

**DEVELOPING THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE WITH THE  
ENGLISH CLASS UTILIZING THE INTERACTIVE METHOD *JEOPARDY!*  
DURING THE ROUND-UP LESSON IN THE TWELVE-GRADE**

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**Abstract.** In this article, we analyze the effectiveness of implementing an American television game show, *Jeopardy!* into our round-up lessons. We used our twelve-grade class as an example, and utilized a survey afterwards to gather feedback from our students. Our hypothesis was that students would find *Jeopardy!* to be a fun, interactive game that served as an effective summary of the unit. Moreover, the game would reduce stress in the classroom, and produce a positive, unifying environment in which students would feel more comfortable with their communication. The survey and our experience showed that the students enjoyed the lesson, and would be useful to implement again with the twelve grade, as well in other classes.

**Keywords:** *Jeopardy!*, communication, round-up, skill, stress, game etc.

**DEZVOLTAREA COMPETENȚEI COMUNICATIVE LA ORELE DE  
ENGLEZĂ PRIN UTILIZAREA METODEI INTERACTIVE *JEOPARDY!* ÎN  
TIMPUL LECȚIEI DE RECAPITULARE ÎN CLASA A DOUĂSPREZECEA**

**Rezumat.** În acest articol noi analizăm eficiența utilizării jocului American televizat, *Jeopardy!* la lecția noastră de round-up. Am implementat jocul în clasa 12-a ca exemplu, iar mai apoi în urma unui chestionar am obținut feedback-ul de la elevii noștri. Ipoteza noastră a fost că elevii vor descoperi *Jeopardy!* ca o joacă distractivă și interactivă care va servi drept sumar al unității. Mai mult decât atât, joaca va reduce stresul în clasă și va produce un mediu pozitiv, unificator în care elevii se vor simți mai confortabil vizavi de comunicarea lor. Chestionarul și experiența noastră a demonstrat că elevilor le-a plăcut lecția și va fi folositor să-l mai implementăm și la alte lecții în clasa 12-a, cât și la alte clase.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Jeopardy!*, comunicare, recapitulare, abilitate, stres, joc etc.

## **I. Introduction**

Round-ups are some of the most important lessons that a teacher can use throughout the school year. It is a powerful tool that allows teachers to successfully review material that has been learned throughout the previous unit. This has two distinct advantages; it allows the teacher to focus student attention on the most pertinent information that the unit has had to offer, and to improve student performance on examinations. By creating a sufficient base of knowledge using summarization, the round up lesson gives students the opportunity not only to reinforce what they have learned, but to expand upon it as well in the future.

While learning a secondary language, one of the most important tasks for the student is to develop their communication skills. When a native language speaker is

talking, they do not need to think about the syntax of their speech or the vocabulary necessary to communicate their thoughts – it is done immediately. This skill does not come easily to the student. It can take years of practice. As such, whenever possible, communication must be stressed to the student. If the learner can express their thoughts in conversation, it will be easier for them to approach different tasks, such as reading, writing, direct translation, and listening. The student, however, may be nervous to speak aloud in class, and it may be difficult to convince them to participate willingly. Bridging this divide between student and teacher is one of the most important tasks in the classroom. If successful, the student will be eager to improve their language skills and to express their ideas using foreign concepts that were previously unknown to them.

## **II. Interactive games within round-up lessons**

Our classroom offers a unique opportunity for Moldovan students; it includes two teachers, one with an experienced background in Moldovan teaching techniques for Secondary English speakers, while the other is a native English speaker. Matthew Berger is a Peace Corps volunteer from the United States, with experience teaching phonetics to developing English speakers. It was our idea to use the American television game show *Jeopardy!* to our 12<sup>th</sup> grade English students, after the first unit from the textbook, *Personal Culture*. We adapted *Jeopardy!* using an interactive PowerPoint presentation to review the material from the first unit.

