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GAME-BASED TECHNOLOGIES AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN RUSSIAN

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Abstract. In the modern educational environment, the development of students' motivation to learn a foreign language is one of the important objectives of higher education. Traditional teaching methods do not always provide sufficient opportunities for active participation, independent learning, and sustained student engagement. In this context, game-based technologies represent an effective pedagogical approach that can create a positive learning environment and encourage students to participate actively in the educational process. This article examines the role of game-based technologies in enhancing students' motivation to learn Russian. It explores the pedagogical potential of educational games, digital platforms, interactive tasks, role-playing activities, and gamification techniques in Russian language teaching. Particular attention is paid to the development of communicative competence, vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and students' confidence in using Russian in real-life situations. The article also discusses the importance of selecting game-based activities according to students' language proficiency, educational needs, and learning objectives. It is argued that the systematic integration of game-based technologies into Russian language instruction can contribute to a more engaging, interactive, and student-centered learning environment.

Keywords: game-based technologies, Russian language teaching, student motivation, gamification, educational games, digital learning, communicative competence, interactive learning.

Introduction. In the context of contemporary higher education, the development of students' foreign language competence is closely connected with the use of innovative teaching methods and technologies. Learning Russian as a foreign language requires students to acquire vocabulary, understand grammatical structures, develop pronunciation skills, and use the language effectively in oral and written communication. However, these processes may become challenging when instruction relies predominantly on memorization, repetitive exercises, and teacher-centered activities.

Student motivation is an essential factor influencing the effectiveness of language learning. Motivated students are generally more willing to participate in classroom activities, complete assignments, overcome difficulties, and practice the target language independently. Therefore, language teachers need to create learning environments that stimulate curiosity, encourage active participation, and support students' confidence.

One promising approach is the integration of game-based technologies into the educational process. Educational games combine learning objectives with rules, challenges, feedback, and opportunities for interaction. They can transform language practice into an engaging activity in which students learn through participation, experimentation, and communication.

The relevance of this topic is determined by the growing need to modernize language education and develop teaching methods that correspond to students' educational needs and digital learning experiences.

The purpose of this article is to examine the pedagogical potential of game-based technologies as a means of enhancing students' motivation to learn Russian and to identify practical approaches to their effective implementation in higher education.

The objectives of the study are to analyze the relationship between motivation and game-based learning, identify the principal types of game-based technologies applicable to Russian language instruction, and develop practical recommendations for their use in university classrooms.

Theoretical foundations of game-based learning. Game-based learning is an educational approach in which games are used to achieve specific learning objectives. Unlike entertainment-oriented games, educational games are designed or adapted to develop particular knowledge, skills, and competencies.

The theoretical foundations of this approach can be associated with the ideas of active learning, constructivism, and social interaction. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of social interaction and guided participation in cognitive development. From this perspective, language games can provide opportunities for students to learn collaboratively, exchange ideas, and develop communication skills with the support of their peers and teachers.

Gee (2003) demonstrated that well-designed video games can create learning environments characterized by active problem-solving, feedback, and meaningful participation. These principles can also be applied to foreign language education, where students need opportunities to use linguistic knowledge in meaningful contexts.

It is important to distinguish between game-based learning and gamification. Game-based learning involves using complete games or game-like activities as learning tools. Gamification, by contrast, refers to the application of selected game-design elements, such as points, levels, badges, challenges, and progress indicators, in a non-game learning environment (Deterding et al., 2011).

Both approaches can be incorporated into Russian language teaching. For example, students may participate in a role-playing game to practice everyday conversations or complete a series of vocabulary challenges in which they earn points for correct answers and successful collaboration.

The educational value of these technologies depends not simply on the presence of entertainment but on the relationship between game mechanics and learning objectives. A successful educational game should require students to apply language knowledge, communicate meaningfully, and reflect on their performance.

The role of game-based technologies in enhancing student motivation. Motivation is a complex psychological and pedagogical phenomenon that influences students' engagement, persistence, and willingness to learn. Deci and Ryan (2000), in their self-determination theory, highlighted the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in supporting intrinsic motivation.

Game-based technologies can support these needs in several ways.

First, they provide students with opportunities for active participation and choice. When students select answers, solve problems, complete missions, or make decisions in a simulated situation, they become more directly involved in the learning process.

Second, games provide immediate feedback. Students can identify mistakes, correct their answers, and observe their progress. This process may help reduce uncertainty and make learning outcomes more visible.

