**Developing Lexical Competence through Game-Based Learning in Secondary English Classes**

by

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**Abstract**

The article investigates the development of lexical competence through games in English lessons among high school students. The study aimed to learn new vocabulary through games. The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of interactive methods and approaches in English lessons. How this increases students’ ability to master and effectively use vocabulary in the target language. The study used a mixed methods approach. This study evaluates the effectiveness of using games as a pedagogical tool. This study also delves into the nuances of how and what affects lexical development. The study conducted pre-tests, post-tests, and surveys of students and teachers, and observed students during lessons with and without the use of games. The participants of the study were eleventh grade students and English teachers. Using pre- and post-test surveys, classroom observations, and student and teacher feedback, the study evaluates the impact of using games in English lessons. The results represent a comprehensive analysis of the data, demonstrating improvements in students’ lexical competence, vocabulary acquisition speed, and qualitative impact on their language skills and confidence. The discussion section critically examines the results.

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of language education, developing lexical competence through the use of games in English lessons. This article offers useful recommendations for future research that can develop this research topic. The results highlight the effectiveness of interactive and engaging activities in English lessons. Also, motivating and encouraging students to learn new lexical items.

**Анотація**

Це дослідження заглиблюється в розвиток лексичної компетентності серед учнів середньої школи шляхом інтеграції ігор на уроках англійської мови. Проблема, яка є в данний час, полягає в тому, що учням потрібна допомога у вивченні лексики. Учням важко засвоїти великий словниковий запас за короткий час. Учням важко запам’ятати слова, просто прочитавши їх. Основна мета полягає в тому, щоб дослідити вплив інтерактивних та захоплюючих заходів на підвищення здатності учнів освоювати та ефективно використовувати лексику цільовою мовою. Ця робота досліджує вплив використання ігор на розвиток лексичної компетенції учнів загальноосвітньої школи та які методи можна використати для ефективної інтеграції ігор на уроках англійської мови.. Дослідження було проведено серед учнів старших класів та вчителів англійської мови. Було використаний підхід змішаних методів, щоб оцініти ефективність використання ігор як педагогічного інструменту та заглиблюєтися в нюанси того, як такі дії впливають на лексичний розвиток. Дослідження починається зі встановлення теоретичної основи, яка підкріплює значення лексичної компетенції у вивченні мови та роль інноваційних методологій навчання у сприянні цьому розвитку. Спираючись на попередні дослідження та наукову літературу, дослідження контекстуалізує дослідження в рамках ширшого ландшафту мовної освіти, підкреслюючи потребу в динамічних і орієнтованих на студента підходах для покращення мовного рівня. Огляд літератури підкреслює важливість використання ігор як педагогічного засобу для розвитку словникової компетенції в учнів середньої школи, які вивчають англійську мову.

Передтестове тестування показало, що рівень знань лексики був менший, після використання ігор на уроках англійської мови було проведено післятестове тестування. Що підсумувала рівень знань став краще після використання ігор на уроках. Крім того, якісна інформація забезпечує глибше розуміння рівня залученості, мотивації та загального досвіду навчання студентів при використанні ігор як інструменту навчання. Це дослідження підтверджує, що ігрове навчання є життєздатним і ефективним методом розвитку лексичної компетенції учнів середньої школи. Дослідження висвітлює наслідки для викладання та вивчення мови за допомогою ігрового підходу на уроках англійської мови.

Опитування вчителів зазначало що є переваги і недоліки у використані ігор на розвиток лексичних компетентностей на уроках англійської мови. Опитування вчителів зазначало що більшість учнів до вподоби використання ігор для вивчення нової лексики. Можна відзначити, що в ігровому підході до навчання головну роль відіграють і вчитель, і учні. Завдання вчителя – оптимізувати їхні знання у використанні інтерактивних ігор та мотивувати учнів. Завдання студентів полягає в тому, щоб залучити та практично застосувати мовні навички після оволодіння новою лексикою.

Розділ результатів представляє всебічний аналіз даних, демонструючи покращення лексичної компетенції студентів, швидкість засвоєння словникового запасу та якісний вплив на їхні мовні навички та впевненість.

