

Review in Form of a Game: Practical Remarks for a Language Course

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Abstract. The article summarizes my own experience of conducting reviews for exams in French language courses. Through more than ten years of teaching French language and linguistics, I have developed pre-exam review sessions based on game models to help my students repeat term lessons in an engaging and memorable atmosphere. The article is intended as a practical guide for creating and organising such a review game. It is constituted of seven parts with subtitles, which should make it easy to navigate. After a short introduction describing challenges encountered in end-of-year reviews, the reader will find a general description of the game in part 2 and examples of one complete round of it in part 4, while the interceding part 3 will provide practical tips on support materials, which themselves make up part 5. These supports deal with ways of formulating questions and displaying answers using animations in PowerPoint presentations. The final section, part 6, will offer advice on using a course website and classroom aids to increase student attendance and encourage more effective classroom participation. The brief conclusion enumerates the beneficial effects of the game, underlines the value of a well-prepared PowerPoint presentation, and gives examples of students' positive feedback on this format of material review.

Keywords: language teaching; technology and PowerPoint; game-based approach; final review

Introduction

Year after year, teachers and students face the same situation: as the end of the term nears, inevitably bringing with it final exams, there comes a need to review the entire term's material in one or two hours. Review sessions, meant to help a nervous and busy student population in its preparations, turn into proto exams that sometimes bore, never manage to address all questions and concerns, and most often only heighten students' anxiety. To counter this situation, I have throughout the past fifteen years developed review sessions based on game models to engage my students and help them repeat term lessons with a lighthearted but effective touch.

Having noticed that games and game-like approaches are used rather minimally in university teaching practices, I turned to the didactic literature

available on the subject in our Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Despite scarce sources on the matter, those few authors who do examine play activities provide ample confirmation of the effectiveness of games – not only for teaching language or for instructing young people but for teaching in general (though they do utter some words of caution too). So before introducing and offering up my own game for reader review, let me provide a brief overview of recent research on the didactic value of games in the following paragraphs.

I was pleased to see that contemporary teachers and researchers still refer to Johan Huizinga and his *Homo Ludens: The Playing Man* or *Man the Player*, a work that influenced my own approach to education years ago. Justin Hodgson (2013, 46) uses Huizinga’s arguments to justify his design of a whole course based on a video game, while Robert J. Blake (2013, 163–64) insists on the importance of gaming environments for learning when he follows Huizinga’s argument that the “deep-seated imperative to play” is embedded in our human nature. Since Huizinga outlined the crucial importance of game-like activities for humans from ancient civilizations to modern-day cultures, I have always considered playing an appropriate activity for the university classroom. Nonetheless, I still relegated it to a secondary role even in language-practice courses. This approach seems to reflect the general situation in our didactics: most authors writing about play activities deal either with younger learners or concentrate on computer games and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) as a supplement to a wider-ranging education. The researchers all agree that the games add to the **pleasure** of and **motivation** for learning. The authors of one of the most recent volumes dedicated to engaging activities in school language classes offer many variations of word games and brand-game formats as “a motivating way to contextualize language learning” based on their association with “fun, relaxation, and pleasure” (Watts and Phillips, 2014).

These same reasons – fun and motivation – are often put forth in favour of educational video games. In this domain, James Paul Gee’s book *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*, which proffers thirty-six learning principles used in digital games that, according to Gee, should exist in any good learning environment, became as influential as Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*. Although Gee’s tome deals mainly with concepts specific to digital games, such as role models, false identities, or command obedience, all researchers promoting game use in teaching point to one characteristic of games that Gee deems to be of paramount importance: A game is always **engaging**, and thus it can “engage in situated and embodied learning,”¹ therefore “transform[ing] language learning experiences”² and contributing to “deep, sustained, and transferable learning.”³

It should not be left unsaid that a few voices do warn against too much play. For example, Jackson, Dempsey, and McNamara question the balance between the efforts necessary for mastering game skills and the learning outcomes,⁴ while Robert J. Blake urges educators implementing games into the

¹ Hodgson (2013, 48)

² Sykes and Reinhardt (2013, 3)

³ Filsecker and Bündgens-Kosten (2012, 50)

