball

It is developed by Bhuvaneswar (2004). A group of students (from 4-10) will form a circle or two parallel rows or a polygon. Each person will throw a ball to the next person at the elementary level or to any person at the intermediate and advanced levels by saying a word. The player who receives the ball should say another word

According to the rule. If she fails to do so, she will

Fig. 7. Throw Ball   lose the point. Whosoever scores the highest will *(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser* win the game. At the intermediate and advanced levels, she will be out of the circle. The last student is the winner.

A **playing topic** will be selected by the players. It can be simply any verb such as *go,* *play,* etc., or any adjective such as **big, small,** etc. at the elementary level, or it can be a set of verbs such as **go-went-gone; play-played-played**; adjectives such as **big-bigger-biggest**, etc. at the intermediate level. At the advanced level, they can be mixed and the following player has to give the appropriate form of the word said by the previous player, for example, if a player says **big,** the following player who catches the ball has to say an adjective **bigger** and so on but not a verb like **went.**
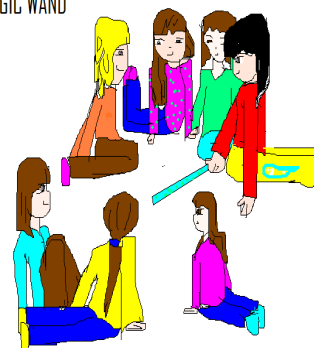
5. Flippers

This game is developed by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser. In this game, there are four movements of the the legs: two for each as shown in the Fig. 8. Sets of four words are chosen and said one by one for each movement of the leg. For example, these words can be just any verbs like **go, work, tell, and help**; or they can be **go-going-went-gone**; or antonyms and synonyms like **good-bad; come-go**. This game is also very useful in practising sentence patterns such as: **I play Nageza – I am   playing Nageza – I have played Nageza – I have been playing Nageza.** This game can be further extended by group dancing and adapting it to dual dancing in a similar way as verbal duels (see Verbal Duels above).
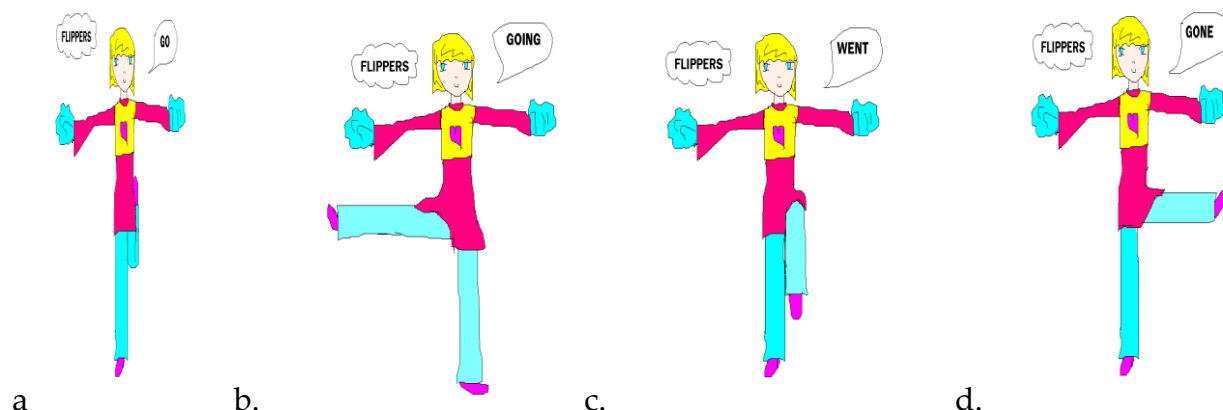

Fig. 8. Flippers *(drawing by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser)*

6. Magic Wand

Magic wand is a simple game developed by Fatima Zahara Omar Nasser. In this game, a group of students say form 4 - 8 will sit in a circle. There is a stick with a head. It can be rotated. The umpire will sit at the centre and turn the stick as she likes. The person towards whom the head of the stick points out   should play the game by saying a word/sentence. This is a flexible and sedentary game and can be used for any type of language teaching activity for any type of language teaching activity. It can be used for word-building (saying any word), grammar (saying grammatical forms, or sentences), and semantics (saying antonyms and synonyms). The stick is called the magic wand.

IV. Conclusion

In *B. Selected Games,* it has been shown how local games can be usefully integrated into the teaching programme and teach various levels of language. In the pilot project, 9x3 =27 verbs and 13x3 =39 adjectives from Lesson 1 of Preparatory 2 English of English for Libya are being tested to see how students respond to such a move of *Playing English* and the initial response is very, very encouraging and the final results are being awaited anxiously.

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