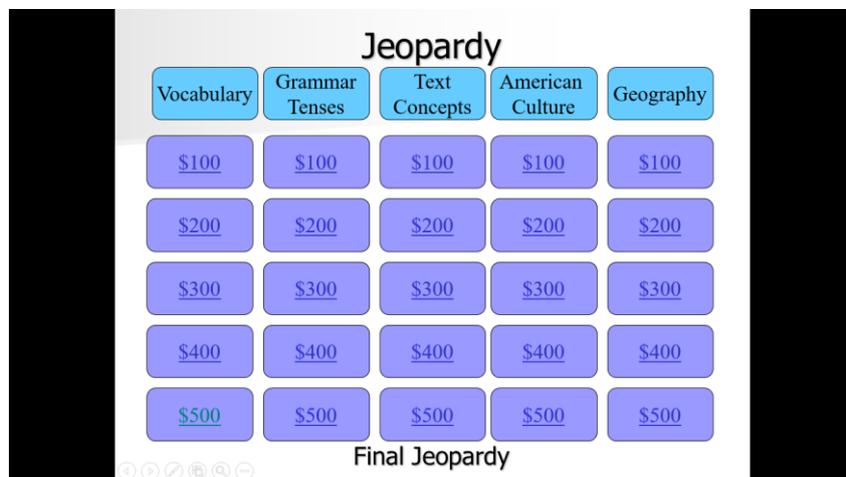
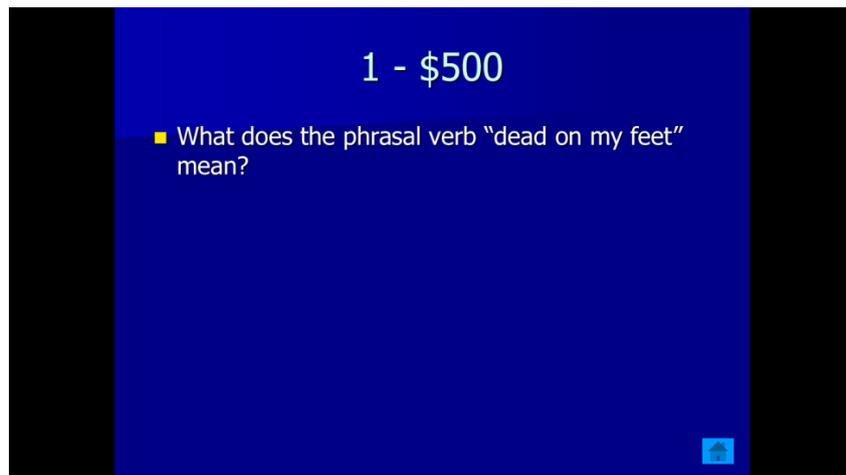
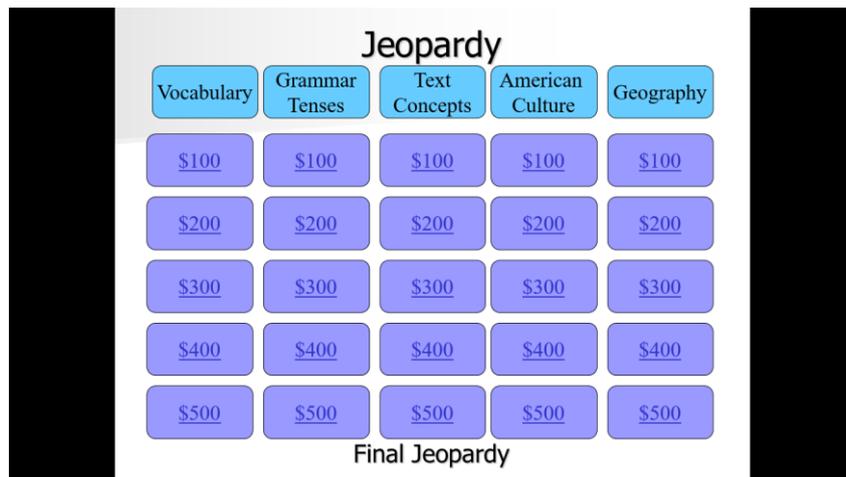
*Jeopardy!* was created by Merv Griffin in 1964, and has been broadcasted for decades on the NBC network, with new episodes airing weekly. It is a staple of American culture and wildly popular with the American public. For years, Americans have sat in their living rooms and tackled every part of popular culture throughout both the US and the world; books, movies, music, historical facts, science, geography, etc. For the contestants, there is singular focus to win the game – answer as many questions correctly as possible to earn more money than the other players. The game is formatted using 30 questions: there are 6 categories, with 5 questions in each category. Each question is assigned a different value, with intervals of \$100, from \$100 to \$500. The questions that are worth less in dollars are easier to answer, and increase with difficulty as the value increases. For example, a \$100 question in our twelve-grade classroom asked, “What is the thesis of an essay?” A \$500 question asked our students to name each of the 5 parts to a story as defined by the textbook. The \$500 question is more complex and demands complete fluency of the lesson, while the first question only asks about a singular concept. The contestants only have 10 seconds to answer the questions, though for our students, we allowed them 20 or 30 seconds to respond depending on the difficulty of the questions.