Third, many educational games encourage cooperation. Pair work, team competitions, and collaborative problem-solving activities allow students to interact with classmates and learn from one another.

Fourth, appropriately designed games can reduce the perceived pressure associated with making mistakes. In a supportive classroom environment, students may become more willing to experiment with unfamiliar vocabulary and grammatical structures.

The motivational benefits of games are not automatic. Excessive competition, difficult tasks, poorly designed scoring systems, or an overemphasis on rewards may discourage some learners. Therefore, teachers should prioritize meaningful participation, individual progress, and the development of communicative competence rather than competition alone.

Types of game-based technologies in Russian language teaching. Various types of game-based technologies can be used to develop students' Russian language skills.

Digital vocabulary games. Vocabulary games help students learn new words, reinforce previously studied vocabulary, and improve the speed of word recognition. Teachers can organize matching activities, word searches, flashcard challenges, and quizzes.

Digital platforms such as Quizlet and Wordwall can support the creation of vocabulary exercises and interactive classroom tasks.

For example, when studying the topic "My Profession," students may match Russian words with their definitions, identify appropriate terms in sentences, or complete a timed vocabulary challenge.

These activities can be particularly useful for revising professional terminology, everyday expressions, and frequently used verbs.

Grammar games. Russian grammar presents specific difficulties for learners, particularly in the use of grammatical cases, verb conjugation, gender, number, and agreement.

Game-based exercises can make grammar practice more interactive. Students may complete sentence puzzles, correct grammatical errors, select appropriate word forms, or compete in teams to construct grammatically accurate sentences.

For instance, when learning the prepositional case, students can complete sentences such as:

- Я учусь ... университете.
- Мы говорим ... русском языке.
- Студенты читают текст ... учебнике.

Students must select the correct grammatical forms and explain their choices. This combines language practice with analytical thinking.

Role-playing games. Role-playing games are particularly valuable for developing communicative competence because they simulate real-life situations.

Students assume different roles and use Russian to accomplish a specific communicative task. Possible scenarios include:

- Meeting new people and introducing themselves.
- Asking for directions in a city.
- Buying tickets at a railway station.
- Participating in a job interview.
- Visiting a doctor.
- Discussing university life and future professions.

For example, in a job interview simulation, one student acts as an employer and another as an applicant. They prepare questions and answers, practice professional vocabulary, and develop the ability to communicate spontaneously.

Role-playing activities help connect grammatical knowledge with practical language use. They also create opportunities to develop fluency, listening comprehension, and confidence.

Online quizzes and interactive competitions. Online quizzes can be used to assess students' understanding of vocabulary, grammar, reading materials, and cultural information.

Tools such as Kahoot! and Quizizz can support interactive quizzes in which students answer questions using their devices or participate through classroom displays.

A quiz on Russian culture, for example, may include questions about literature, traditions, geography, famous personalities, and everyday communication.

The teacher can use the results to identify areas requiring additional explanation. However, quiz speed should not be the only assessment criterion, since students differ in reading speed, confidence, and familiarity with digital tools.

Quest-based learning. Quest-based activities organize learning around a sequence of challenges. Students complete tasks, solve problems, and collect information to reach a final objective.

A Russian language quest may be entitled "A Day in Moscow." Students receive a series of tasks related to navigating the city, reading signs, buying tickets, asking questions, and understanding announcements.

Each completed task provides information needed for the next stage. This structure encourages students to use Russian for practical purposes and cooperate in solving problems.

Quest-based learning can also integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening within a single educational activity.

Practical implementation of game-based technologies. The effectiveness of game-based learning depends on systematic planning. Games should be integrated into the lesson structure rather than used merely as entertainment or an unrelated break from instruction.

A teacher can organize a game-based Russian language lesson according to the following stages.

Stage 1. Defining learning objectives. The teacher identifies the vocabulary, grammatical structures, or communicative skills that students are expected to develop.

Stage 2. Selecting an appropriate game. The activity is chosen according to students' language proficiency, age, interests, available technology, and lesson objectives.

Stage 3. Explaining the rules. Students receive clear instructions, understand the task requirements, and become familiar with the assessment criteria.

Stage 4. Conducting the activity. Students participate individually, in pairs, or in groups. The teacher monitors their progress, provides support, and encourages the use of Russian.

Stage 5. Providing feedback. The teacher identifies common mistakes, explains difficult language points, and gives students an opportunity to correct their answers.

Stage 6. Reflection and assessment. Students discuss what they have learned, identify difficulties, and evaluate their own progress.

