Yes, laughter is good for us! Apparently “it increases the secretion of hormones, which in turn increases oxygenation of the blood, relaxes the arteries, speeds up the heart, decreases blood pressure, which has a positive effect on all cardio-vascular and respiratory elements as well as overall increasing the immune system response!”

Well apart from all that of course it helps us along with the task at hand especially when we’re in the classroom! So here are a few more ideas to help us to motivate both adults and children and help them to have a good laugh while learning to read and write their own language!

The following games were used during adult literacy workshops in the Seimat language held on Patexux, Lau and Pihon Islands 2006-8. They have also been used by the elementary teachers in the Seimat elementary schools. Try them out in your own language and adapt them if necessary!

Game no.1 is lead by the teacher at the front of the class. In Game nos. 2 and 3 the students are divided into groups and after the teacher’s initial explanation each group continues to play by itself. The teacher’s role becomes one of time-keeper, listener, helper and encourager. The students help each other to learn and also correct each other where necessary.
1) Noughts and crosses

Materials: Blackboard and chalk

No. of players: 2+

How to play:

The class is divided into teams. Team A uses the nought (O) and team B uses the cross (X). Then the teacher draws a grid and fill each space with a word or phrase. For example, to practice question words, the teacher might write this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>what</th>
<th>how</th>
<th>when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>when</td>
<td>why</td>
<td>how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how</td>
<td>what</td>
<td>why</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Team A chooses one of the squares and one of the team has to make a sentence or question with the word or phrase in that square. If they succeed they put an O on that square. Team B tries to do the same with another square. If successful they put a cross on the square. The first team to get a straight line of three noughts or crosses (either horizontally, vertically or diagonally) wins the game.

An extension of this oral activity would be for teams to write each of their sentences on the blackboard.

(Taken from: Teaching and Learning Grammar - J. Harmer (1992) Cambridge: Longman.)

2) Snatch

Materials: A game pack consists of about 150 letters based on a rough frequency count. Print out the letters from the computer and then cut out all the individual letters. Keep in a zip-lock bag with a score pad and pen. If there is no paper, we record the scores in the sand.
**No. of players:** 2 +

**How to play:** This is based on the English Word Game “Snatch”

Place all the letters face down in the centre. Each player takes turns to turn over one letter until a word can be made. The player who sees and says the word out loud first then takes it and puts it in front of him/her where it can be seen by all players. Keep turning the letters in turn. From now any player can make new words from the letters in the centre and snatch words from opponents by adding one or more letters. So the word CAT might become a player’s word CART which might then become another player’s word TRACK. Play on until all the letters have been turned and all the players agree to stop playing and start scoring.

**Rules:**
- All words must have 3 or more letters.
- Players can snatch a word at ANY time during play.
- You can add to your own words.
- If 2 players shout out words at the same time, the longest word wins. Add as many letters as you like but use ALL the letters of the word you are snatching. You must change the meaning of the word (You can’t just pluralise or change tense).
- Words must be lengthened not just rearranged.
- No names and no slang

**Scoring:**
The first 3 letters of a word score 1 point, subsequent letters score 1 point each eg. HAT=1 point, THA-N=2 points, CHA-NT=3 points; SNA-TCH=4 points.

3) **Pick-up-2 (Memory Game)**

This activity can be used for learning, testing or revising different grammatical features or lexical items in the language:

One interesting characteristic of the Seimat language is that there are 20 noun classifiers (discovered to date). The classifier may be for either a group of nouns (tel seilon=one person; ‘tel’ is used with any kind of person) or an individual noun (tehot ah=one fire). The pick-up-2 memory game is ideal for matching a noun correctly with its classifier.
**Materials:** One pack of cards (30-40) for each group

**No. of players:** 1-4

**How to Play:**

Place all the cards face down in the centre. Player no.1 turns over 2 cards and reads out each word as it is revealed. If a noun classifier correctly matches the noun, the player keeps them for him/herself and earns one point (for the pair). He can then play again.

If 2 nouns or 2 classifiers or 2 non-matching classifier and noun are turned over, the player turns the cards face down again in the same place so that all players can remember their location. Player no. 2 then turns over 2 cards. Each player then takes his turn, doing the same thing until all the cards have been correctly matched and taken by a player. The winner is the one with the most points.

The same game can be used to learn / revise / re-enforce lessons on adjectives, prepositions and verbs by making sets of cards of **opposites:**

**Verbal opposites**

- stand/ sit
- open/ close
- come/ go
- start/ stop
- laugh/ cry
- float/ sink
- start/ finish

**Adjectival opposites:**

- shallow/ deep
- black/ white
- thin/ fat
- wide/ narrow
- tall/ short
- heavy/ light
- hard/ soft

**Prepositional opposites:**

- inside/ outside
- in front of/ behind
- above/ below
- close to/ far away
- on/ under
There may be other characteristics of your particular language that this activity would work for or could be adapted to! For example contrasting verbal endings, 1pSing/ 1pPlural, affixes or inalienable nouns.

Theresa Wilson and Beata Wozna work with the Seimat people of the Ninigo Islands, a small group of coral atolls. They are 250km north of Wewak, which is on the Northern coast of Papua New Guinea.

This material was presented at a seminar in Ukaruampa in which we did these games and others contained in the earlier article “Can learning be fun?” Volume 40:2 October 2005.

You don’t stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing!