Functional Skills Criteria for Literacy.
How the Buddenbuk type games can help.

Introduction:
Making implicit knowledge Explicit:
In the document "National Literacy Strategy. Grammar for Writing" DfEE Sept. 2000 the authors say in the Introduction:
"All pupils have extensive grammatical knowledge. Much of this is implicit, but they are able to generalise and improvise from this knowledge. Teaching which focuses on grammar helps to make this knowledge explicit, extend children's range and develop more confident and versatile language use.
"...the purpose of teaching grammar...is about making children aware of key grammatical principles and their effects, to increase the range of choices open to them when they write."
This is equally true of adults.
However, teaching grammar in an analytical way takes time and commitment from teacher and learner. It involves introducing new vocabularies and exercises that may not feel at all relevant to the learner. Within a limited time frame it is important to draw out the learning from the activity, rather than teach rules and then find ways to apply them.
I believe these interactive games help to make explicit the implicit knowledge which learners have about grammar. In Literacy teaching, much of the knowledge learners bring is based on spoken language, and through the process of these games they proceed from generating a spoken sentence, checking that it is understood, and moving to getting it right on the page.

These games make sentence construction and modification into a fun game. Many principles of grammar can be drawn from the experience. Grammar is a term which describes making oneself clear, making sense, and being understood. Because of the game format, the resulting sentences are composed and written by the learner, and remain as evidence of the stage of learning. It is important to make the learner write her sentence down once it is spoken, and at times ask them to read it out from the written page.
(As Stephen Fry recently said, nobody actually makes the rules of English. We all have our own version in our heads. All Grammars are attempts to describe the points we share in common.)

Important aspects of the Functional skills agenda are the need for the learner to have independence in decoding written language; the importance of understanding what is being read and written, and the emphasis on the independent construction of sentences to communicate.

Buddenbuk Games
I am presenting here the games I have developed in order to allow learners to discover for themselves the internal rules which all native speakers have developed in order to communicate. Negative experiences of learning have often

obscured from the learner the simple fact that if they did not know the 'rules' of grammar, they would not be able to communicate.

What distinguishes these methods from other flash card, sentence making games is firstly that the learner is creating the sentence himself, with the minimum of prompts, (rather than being given a sentence to reproduce) and secondly that only very specific categories of grammatical words are provided for particular games which draw on the structural role of these words for the challenge of the game.

The basic cards consist of a lexical word, embedded in a photo context. The word can be freely taken out of context to in the game, and its form can be adapted to make it plural, or change the tense or mood etc. Any change that the players allow can be made. The word 'park' can mean the place in the photograph, or can refer to parking the car. Suffixes and prefixes can be added and removed as needed. To test out what can be allowed the player says his sentence out loud and the group decides if it is complete and makes sense.

A player can add any words she chooses to make her sentence. They are not restricted to the words on the cards.

There are other sets of cards which are mainly closed sets. These focus on particular aspects of sentence construction.

Using the cards to promote functional skills.
Looking at the underlying skills, knowledge and attitudes behind the Functional skills criteria, certain aspects of grammar can be picked out at each stage, and by playing these games, the implicit knowledge can become a focus for discussion.

1. Entry One requirements.

To qualify at Entry One, learners need to engage with the process and *make contributions to be understood* when speaking and listening. They need to *ask simple questions to obtain specific information*. These contributions need to be evidenced. They need to *read and understand simple regular words and sentences.* They have to *Use written words and phrases to present information, and Construct simple sentences using full stops.*

1.1 Speaking, listening, being understood.
In the context of these games, the learner is in a group and all are required to produce a sentence in turn, starting with a capital letter and ending with a full stop. The players observe and hear each other's contributions. Using the cards as their framework, the group hears each player say a sentence, and the group has to agree that it is complete and makes sense, before the player writes it down. The first player then reads back to the group what he has written. This is speaking and listening, and makes a shared understanding of what makes sense, and what is complete or incomplete. It is peer monitoring and approval, and is about understanding what has been written down. The role of the tutor is to approve the correct decisions. Also, importantly, because the sentence is written down, there is paper evidence to use after the exercise, (the game), to pick up specific difficulties of individual learners.

Motivation comes initially from the point scoring system, but also from listening to other players and co-operating to help arrive at clear meanings, and from the

satisfaction of completing the writing task. Point scoring is often forgotten in the discussion of what works and why.