Generally, the game is played by individual contestants. However, in terms of the classroom, the students are separated into groups, and take turns answering the questions. The TV show demands that the contestants must rush to answer the question first. This

would not work in a classroom setting and would cause chaos. The group setting encourages students to work together, and allows stronger students to help those who may need help, as it is in their interest to do so to win the game. For an incorrect response, the TV show would take away the value of a question for an incorrect response. We chose not to include this rule, because we did not want to discourage students from attempting to answer a question. In a test environment, an incorrect answer will not take away from a student's score. There is no negative score on a test. For instance, you cannot score a -2 on a test, whereas in *Jeopardy!* the contestant may easily fall thousands of dollars below 0.

If a group answers incorrectly, the other groups may have an opportunity to steal the question without using their turn. Typically, this is done to see if either a group of students are struggling with the question or the entire class. If the entire class is unable to answer, then the teacher may reevaluate whether the question itself was difficult to understand, or if they need to administer the material from the lesson more effectively. After every question has been answered, the scores are tallied, and the game moves into its final round, called Final Jeopardy. The contestants must bet a certain amount of their score. The exact amount is at their own choosing. Whereas each question during the first part of the game is oral, this question is answered by every group by writing silently. The groups then present their answers for grading. Each correct answer wins double the amount betted, whereas an incorrect answer loses the amount betted (this is the only case where losing money occurs).

So why does *Jeopardy!* work as a round-up lesson, in comparison to other traditional methods? The first and foremost reason involves its structure; the lesson is a game, and thus creates a competitive setting. This is useful for the teacher because winning a game is a strong motivator for students. Students are naturally competitive with each other, especially in the early adolescent ages [4]. By playing *Jeopardy!* in an educational context, a teacher can redirect competitive energy in a positive, productive way [2]. The teacher is a neutral arbitrator whom students look up to. If done correctly, the competition is deemed to be fair for the students and prevents arguments that other games may cause. Another point to consider is the strategic decisions needed to win *Jeopardy!* As there are different dollar values for each question, the students must use math and develop strategies to earn as many points as possible. If your group cannot confidently answer each of the \$500 questions, it is pointless to choose it and risk another team being able to win the money from that question using their steal. These strategic decisions exercise a different part of their brains than language learning does, which is inherently useful. Balanced learning can cause more advanced development in unrelated subjects [5].



FIGURES 1.1, 1.2, 1.3: Slides from the PowerPoint presentation used to play Jeopardy! 1.1 is the main screen and includes links to each of the questions. Clicking on Vocabulary, \$500, will lead to 1.2, where the student will answer the question. Afterwards, the icon on the bottom right hand of the screen leads back to the title screen. As seen in 1.3, Vocabulary, \$500, is now colored in, indicating to the student that this question has been answered. There are templates of Jeopardy! available on the Internet for other teachers to use.

