



## Ludic Language Pedagogy Special Issue Article: The Ludic You Love

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# Around the World: A Basketball-Inspired Language Game

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### Item Details

#### Keywords:

Young Learners  
Adaptability  
Board Game  
GBL  
PPP  
TPR  
CLT

### Key points

- **Name of ludic object:** Around the World
  - **Type/genre/theme:** Board game
  - **Intended audience age** 🧑: Elementary School Students
  - **Intended audience proficiency** 🗣️: A1 to A2
  - **Typical time to play** ⏳: 5-10 Minutes
  - **Number of players** 👥: 2-4 In pairs or groups
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### Microblog synopsis

*Around the World* is a basketball inspired language game that is fun and engaging for young learners. Its versatility and adaptability allow for it to be utilized to teach many language skills and forms using a plethora of different language teaching methodologies.

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# 1. The Game

## 1.1 Origins

The game takes inspiration from the *Around the World* basketball drill (explained [here](#)), hence the name of my game is one in the same. Depending on the linguistic or pedagogic focus or study, I would change the name of the game to suit the learning objective, such as, *Emotions Around the World* or *Summer Vacation Around the World*. As a basketball player myself, I thought it was really fun to modify the rules of the drill to fit the classroom, and have really enjoyed using it in the classroom.

## 1.2 Components and Gameplay

To run this game the only essential component is the gameboard (See Figure 1). The board game's start and finish point are one in the same. In this version of the game students were able to choose which way they wanted to start their journey around the world.

**Figure 1**

*The board for the Emotions Around the World iteration of the game.*



To start, students play rock, paper scissors (Janken in Japanese). The winner then proceeds to move their eraser (or place marker) to the first square in either direction. The loser of the round then asks them a question. Using Figure 1, if the winner had decided to place their marker on the "good" space, the loser would ask the winner "how are you?" and the winner would respond with, "I'm good" and the corresponding gesture they had learned. If the winner answers correctly, the marker stays, if incorrectly, the marker is moved back to its previous position. This process is then repeated until one of the players makes it around the world and back to the start/finish point.

## 1.3 Overall Experience

Overall this game is a lot of fun, especially for elementary school students where the magic of Janken (Rock Paper Scissors) is still very much alive. This sense of enjoyment appears to stem from the intentional pairing of the game board with Janken, as each element reinforces the other. The board provides a clear sense of progression and purpose, while frequent Janken interactions introduce unpredictability and excitement. One of the reasons I think this game has been so successful is because there are many battles (the Janken between rounds) to win the war (completing the journey around the world). The game is very replayable in the sense that it is easily adaptable. By changing the board it can be played again and again, to introduce or practice grammar, vocabulary, and can even be used as an icebreaker activity. However, without adapting the board, the game does lack replayability.

## 2. The Language

### 2.1 Accuracy, Relevance, and Appropriateness

*Around the World* was made with language teaching and learning in mind. It, like its inspiration from the basketball drill, is just that, a fun drill for language practice. Just as the spots on the court are decided at the beginning of the game, the language being practiced is decided by the instructor and the game board they create. As a result, the language used can be accurate, relevant, and appropriate depending on the instructor's goal(s). *Around the World* is a game that offers primarily speaking and listening practice, and to a small extent reading practice depending on the game board. Most recently, I used this game as an [Icebreaker for college students](#). The language was used realistically and authentically as they got to know one another and discuss their summer vacation. When I used this game with elementary school students I used it to focus on language systems such as vocabulary, grammar, and simple sentence structures. For vocabulary practice, I used pictures of target vocabulary words as the spaces on the board. For grammar, I used simple past questions about summer vacation, and to practice simple sentence structures I had them ask different questions to practice structures like "How are you?" and "do you like..." as well as their corresponding responses. Finally, the game was appropriate and accessible to the students. Through *Around the World*, they were able to learn and practice many of the vocabulary words, sentence structures, and grammar set out in the elementary school English curriculum of Chiba Prefecture, Japan. Engagement was observed through active participation, evident enthusiasm, willingness to respond, and sustained interaction during the game.

## 3. Pedagogy

### 3.1 Methods

*Around the World*, is at its heart, a pedagogical game and falls under the umbrella of Game-based Learning (GBL), which is defined as an instructional approach that uses games to support learning and instructional goals (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015). The game and its board are template like in nature and as a result they can be adapted to fit instructor goals and student needs. Because of this flexibility, there aren't many limits to what can be taught with the game.

As shown in Spano, York, deHaan, and Bard (2021), it is possible for one game to utilize several different teaching methodologies. I believe that *Around the World* is also one of these games, because of its adaptability. I myself have used this game with Presentation Practice Production (PPP), Total Physical Response (TPR) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). For PPP I presented grammar, drilled vocabulary/grammar, and had students play the game for production. For TPR, I had students do gestures along with the target vocabulary/simple structures. Under CLT, I used it as an [icebreaker activity in the college classroom](#) to facilitate

conversation between students. Those are just some of the methods I used along with this game, and with other modifications/adaptions, there's no telling what other methodologies could be used as well.

### 3.2 Teacher Advice

- While the game is very adaptable and can be used to teach many language skills and forms, replayability without teacher adaptation is lacking.
- The game is geared towards elementary school students, and that is where it has had the bulk of its success.
- It doesn't have to be primarily a speaking and listening activity. You can change each space into a writing prompt and have them write something instead.

## 4. Conclusion

*Around the World* is a versatile, engaging, and highly adaptable classroom game that blends fun with meaningful language practice. Whether it's used to practice vocabulary, grammar, or to spark conversations it offers students a fun and engaging way to interact with the target language. While its replayability depends on thoughtful teacher adaptation, its flexibility makes it a valuable tool for any teacher to have in their toolkit.

## References

- Plass, J. L., Homer, B. D., & Kinzer, C. K. (2015). Foundations of game-based learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 50(4), 258-283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2015.1122533>
- Spano, F., York, J., deHaan, J., Bard, R. (2021). One game, many approaches: How teachers can use a single game with any teaching methodology. *Ludic Language Pedagogy*, 3, 153-195. [https://doi.org/10.55853/llp\\_v3Pg8](https://doi.org/10.55853/llp_v3Pg8)