1.2 Construct simple sentences: The Basic Game.
The basic card game, using just the photo cards, involves a group of players (4-6) taking turns to make sentences. Player One takes two photo cards and makes a sentence using both words. He speaks the sentence out loud to the group, and the group decide if it is a complete sentence and makes sense.
If it is, then player one writes it down on his own pad. He scores 2 for each card word and 1 for each other word in his sentence. Player Two then takes one new picture card and makes a sentence relating this word to one of those used by player One, and places it above that word, or below, according to the sentence he has made. If it is agreed he has made a complete sentence he also writes it down on his pad and scores it. The other players follow in the same way.
This game builds up a matrix of cards on the table and players can choose which card to link to their new card. There is no restriction on the kind of sentence made, as long as it is complete and makes sense. (*You can of course rule out bad language, innuendo etc.)*

The native speaker <u>does know</u> what we mean by a *complete* sentence, and *making sense*. People with much more confidence in spoken language may lack confidence about where full stops come, as there are no full stops in speech, but encouraged to consider the concept of '*being complete and making sense*' I find that learners grasp the importance of marking this complete unit with a capital letter at the start and a full stop at the end.
The Functional Skills Criteria document seems to suggest that a simple sentence is an earlier stage of understanding literacy than a complex sentence. In speech people use very complex sentences readily. When people lack confidence about written work they find it hard to simplify their sentences at the same time as conveying something meaningful to them. Many useful verbs demand a complex sentence:
(A word like 'told' in a sentence often involves subordinate clauses.
'Michael told me….a story.
            ....to go to sleep.
            ......he was going to see his sister.
There are many common verbs that make this demand for a complex sentence. 'helped', 'wants', 'kept', 'let', 'explained', 'got' for example.)
What the learner needs is experience in building sentences up with clauses so that he gains an understanding of the nature of a clause, and how clauses are combined in sentences, and understands that what we call a simple sentence is a one-clause sentence.

1.3 How big can a sentence get?
The basic card game, just using the photo cards, can be played by a group continuing to add clauses to the first one, to find out how long a sentence can be. Groups engaged by this exploration will pull tables together to keep the sentence going across the classroom, repeating the sentence as each new clause is added. By discovering the tremendous flexibility of the 'complete sentence' to go on including new clauses, the concept of the clause is discovered and understood.

1.4 There are two underlying principles in this card game format:
Step one: Making a distinction between lexical and grammatical words:
Although the emphasis of functional skills is on language in a specific context, it is important, when learning, to grasp principles so that they can be applied flexibly in new contexts. It is useful to learn words and phrases that belong to a specific context, but the principle must be grasped that some words refer to real or imagined objects, actions, qualities, and some are there to show the relationship between these.
Lexical words differ significantly from grammatical words. Lexical words are huge open classes of words, being added to all the time. Grammatical words are rarely added to as groups, and while there are semantic implications (tense, mode, number..) they do not refer specifically to objects, actions or qualities. The photographic context of the word on the card helps to convey the idea of 'lexis' or reference to the real world.
Step two: a clause is constructed by linking two lexical words in a meaningful way.
Rather than try to teach grammatical labels and classes, the games develop confidence in constructing clauses which convey meaning, and this is done by considering a meaningful link between two lexical words, and expressing that relationship in a sentence (in a way that makes sense). The words needed to express the relationship come readily to the tongue in speech, and the challenge then is to write down what has already been spoken and makes sense.

1.5 Asking questions: The Question Game .
The dice game **'Tell me More'** involves one player making a sentence and then the next player rolling the dice and constructing a question based on the *wh-* word linked to the dice number. Then in reply, the first player creates an extension to his sentence that attempts to answer the question he is offered.
The questions words are "When? Where? Why? How? Whose? and Which?"
This game serves the purpose of helping players construct meaningful questions and reply to them, as well as stimulating the creation of additional phrases and clauses to the original clause, which leads to making use of prepositions and conjunctions that link such phrases to the first clause. Because the challenge is still to make sense and to form a complete sentence their attention is drawn to differences in the form when a question is constructed. The fact that some sentences are questions and end with a question mark is highlighted. The purpose of an exclamation mark can also come up here. Because of the interactive value of the game, this exercise involves creating a question and responding to it in a meaningful way. Deciding what question to ask involves thinking about the context implied by the original sentence, helped by the photographic context. Others in the group will make suggestions.
The words on the card help learners to frame their ideas.

1.6 The language of a specific context:
Once you as a tutor have understood the principle of creating meaningful clauses by linking lexical words, you can go on to create sets of lexical words specific to any context and use them to play these games. The pack I have developed has a

focus on commonalities such as traffic, travel, work in a general sense, shopping, and food.