An important aspect of playing *Jeopardy!* is that it is fun for students! We created a poll for our twelfth-grade students after playing the game, and we received XX responses. The first question asked the students to rate their enjoyment of *Jeopardy!* from a scale of 1-5. From the 16 responses we received, the average score was 4.6, indicating a

general sense of satisfaction. Our follow up questions after the poll asked, “What specifically did you enjoy about the game?” and “Are there any improvements that you would suggest for *Jeopardy!*” The poll was done through Survey Monkey and it was stressed to the students that the poll was anonymous to ensure as many honest responses as possible. From the longer form responses, there were several consensuses that could be drawn. The students enjoyed having a new activity that was technologically interactive using the Smartboard. Though American money was not used, the usage of a point system with money was thought to be creative and motivating. Moreover, our game included questions about American culture and geography as well. The students liked the connections between American and Moldovan culture, and testing how much they knew about where their new teacher had come from.

## **Conclusions**

What’s important to take away from this game is not only how much the students enjoyed it, or how competition is an effective use of student energy. Throughout the game, the students were too motivated to win and to prove their knowledge to be stressed about their communication skills. Brothy [1] explains that, “.... In general, classroom motivation covers three categories of classroom motivation: state, trait, and intrinsic. Trait motivation describes the student’s nature to learn. It is part of their inherit character to learn. Intrinsic motivation is a little different. This category of motivation describes the student who participates in a learning activity for the enjoyment of the experience, not for the purpose of learning. The category that this review examines is state motivation. Think of state motivation as the student’s state of mind of the student when he or she walks into the classroom. Does their state allow them to engage in the class’s activities for the purpose of “acquiring the knowledge or mastering the skill the activity was designed to teach?” They were eager to share what they knew, and they were not stressed that the game would reflect their English language skills. This is incredibly important for their development. It has been shown that decreasing stress for the student is paramount for breaking learning barriers [3]. If a student is embarrassed to speak in their new language, they are not open to learning new concepts. *Jeopardy!* was effective in creating a friendly, comfortable setting in the classroom that motivated students that shared their knowledge.

Moreover, *Jeopardy!* forms an opportunity for the teacher to give students clear, effective, and immediate feedback. Before taking a test, honest, immediate feedback is imperative for the student. The test will be taken the lesson immediately following the round-up lesson, so time management is necessary as well. By giving different categories for the students, they can see their strengths and weaknesses for the given unit. Even if they do not choose a certain category while they play *Jeopardy!* the student may respond to themselves; *oh, I was not confident in my text concepts, I must read about story*

*structures tonight*. If a group struggles to win lots of money, it will be a wake-up call for them that they need reevaluate how they are learning the lesson. On the other side, if a group wins and finds they can answer nearly every question, they can see that the test is not to be feared.

Also, feedback with foreign languages is integral towards development. If a student is struggling with perfect tenses in English, they must not repeat their mistakes. Verb usage comes naturally to native speakers, yet have more weight in a sentence than any other part of the sentence. The student that says that, “Tom travelled to the zoo today,” rather than, “Tom has travelled to the zoo today,” can confuse a native English speaker about when exactly Tom was at the zoo. Repeating that mistake can be harmful for the English student, and must be immediately fixed each time. This holds true for different vocabulary words, listening abilities, and writing. Yet being corrected immediately is an uncomfortable process for the student. It is often done in front of the class, and can cause students to shy away from participating in class. With *Jeopardy!* though, the student is getting feedback along with the entire class, and the mistake is not individualized. The mistake is the group’s mistake, and there is no ostracizing that causes the student to retreat. This is one of the biggest advantages of *Jeopardy!*: the ability to provide feedback in a comfortable setting, while encouraging the student to participate to win the competition.

This is what occurred during our round-up lesson with *Jeopardy!* We had great success in getting our students to speak and participate with the game. In the future, we hope to further develop interactive methods to help our students speak more in class. The key, is to provide a stress-free environment in which students feel empowered to share their thoughts and knowledge. As one student in the survey stated, the game introduced “team spirit development,” which is encouraging, as this student felt the game united them through competition rather dividing them into winners and losers. In conclusion, using the game *Jeopardy!* is highly effective as a round-up lesson, and was successful in getting students to speak while giving them the clear feedback needed to prepare them for a test.

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