The following example illustrates how game-based technologies can be integrated into a Russian language lesson.

Table 1.

Examples of game-based activities for teaching Russian

Learning objective	Game-based activity	Expected learning outcome
Expanding vocabulary	Digital flashcards and word-matching games	Improved word recognition and vocabulary retention
Practicing grammatical	Sentence-building	More accurate use of grammatical

cases	competitions	forms
Developing speaking skills	Role-playing everyday situations	Greater communicative confidence
Improving reading comprehension	Text-based quests	Better understanding of written information
Developing listening skills	Audio quizzes and listening challenges	Improved comprehension of spoken Russian
Revising course material	Interactive online quizzes	Identification of knowledge gaps
Developing collaborative skills	Team-based language challenges	Increased peer interaction and cooperation

The activities in Table 1 can be adapted to different stages of language learning. Beginners may benefit from word recognition and sentence-completion games, whereas more advanced students can participate in debates, simulations, and complex communicative quests.

Conditions for the effective use of game-based technologies. The implementation of game-based technologies requires consideration of several pedagogical conditions.

First, activities must correspond to the learning objectives. A game should help students acquire or apply language knowledge rather than distract them from the lesson content.

Second, the level of difficulty must be appropriate. Tasks that are excessively easy may not maintain interest, while overly complicated activities may lead to frustration. Teachers should provide differentiated tasks according to students' proficiency levels.

Third, the classroom environment should encourage participation and respect. Students should feel comfortable making mistakes and receiving constructive feedback. Teachers should avoid public comparisons that may negatively affect students' confidence.

Fourth, the selection of digital tools must consider accessibility. Not all students have the same devices, internet access, or digital skills. Consequently, teachers should provide low-technology alternatives, including printed cards, board games, and face-to-face activities.

Fifth, assessment should focus on both the learning process and the results. Points and badges may increase engagement for some students, but they should not replace meaningful assessment of vocabulary knowledge, grammatical accuracy, and communicative ability.

Finally, teachers should evaluate the effectiveness of the activities through observation, student feedback, quizzes, and comparisons of learning performance over time.

These conditions help ensure that game-based technologies serve educational purposes and contribute to the development of students' language competence.

The analysis suggests that game-based technologies offer several pedagogical opportunities for Russian language teaching. They can introduce variety into classroom activities, provide repeated language practice, encourage peer interaction, and create situations in which students apply their knowledge to solve communicative problems.

Their potential is particularly significant in higher education, where students are expected to develop independent learning skills and practical communication abilities. Digital quizzes, interactive tasks, and role-playing activities can complement traditional explanations and written exercises.

Nevertheless, game-based learning should not be considered a universal replacement for conventional teaching methods. Explicit explanations, structured practice, reading, writing, and systematic feedback remain important components of language instruction.

Another consideration is the distinction between temporary engagement and sustained motivation. Students may enjoy a particular game without necessarily developing long-term interest in learning Russian. To support sustained motivation, teachers should connect game-based activities with meaningful learning outcomes, personal goals, and practical communication needs.

The effectiveness of these approaches also depends on students' individual characteristics, previous learning experiences, and access to educational technology. Therefore, the selection of games should be based on pedagogical judgment and ongoing assessment rather than on the popularity of a particular platform.

Future empirical research could investigate changes in students' motivation and language performance through classroom observations, student questionnaires, interviews, and pre-test and post-test comparisons. Such research would help determine which types of games are most effective for different language skills and student groups.

The present article provides a theoretical and methodological analysis. It does not report original experimental data; therefore, the proposed benefits should be examined through empirical studies in specific educational settings.

Conclusion. Game-based technologies represent a promising means of enhancing students' motivation to learn Russian in higher education. Their educational potential lies in combining language practice with active participation, immediate feedback, collaboration, and meaningful communicative tasks.

Digital vocabulary games, grammar challenges, role-playing activities, online quizzes, and quest-based learning can support the development of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, speaking, listening, and reading skills.

However, the successful implementation of these technologies requires clear learning objectives, appropriate task difficulty, accessible learning resources, constructive feedback, and balanced assessment. Games should complement other teaching methods and be selected according to students' needs and the expected learning outcomes.

It can be concluded that the systematic and pedagogically grounded use of game-based technologies can contribute to a more interactive, supportive, and student-centered environment for learning Russian. Further empirical research is needed to measure their impact on students' motivation, academic achievement, and long-term language development.

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