We have in the past created specific packs for other contexts. From the study of the brain to geographical terms, psychological concepts, and subjects like fishing, the classroom and the playground. A pack of lexical words needs to contain objects, actions, places and people relevant to the context.

Language in life contexts involves massive vocabularies, but in reality the learner only needs enough clues to grasp the principles and she can work out the rest.

This is all about building independent thinking in learners. That means giving them the experiences of creating clauses, and creating questions and answers with these card based words as a frame.

The assets learners bring with them should not be forgotten. Every learner has a background of knowledge about their own lives, their families, their work experiences, their leisure interests. It would add value if the participants went on to create sets of their own lexical words with which to write of their own experiences.

2. Entry 2 Requirements:

To qualify at Entry Two level, learners are asked to *communicate information so that the meaning is clear; and to ask and respond to straightforward questions*. They need to *understand the main points in chronological texts* and *read and understand simple instructions.* Playing the game as described above will improve confidence in interaction, and allow the learners to engage and respond to each other as required. When the student reads back what they have said and written, they make the connection between reading and writing.   The decoding of writing to speech is clearer because they are reading their own thoughts.

2.1   Common conjunctions: The Link and Bond Game.

In the writing requirement of the Entry Two standards, learners are asked to *construct compound sentences using common conjunctions.* The **Link and Bond** game not only gives practice in this in a game format, but results in written evidence of this being achieved.

Learners need to recognise how a text is organised into a sequence, for example: with conjunctions such as 'before' and 'after' 'until' and 'then'. There are a range of conjunctions which bind one clause to another in this way, and these can be explored with the game **'Link and Bond'** where, after making a sentence using two basic 'lexical' cards, they add one of the plain cards with conjunctions, (which link or bind the new clause) which then prompts a dependent clause, or a linked clause. In playing this game the learners become familiar with the way that different conjunctions create different links or bonds between clauses, and start to notice these words in the texts that they read.

2.1 List

Links and bonds (conjunctions) include: "while, although, until, when, after, even, before, as, because, once, since, but, so, or, yet, for, and, unless," -ing form verbs can also link sentences, as well as repetition of lexical words in each clause.

Going back to the second game: **'Tell Me More'**, the questions that are asked in this game lead the first player to add prepositional phrases (at the..) (in the..) to her sentence to answer questions beginning 'Where..?' and 'When…?' but the

questions starting 'Why…?' or 'How…?' may lead to a clause using a conjunction like 'because', or 'by' . Players may choose to answer the question with a separate sentence, but it is interesting to encourage them to try to extend the original sentence, which makes demands on them to focus on grammatical structure. The question word 'whose?' makes it necessary to use possessive forms of nouns. 'Which?' will need a response with terms like 'this' and 'that' (determiners)
In the process of these games the learners are *using written words and phrases to record and present information, paying attention to punctuation and spelling* as points depend on accuracy.

3. Entry 3 Requirements:
To qualify at Entry Three level the speaking and listening requirements will be practised in the course of playing these games in a group, as they will improve their score in the game by *following discussion, giving points of view and responding to others, and allowing for, and responding to others' input.*

3.1 When it comes to writing, there is a requirement for *'Using basic grammar including appropriate verb tense and subject verb agreement'*

Most verbs in the photo cards are shown unmarked or with the –ing form. Players can change the verb to the unmarked or the –ing form or add –s or –ed, -en etc. as they need to. It is important to explain that while using the word on the card it can be modified to fit the needs of the sentence. When building on a sentence already made, players can alter it to fit their new construction. In this way the sentence they are creating makes its own demands for verb tense and subject verb agreement in order to be complete and to make sense. This is also true of the nouns, which may need changing to indicate plural for example. Words which change internal vowel sounds need particular note, as spelling may be a challenge there.
Instead of approaching the grammar analytically, these games are holistic, keeping the focus on meaning and communication. All we are asking is for the players to notice what they have done to change the sentence, in order to make sure it makes sense. They confirm this by speaking it aloud and gaining the approval of the group.

Table 3.1 Forms of the verb.
English verbs can be seen to have four, five or six possible forms:

Traditional name	6	5	4
1. Simple:	show	walk	cut
2. Infinitive:	to show	to walk	to cut
3. S-form:	shows	walks	cuts
4. 'preterite':	showed	walked	--
5. 'participle':	shown	--	--
6. Ing- form:	showing	walking	cutting

Following: English Grammar: a linguistic study of its Classes and Structures. By Scott and Bowley (1968) Heinemann, London, Aukland p.28 Verbs.