⁴ Jackson, Dempsey and McNamara (2012, 115)

curriculum to ask themselves a question: “Are students *learning to play or playing to learn?*”⁵ This question uses the title of an online article by H. C. Arnseth and follows the latter author’s argument. Although these concerns appear more relevant for digital games than for my in-class game-like activities, I, too, have to respond to this question. As I hope to demonstrate in the description of the game below, I give my answer with certainty in alignment with another influential book on games. Much like Prensky⁶, who, with his *Games2train*, teaches serious business content with the help of game-like speed and graphics, I place much greater importance on the content to be learned through the games than on the pleasure they provide. A report from the Summit on Educational Games by the Federation of American Scientists, quoted by Robert J. Blake, lends further evidence to the value and importance of engaging learning activities: “Students only remember 10 percent of what they read; 20 percent of what they hear; 30 percent if they see visuals; 50 percent if they watch someone model something while explaining it; and 90 percent, if they engage in the job themselves, even if only as a simulation or game.”⁷

In this article I will summarize my own experience of conducting reviews for exams in French language courses. The main goal of this undertaking is to encourage language teachers to use ludolinguistics⁸ at least in review sessions by showing that a little extra work is worth the effort. My secondary objective is to engage in the discussion about the use of PowerPoint in the classroom by forwarding a few arguments in its favour.

Since the article is intended as a kind of practical guide for organising a review game, it seems sensitive to introduce the contents of its seven parts in form of an outline with keywords in bold to make it easier to navigate. The reader will find a general description of the game in part 2 and examples of one complete round of it in part 4, while the following questions will be addressed in each part in the following order:

1. What kind of **challenges** do we face in the reviews for final exams?
2. How can a **game** transform a tiresome review into an engaging activity?
3. How do different **support materials** influence the effectiveness of the game?
4. What is the best way to formulate game **questions**?
5. What is the best way to display **answers** and how can PowerPoint help?
6. What kind of **practical tips** can I offer based on my experience?
7. Why is the **game an excellent way** to conduct a review for a final exam?

1. Challenges of reviews for final exams

In final review classes, we often encounter two main challenges: the immense quantity of material to cover and an overall nervousness about the future exam. To review the material for the final exam in a helpful manner usually means to

⁵ Robert J. Blake (2013, 175)

⁶ Prensky (2007)

⁷ Robert J. Blake (2013, 164)

⁸ This term describing play activities in language teaching was coined by Anthony Mollica. See Anthony Mollica, *Ludolinguistica e Glottodidattica* (Guerra-Soleil, 2010).

discuss the format of the exam, to give samples of questions, to offer strategies for dealing with them, and to remind students of possible mistakes or traps. It is difficult to fit all this into a one-hour class, especially at the very end of the semester, when we cannot count on students to practise on exams from previous years or to formulate pertinent questions based on their studies—most of them are too busy with end-of-term tests and assignments.

The task of providing useful strategies for exam preparation is not an easy one either: all the “shoulds” and “musts” we feel we should offer (as in “you should cope with limited time, you must decide how many hours you need to study, you should never give up, etc.”⁹) clearly only add to students’ anxiety and, given in the form of a list, do nothing but overwhelm. Even if phrased as friendly advice or personal experience, these warnings act mainly on the surface of the mind and do not sink deeper without guided experience: students simply do not know *how* to fill these abstract recommendations with content. When, after a few conventional review classes, I recognized the difficulty of this task if I truly wanted to contribute to student success, I decided that a practical activity with some positive emotional value would be a logical solution for the problem.

2. Review as a game

One possible way to provide real-life experience of time management, which can be an issue for students both during the exam and in preparation, is to create a kind of competition. To further create a positive atmosphere and increase students’ motivation in a competition, treats like chocolates offer themselves as a simple but useful solution. So when my conventional review sessions failed to produce the desired results, I began trying out a few different review games— from a simple question lottery to a team competition—all encouraged with various Belgian chocolates, which the class infallibly welcomed with a loud “Wow!”

Yet these initial activities did not work for all students: the games did not address well either the quantity of the material or the students’ varying levels of proficiency in French. Most often, while the best students would answer and win chocolates for themselves or their teams, the rest of the class could not follow. I could see it in their eyes but could not afford to dwell longer on each question. So while these games definitely added some fun to the reviews, they worked mainly for those who would get good marks anyway, leaving the students most in need of review with even more anxiety and despondency, expressed in sighs and desperate looks.

A few years ago I finally developed a format for a final-review game that truly works for everybody. The format closely resembles that of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, whose French title, *Qui veut gagner des millions?*, can be easily transformed into *Qui veut gagner des chocolats?*

Just like the well-known television game, the review game requires a main player, who must answer a series of questions, and an audience, from which the player is selected and which watches the answer progress closely and

⁹ Cf. James L. Clare and G. D. Morison, *Hints on Study and Exam Techniques*, <http://www.casact.org/admissions/syllabus/2016-new/index.cfm?fa=hints>, December 07, 2016.

is ready to participate in questions through the “ask-the-audience” lifeline. The game’s particular purpose in school of course also warrants some differences from the TV show. For instance, a rather frequent change of main players and activities keeps all students on their toes and interested. Let me briefly describe the individual steps of the review game:

1. **The Rules.** I explain the game’s purpose and its rules, reminding students that the questions are formulated as on the exam; I also show the chocolate prizes.
2. **The Fastest-Finger Question.** We run through one question to make sure that everybody understands how the game works, and then we play the first question for real and select the first main player: the one who answered it correctly first.
3. **The Rounds.** The main player has a chance to answer four questions, after which the round is over: the main player receives a chocolate prize, and everyone else in class gets ready to participate in the next round of the fastest-finger question that will provide the next main player. Within an hour it is usually possible to go through about six rounds of four questions each.
4. **The End.** I reward all students with chocolates earned for participation in the game and in the term, remind them that the game will be posted on the course website, and encourage them to practise one round of the game at a time before the exam.

One further change to the rules of the original television game became necessary while playing the game in class for the first time. I had tried to be strict about correct and incorrect answers and to withdraw a first chocolate won in case of an incorrect answer to a following question, as it is done with money in the television game. This did not go well: the whole class almost sang “Oh, no!” when I announced the rule for the first time. I realized immediately that since the point was to review grammar in an enjoyable environment it was better not only to leave all chocolates in the hands of the players but also to help them win more. So now I sometimes even suggest to call on a friend or to use one more “ask-the-audience” lifeline under the pretext that the question is too tricky. The latest game rules thus look like this:¹⁰

¹⁰ The text translates as follows: “The rules of the game: 1. Write your answers to the “fastest-finger” question on your yellow paper – 2. Raise you hand AFTER having written them – 3. If you are the first, you’ll need to answer four questions – 4. If you answer two questions correctly, you’ll get a small chocolate – 5. If you answer all four questions correctly, you’ll get a big chocolate – 6. You can ask the class to help you.” NB: I will not translate question samples: they do not work for English.

Le règlement du jeu :

1. Écrivez vos réponses à la question « qui est le premier » (= *fastest-finger*) sur votre papier jaune.
2. Levez la main **APRÈS** les avoir écrites.
3. Si vous êtes LE PREMIER, vous devrez répondre à quatre questions.

- 4. Si vous répondez bien à deux questions, vous gagnerez un petit chocolat.
- 5. Si vous répondez à toutes les questions, vous gagnerez un grand chocolat.
- 6. Vous pouvez demander à la classe de vous aider.

3. Different support materials: from paper to PowerPoint presentations

It is possible to use different support materials to organize this game. Even in the years when not all classrooms were equipped with computers and projectors, the game worked relatively well. In this case, the rules were written on a poster and the questions printed out and distributed to each student. In the paper version, it is necessary to fit all questions for one round on a single page, because the main player should not see the questions in advance: once the main player for the round is selected, all the students can turn the page and work with the questions, but the main player gets the questions one by one from the instructor. It is also important to write the correct answer on the blackboard afterward, because there are always students who miss oral instructions.

One of the advantages of paper is that it leaves a hard copy with examples in students' hands, which is helpful if we can trust that they marked the answers correctly and added appropriate comments about incorrect answers and possible traps. The use of transparencies adds two more advantages: no time is wasted with writing on the blackboard, and it is also easier to comment on the wrong answers, because the difficulties of the question can be pointed at on the screen in front of everyone. Plus, if an erasable marker is used to indicate correct answers, the transparencies become recyclable.