3.2 Another requirement at Entry Three is to *sequence writing logically and clearly*.

As the learners get familiar with the basic game they begin to naturally find sequences in the sentences that they build up. Using the 'Link and Bond' cards within the game can help them to develop some narratives with the characters and actions.

Asking them to use the sentences they have created to tell a story, or describe a shopping trip or journey, allows them to use their own sentences to create texts of some length. They will begin to look for the conjunctions that they need to sequence the events.

There are some very useful linking words that help to not only sequence writing: "firstly.. secondly… lastly" "Initially,… later,… in the end…" but can place points alongside each other: "while… at the same time…." "although…, nevertheless…" and can move backward and forward: " before…later… earlier…"

Once the usefulness of conjunctions has been understood learners can identify them in texts and add to their collection of these closed groups of words and understanding of how to make use of them.

As with "at the same time" some of these links are phrases.

Most common conjunctions are included in the 'Link and Bond' pack, but learners may turn to the tutor to ask how to express a particular relationship.

Words that you have sought to express your thoughts stay in memory better than ones you are simply told about.

4. **Level One Requirements**

At Level 1 there is a requirement for extended skills, understanding 'in detail' and writing 'at the appropriate level of detail'. They are asked to 'Identify suitable responses to texts' and to respond to 'more than one type of text'. They must present information in a 'logical sequence' and use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience'.

The games already described have given players an understanding of the way that sentences are built up of clauses linked together and in some cases dependent. (There are arrows on the cards that show the word is a linking or a binding particle.) In the game 'Link and Bond' players have to add a conjunction to the sentence they have created, and because this makes the sentence incomplete they have to add another clause to complete it. In the dice game players ask questions to lead to adding information to sentences also leads to added phrases and clauses.

How can the games help to develop higher level skills with more appreciation of details?

Once the learner understands that the sentence is made up of clauses, and that different linking and bonding words help to organise the relationship between these clauses, it is time to look more closely at the phrases or groups which make up the clause.

Learners have seen that these phrases, sometimes consisting of only one word, can be joined to the original clause by prepositions or conjunctions.

4.1 Noun Phrases: Describals

Using the photo cards to create a basic sentence, the players can begin to use the card game I have called **Describals**.

There is no one word for the words that build up to make a noun phrase (or nominal group). I have used the made up name 'describals' to cover all these words, which include closed groups of words like 'determiners' and 'numerators' and lexical groups we call 'epithets' which are what most people call 'adjectives'. Because epithets (adjectives) are lexical they have been made a strong focus in teaching ways to provide more detail in a sentence, but writers need to understand the other options in extending description or the writing becomes 'adjective heavy'.

The challenge of the game is to use the 'describals' to extend the number of words that can fit before a noun in a sentence, and to get them in an appropriate order. This exercise leads to an understanding of the nominal group as a whole, and to greater flexibility in using it.

The structure of a nominal group includes several categories modifying the noun. It is not recommended to teach these labels and categories before the game has made it clear that there is an order to how these words can fit together. Playing this game should allow players to put words into the meaningful order themselves, after which they can be supplied with labels for them. At all times the game should continue to work with whole sentences, for which there is a need to make sense and to be complete. Words and phrases following the noun are said to 'qualify' it.

Table 4.1 Classes of Describals:

Determiners	Ordinators	Epithets	Nominators		Head Noun
The	two	friendly	geography	advisors	
This	last	desperate	chess	move	
All these	larger	blue	class		registers
Some	three dozen	tasty	cheese and pickle		sandwiches

Following: English Grammar: a linguistic study of its Classes and Structures. By Scott and Bowley (1968) Heinemann, London, Aukland Chapter 7.

4.2 The Verb Phrase: Verbits.

The verb phrase (verbal group) also consists of a Head word, with several modifying possibilities. The game called 'Verbits' leads to an understanding of the purpose of the various auxiliary verbs.

In this game once again a sentence is made using the photo cards, and the player picks a card from the Verbits pack. (These can be dealt out so the player has a range to choose from.)

As with Describals, the Verbit card is inserted between the cards representing the sentence, at the appropriate place, and the sentence is spoken accounting for the additional word. The next player then tries to put another Verbit card into the sentence alongside the first and reads out a new version of the sentence. At each stage the sentence is written down in its new form. Players take turns to increase the number of verbits that can be fitted into the sentence until they give up. The complete sentence is written down. Other aspects of the sentence need to be changed to accommodate the overall meaning.

In speaking the sentence aloud players can use their ingenuity to adapt words to make the sentence make sense.