In classrooms equipped with computers and projectors, one can start the review session by playing a short video with the French opening of *Qui veut gagner des millions?* to set the mood and to facilitate the explanation of the rules.¹¹ Once the students have recognized the prototype of the proposed game, one can proceed to a PowerPoint presentation that greatly eases the flow of the game in comparison with the use of paper and transparencies. Moreover, the use of PowerPoint facilitates the recycling of questions and the changing of content, which helps to constantly improve the quality of the review. Well-prepared PowerPoint slides can also enhance the quality of the presentation with colours and animations. I will give more examples of and explanations for such quality

¹¹ See *Qui veut gagner des millions générique* TV France 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8LFAHkaO30&feature=related>, December 07, 2016.

improvements in part 5. In the following part, I will provide examples of questions that tolerate any support: paper, transparencies, or PowerPoint slides.

4. Examples of questions

The game questions provide the means to discuss the format of the exam and to review the material. There are two main types of questions: fastest-finger questions, used to choose the main player for each round, and actual game questions (most often concerning grammar), answered by the main player or by the class as a lifeline.

In terms of preparation for the final exam, fastest-finger questions serve to review vocabulary learned during the semester. In a language course they can be of two main types: for verbs, reorganizing actions in a logical order and, for nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, rearranging a list of given words according to their meaning—size, value, position, or the like, starting from the biggest, the cheapest, the lowest, etc. Here are two examples, one for each type, for a game in a first-level French course (FREA01).

- Réarrangez ces actions selon leur ordre logique!
 - a) se laver
 - b) s'en aller
 - c) se réveiller
 - d) se lever¹²
- Réarrangez ces adverbes de quantité selon la quantité exprimée en commençant par la plus petite!
 - a) beaucoup
 - b) peu
 - c) trop
 - d) assez¹³

When the students are writing their answers to the fastest-finger question, I usually wait until I see at least three hands, remember in what order they rose, and then collect the pieces of paper with answers from the three fastest students. This is necessary in case the first and the second students get it wrong. In the rare case that all three answers are incorrect, I offer a collective game to the class and make students vote for each question, that is, raise their hands in support of the answer they deem correct. In such a case, I distribute the small chocolates after this round, rather than at the end of class, as they represent a reward for everybody's participation.

The grammar questions are used as a tool to discuss the way in which questions on the final exam will be phrased, to review the main grammar points, and to warn about possible traps. Once the main player has been chosen, I explain the grammar task and the part of the exam to which it corresponds. For example, in the round for the review of pronouns, the player will be managing

¹² The text translates as follows: "Rearrange these actions according to their logical order! a) get up; b) go out; c) wake up; d) get washed/take a shower"

¹³ The text translates as follows: "Rearrange these adverbs of quantity according to the quantities that they represent starting from the smallest! a) much/many; b) little/few; c) too much/many; d) enough"

two types of tasks that correspond to the parts D and E of the final exam. First, I show and read the task in the exact wording of the exam:

- D. Les pronoms personnels. Remplacez les mots soulignés par « y », « en » ou un pronom personnel. Mettez le pronom à la place appropriée. Faites tous les changements ou les accords nécessaires.¹⁴ (10 points)

Then I display the first question with multiple-choice answers:

- 1. Est-ce que le singe a bouffé les bananes?¹⁵
 - A) Il **les** a bouffés
 - B) Il **en** a bouffé
 - C) Il **les** a bouffées

Once the answer is given by the main player, I ask the class why the two other answers are incorrect and remind them of the dangers of forgetting about agreement (A and C) or not paying attention to the article (B and C). Then comes the second question:

- 2. Est-ce que je parle à mon chat de mes problèmes?¹⁶
 - A) J'**en** parle
 - B) Je **lui** parle **des miens**
 - C) Je **lui en** parle

Once the correct answer is given, the class is again invited to explain why in this case the answer A is insufficient and B does not fit this exercise.

After the last question that corresponds to one of the exam exercises, I ask whether students have any particular difficulties with this material. I usually look at the students who did not fare well on grammar tests and invite questions from them; then, depending on the feedback, I briefly review the most difficult points or the general guidelines. For example, in this instance, I could go back to the previous question or to the formulation of the task to remind students that direct object pronouns are identical to definite articles; that indirect pronouns are *lui* and *leur*; that *en* is used to replace nouns with the preposition *de*, the indefinite article, and quantities; and that *y* stands for places and objects with the preposition *à*. After that, we continue with the next task, phrased exactly as on the future exam:

- E. Les autres pronoms. Remplissez les blancs. Utilisez les pronoms possessifs, démonstratifs, interrogatifs. ¹⁷(10 points)

Then follow the question and its possible answers:

- 3. Je ne prends pas d'autres médicaments que _____ qu'on m'a prescrits.¹⁸

¹⁴ The text translates as follows: "D. Personal pronouns. Replace the underlined words by "y", "en" or a personal pronoun. Put the pronoun into a proper place. Make all necessary changes and agreements."

¹⁵ The question translates as follows: "Did the monkey devour the bananas?" - the correct answer translates "He devoured them"

¹⁶ The question translates as follows: "Do I talk to my cat about my problems?" - the correct answer translates "I talk to him about them"

¹⁷ The text translates as follows: "E. Other pronouns. Fill in the blanks. Use possessive, demonstrative, and interrogative pronouns."

¹⁸ The correct answer translates as follows: "I do not take any other pills than those that was prescribed"

- A) ce
- B) ceux-ci
- C) ceux

This, too, is followed by an in-class discussion and a warning about the possible confusion of *ce* and *ceux* (A and C) and a brief reminder about the use of *-ci* and *-là* (B) with demonstratives. Finally comes the last question for this player:

- 4. - Est-ce que c'est ta valise?
 - Oui, c'est _____.¹⁹
 - A) celle-là
 - B) quelle
 - C) la mienne

Once the main player gets the chocolate prize and applause, I go back to the original task phrase and talk with the class about particular difficulties they might have with these pronouns. If there are no burning questions, I will simply remind them of the agreement of gender and number with those of the antecedent using question 4 and replacing *ta valise* with *ton sac* and *tes affaires*.

At the end I always remind my students that despite the multiple-choice format of the review game, the final exam does not offer various answer options, and that I am offering these choices here only to explain common errors, often using incorrect answers from students in previous years.

5. Examples of answer displays²⁰: Custom animation

The most important aspect of the game is to make sure that all students get the correct answer to each question and understand why the other answers are unacceptable. Unlike paper and transparencies, PowerPoint offers many opportunities for the effective presentation of answers. For example, for comments and warnings about incorrect answers I use call-outs that gradually appear on the PowerPoint slide²¹. In the case of the first question of the round described above, animations would appear in this order:

¹⁹ The correct answer translates as follows: "Is it your suitcase?" - "Yes, it is mine"

²⁰ The pictures below illustrate various techniques for displaying answers and other useful information, the translation of the French text, which contains mostly examples understandable for an English speaker, is therefore unnecessary.

²¹ In terms used by Sophie Dufour and Chantal Parpette in their article on the use of PowerPoint presentations in university courses (2014, 25), the slide itself represents "the object of the explanations" while the call-outs correspond to "the extracts of the explanations themselves." I believe that such use of the call-outs solves the problem pointed out by Dufour and Parpette because they do not distract students' attention from oral explanations, as slides filled with longer explanatory extracts would do (2014, 28), but on the contrary draw the attention to the main points.

Pronoms

- 1. Le singe a bouffé les bananes!
- A) Il **les** a bouffés = m.pl.
- B) Il **en** a bouffé Remplace « des bananes »
- C) Il **les** a bouffées = f.pl.

Remplace « les bananes »

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1. smiley indicating the correct answer
2. call-out for “les” in C
3. call-out for “en” in B
4. call-out for “-es” in C
5. call-out for “-s” in A

In the fastest-finger questions, the screen may not only display the correct order of the words but also some images that augment the visual salience²² of the material and thus reinforce the memorising of vocabulary. The pictures below show the same slide on which the answers appear in the correct order and with illustrations, right after the main player is selected.


Qui est le premier?


- Réarrangez ces animaux selon leur taille en commençant par le plus **petit!**
- a) une vache
- b) un lapin
- c) un cochon


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Qui est le premier?