After trying various sentences by this method the players can start to make lists of which verbits can be used with which and what changes in relation to meaning. They will discover concepts of mood, tense, passive and negative forms. They may

also discover that some of these can be substituted for main verbs to avoid repetition.

In order to have real flexibility of sentence construction an understanding of the verb phrase with its auxiliaries, is extremely useful.

There is no need to teach the table but it is given here for reference. The columns do not correspond to meaning categories directly, but show the possible order.

4.2 Verbits order:

a	b	c	d	Head Verb
must	have	is	Is	*drive*
can	has	m	am	*to drive*
could	had	are	are	*driving*
may	to have	were	was	*driven*
might	having	been	were	
will		be	been	
would		to be	be	
shall			to be	
should			being	
need				
dare				
ought				
used				
am				
is				
are				
was				
were				
do				
does				
did				

From: English Grammar: a linguistic study of its Classes and Structures. By Scott and Bowley (1968) Heinemann, London, Aukland. P.103

5. Level Two Requirements:

At Level Two the requirements for reading include commenting on *how meaning is conveyed,* and to *Analyse texts in relation to audience needs.*

5.1 At this stage it is clear that a vocabulary about language and grammar is needed. The games can provide an understanding of how sentences are structured, which allows learners to develop their own understanding of the purpose of different parts of a sentence, beyond the traditional view of subject, verb, object, adjective and adverb. Having learnt to revise sentences to accommodate different cards that alter the sense of the sentence, learners can be confident to discuss what the difference is between different sentences, and consider how the audiences need is met. They should now be able to talk about clauses, phrases, linking words. They may be able to discuss how future and past tense changes the form of the verb. They may be able to look at whether a style has simple nouns or big noun phrases; whether a text has strong lexical verbal groups, or relies on passive forms.

The requirement to '*use a range of sentence structures, including complex sentences'* should be familiar.

Asked to take a text and simplify the language they may be able to break up sentences into single clause sentences and make the meaning clearer. Creating a poster or a leaflet from a text may be easier.

Clearly there are a great many other aspects to grammar, and this is by no means comprehensive.
For example, one important aspect of language is the way that one level of structure (for example a clause) can become an element of another level of structure, so that a clause can qualify a noun, and a complete sentence can be the subject of another sentence. Language as a study is huge and fascinating and we can only scratch the surface in a workshop.

Cohesion:
The structure of text beyond the sentence is also open to game making.
Essentially to '*organise paragraphs and written communication effectively*' there is a need to study **cohesion**.
Cohesion refers to the ways that sentences are linked in texts beyond the sentence. I am working on games that address this. Different Grammarians use different terms for the cohesion of a text but it is a good term, because we are talking about what makes a text hang together.
Stylistics, which is the study of the language of literature and other texts (rhetoric, advertising etc.) to analyse the author's style, is a level beyond the identification of cohesion within a text, but a sound knowledge of cohesion is a good basis for stylistics.
An essential point is that many linking words and logically-organising words we are familiar with as conjunctions within the sentence can also be made use of, at paragraph level and across a wider text.
A lot of use is made of elision, or leaving words, groups, clauses unspoken, in order to tie sentences together within a text. Other key methods of making ties within a text are repetition, lexical ties (words with closely related meanings) and the use of pronouns as substitutes for nouns.

We think of pronouns as grammatical words within the sentence, but the main force structuring paragraphs and wider texts is the relationship of one sentence to another, and substituting pronouns for nouns is one of the common methods of making this link.
I am working on a game using pronouns.
An example of pronouns tying a text together:
" *Then the last time we visited, my grandfather called my name.*
I was sitting, as usual, under the piano when I heard him shout for me. He was in the shed that was attached to the kitchen at the back of the house. He usually only says my name when he is telling me to put something down or not to touch something, so at first I didn't move and didn't know what to do. He called again, and then again a little louder until he was in the living room looking down on me."

I would like to develop games for these various methods of organising texts.

I hope some of these ideas about functional skills will be of use to you.
The main issue I need to establish is that there is potentially a market for these games. If teachers were likely to grasp this approach to grammar and make use of these materials on a large scale the possibility arises of publishing at a scale which

brings the price down, perhaps to between £3 and £5 a pack. At present producing them on a small scale, it is very expensive.

If you are interested in discussing these games further my contact details are on the leaflet

Blue Ball Press

Freda Davis
2 Stile, Triangle
Sowerby Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX6 3LW
01422 833838 mobile: 07971296025
freda247davis@gmail.com