- Réarrangez ces animaux selon leur taille en commençant par le plus **petit!**
- a) une vache
- b) un lapin
- c) un cochon

b


c


a


In actual game questions, several explanations can be added to the answers; they can explain the quantity of points lost or gained or even provide brief definitions of complex concepts, as in the following slides taken from a course on commercial French (FREB18):

Vocabulaire : **Synonyme**

Une valeur mobilière

😊	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Un titre	1 point
	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Une action	0,5 point
	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Une sécurité	0

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Qui est le premier? (transports)

Réarrangez ces formules selon les frais du fournisseur en commençant par la plus coûteuse!

A	<input type="checkbox"/> a) port payé	Le fournisseur paie tout
C	<input type="checkbox"/> b) port dû	Le client (acheteur) paie tout
B	<input type="checkbox"/> c) FOB	Franco bord (free on board)

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²² The importance of the salience of the material to be learned is discussed by Maria Dakowska in *In Search of Processes of Language Use in Foreign Language Didactics* (2014, 293)

If the explanations are too bulky to fit the 6 x 6 PowerPoint rule,²³ one can use another slide to illustrate the point. I usually indicate the correct answer with a smiley and change the background colour for the explanatory slide to show that it is not part of the game:

The image shows two adjacent PowerPoint slides. The left slide has a dark blue background and is titled 'Question de compréhension'. It contains a question: 'Quelle réduction est accordée au client qui paie au comptant ?' and four multiple-choice options: '1 Escompte', '2 Ristourne', '3 Remise', and '4 Rabais'. A yellow smiley face is next to option 1. The right slide has a green background and is titled 'p.109 + étymologie'. It provides definitions for each option: '1 Escompte = quand on paie au comptant = ex (=out) + (argent) comptant', '2 Ristourne = un remboursement retourné au client (à la fin de l'année)', '3 Remise = le prix est remis (reconsidéré) pour quantité, service etc.', and '4 Rabais = le prix est abaissé à cause d'un défaut (ou hors-saison)'. Both slides have a decorative graphic of vertical lines in the top-left corner and a small number in the bottom-right corner (26 and 27 respectively).

The most important part, however, is to choose the multiple-choice answers wisely. Each one should serve a particular purpose: to illustrate a range of grammatical or lexical phenomena,²⁴ to point to major difficulties, or to reveal possible confusions. For this reason, I never offer simply wrong or impossible answers—they would not have any explanatory force and might even lead to an unconscious memorisation of mistakes.

6. Practical advice plus templates, clickers, and natural pauses

To run the game smoothly, it is important to do a few things in advance:

- a) assign students vocabulary review as homework—it is a smaller task than having to review the entire course material, so there is more probability they will do it, especially if one mentions that it will be important to win chocolates;
- b) post the format of the final exam on the course website and announce that the final and VERY important review will take place in the last class;
- c) buy some Belgian or Swiss chocolates of different sizes—the smaller ones as encouragement prizes and the bigger ones as main prizes: so about six big chocolates and enough small chocolates for each student in the class, plus about ten more for intermediate prizes and other unexpected encouragement needs;
- d) cut enough pieces of colour paper, 2" x 2", to distribute to all students—they will be necessary to jot down the answers to the fastest-finger questions and to draw attention to the rules. They should be small to be

²³ A well-designed and readable slide contains no more than six lines, with no more than six words in each line.

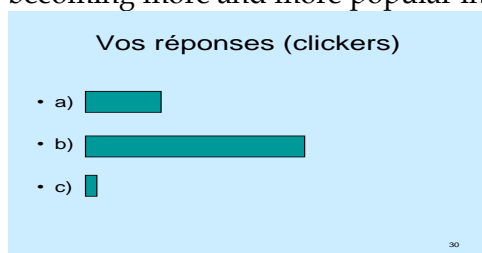
²⁴ For example, the pronouns *celle/ quelle/ mienne*, offered as answers for the fourth question in 4, give examples of all types of pronouns—demonstrative/interrogative/possessive—required for the reviewed exercise; the lexical items in the slide above offer the whole range of synonyms for the term *discount*.

easy to collect and coloured to be easy to spot and to be referred to as “the yellow paper,” for example.

The Internet offers a lot of help for those who want to create classroom activities, including sites that provide templates for all sorts of games. Yet in my experience readymade templates have rarely helped. For example, the template for *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* would force me to offer four possible answers for each question. This is undesirable in terms of time management, both in slide preparation and in classroom timing, and also unjustified in terms of possible mistakes worthy of discussion; usually two are enough to exemplify reasonable errors. My own simple PowerPoint slides offer more flexibility and thus suit the needs of the game better.

After a few games, I also realised that there is no need to economise each minute “wasted” on the technical needs of the game. At first, I had students help me collect pieces of paper with answers and bring chocolates to the winners to save a few seconds and to be able to do more rounds of the game: the idea was ill-advised. In fact, the natural pauses that occur when I walk toward the winner to present the chocolate, for example, actually allow students to breathe: to write down the correct answer still displayed on the screen, to clap, or to simply recover briefly from the quite intense tempo of the game. It appears necessary to give students some room for just breathing in any class, but during a final review, this is even more the case because of the quantity of the material covered: it is better to combine two exam exercises in one round to be able to go through all of them than to rush through more rounds without having enough time to dwell on the main points and to give students a few seconds to digest the information.

Finally, to improve students’ participation, I always encourage as many “ask-the-audience” situations as possible, because they invite the whole class to become actively involved in the game. For this purpose, clickers, which are becoming more and more popular in university classrooms, work very well.



Each student presses the letter corresponding to the answer chosen as correct, and we can see the distribution of choices on the screen.

If a class is equipped with clickers and it is essential with a particular question that the majority of the class understands it well, this same game can be conducted without the main player. In the same way, slides inspired by the game can prove very useful in everyday teaching practice, especially for classes that use clickers.

7. Conclusion

The described game certainly offers a solution to the review challenges outlined in 1. It allows the discussion of all main grammar points in the very format of the future exam and shows many possible traps in practice. Thus the game solves the problem of an enormous quantity of material through the careful choice of questions and answers, which include typical errors from previous years. Moreover, this type of review allows including game activities into

university courses, which usually do not have any room for such activities because of a tight schedule. I believe that the time deficit is the main reason for the lack of attention to ludolinguistics in the higher education: for example, the most recent volumes regrouping publications concerning didactics in higher education contain only a few articles on game-like activities²⁵ and even though there are many publications that prompt “innovative teaching and approaches to student learning”²⁶, very few of them suggest games, and even fewer professors ever have a chance to try games in the classroom²⁷.

However, my review game has always been time efficient. Since each student tries to choose the right answer while the main player is taking the time to decide, all students become more aware of grammatical dangers after seeing themselves falling into well-designed traps during the game. The game also helps students maintain their highest level of attention during the review, not only because it offers a diversity of activities but also because everybody can keep up with the tempo thanks to natural pauses and well-displayed information.

The game also solves the problem of typical exam anxiety by creating a positive atmosphere of mild competition, by offering challenging questions that provoke a desire to try and succeed, and by offering a sweet reward for participation. It also offers an encouragement for everybody when the chocolates are distributed at the end. It is a great pleasure to see the students positively reacting in class – “Yes!”, “I knew it!”, “Bien sûr!” – and leaving class inspired and willing to try the game again at home. The data from surveys that I conduct during the final test in the commercial French course confirm the effectiveness of the review game: no one has ever answered “no” to the question whether the final game helped remember the material on the test.

From this point of view, the value of a well-prepared PowerPoint presentation is priceless. Of course, it also contributes to the smooth flow of the game and to better timing, as well as to the quantity and quality of the reviewed material. Most of all, however, it helps by encouraging every student to revisit the game posted on the course website. My parting words usually are: “See, if you review only one round a day, and one round takes only five minutes – n’est-ce pas? – and then spend a little more time to review the corresponding

²⁵ The collection of articles on *Emerging Issues in Smart Learning* has only two articles on game-based learning activities – one describing their benefits for listening and speaking, the other for working memory capacity. The Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Technology Enhanced Learning in Lyon (*Adaptive and Adaptable Learning*, 2016) contain only three presentations dealing with games but only one of them deals with the game activities in the classroom, while two other treat game-based exercises.

²⁶ Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan “A Short History of Adaptation Studies in the Classroom” in *Teaching Adaptations* (edited by Deborah Cartmell) New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 10.

²⁷ Most of the articles in the *Emerging technologies for the classroom: a learning sciences perspective* (2013) actually describe educational games in virtual worlds and not in the classroom.

grammar in the textbook, you'll do great!" "Oui, ça va! Merci! C'est promis!", comes the answer.

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