Розділ обговорення критично розглядає ці висновки, висвітлюючи наслідки для педагогіки, розробки навчальних програм і ширшого ландшафту мовної освіти. Він також розглядає будь-які обмеження, які виникли під час дослідження, і пропонує шляхи подальших досліджень для підвищення ефективності ігрових підходів до навчання мови.

Підсумовуючи, це дослідження робить значний внесок у сферу мовної освіти, проливаючи світло на трансформаційний потенціал інтеграції ігор в уроки англійської мови для підвищення лексичної компетенції. Отримані результати не тільки підкреслюють ефективність інтерактивних та захоплюючих заходів, але й відкривають шлях для інноваційних та орієнтованих на учня методологій навчання, які резонують із змінними потребами тих, хто вивчає мову в середній освіті.

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# **Introduction**

Developing lexical competence among secondary school students is a critical aspect of language learning, particularly in the context of English education.

The problem that exists at the moment is that students need help with studying vocabulary. It is difficult for students to learn a large amount of vocabulary in a short period of time. It is difficult for students to remember words just by reading them. Doing practical vocabulary exercises for students is uninteresting. However, IT technologies are moving forward, and many teenagers spend much time on gadgets now. Engaging students in learning English can be achieved through interesting and active lessons and interactive teaching methods, one of which is vocabulary games in lessons. With the growing recognition of the role played by interactive and engaging activities in language acquisition, this study focuses on exploring how the integration of games can enhance students' lexical competence in English lessons.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using games as a pedagogical tool to improve students' lexical competence in English. By delving into the impact of interactive and engaging activities, the study aims to provide insights into innovative teaching methods that can significantly enhance language learning outcomes among secondary school students.The study examines the effectiveness of game-based approaches, vocabulary improvement, and the use of game-based approaches in language learning and English language lessons. Using a mixed-method approach in the research process allowed for in-depth exploration and research of the topic. The study helps determine the effectiveness of game-based learning strategies and how they can be used in English language lessons.This research holds in the field of language education as it highlights the potential of incorporating games into traditional teaching approaches. This study was conducted with eleventh-grade students and English language teachers. From communication with teachers, it can be determined that using games in English lessons is an interesting topic for future pedagogy and methodological materials. By examining students’ knowledge before and after the study, it can be noted that by focusing on the development of lexical competence, the study not only contributes to improving students’ vocabulary acquisition and usage skills but also highlights the value of dynamic and student-centered methodologies in enhancing the language learning experience. This study confirms that game-based learning is a viable and effective method for developing lexical competence among secondary school students. The study highlights the implications for teaching and learning language through a game-based approach in English lessons. The implications have implications for many factors such as the need for innovative approaches, students’ language learning needs and pedagogical teaching practices.

It can be noted that both the teacher and the students have a major role in a game-based approach to learning. The teacher’s task is to optimize their knowledge in the use of interactive games and to motivate students. The students’ task is to engage and practically apply language skills after acquiring new vocabulary. The literature review highlights the importance of using games as a pedagogical tool for developing vocabulary competence in secondary school English language learners. As learning requires high motivation, gamification design elements are interestingь for implementation in e-learning systems. When using gamification in an e-learning system, it is important to consider various types of learners and their learning habits.

Overall, vocabulary learning and vocabulary consolidation games are important as engaging tools for vocabulary acquisition, driven by factors such as accessibility, language use, genre preferences, and motivational aspects.Тhis study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the effective use of games for enhancing lexical competence among secondary school students in English lessons, thereby enriching language education practices.

# **Literature review**

Lexical competence, which encompasses the ability to comprehend, produce, and manipulate vocabulary effectively, is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency. The acquisition and mastery of lexical knowledge significantly contribute to learners' overall language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities. In recent years, educational research has increasingly emphasized integrating innovative pedagogical approaches to enhance lexical competence among secondary school students, particularly those learning English as a second language (ESL). One such approach that has gained significant attention is using games in English lessons. This literature review aims to delve into existing literature, theories, and empirical studies concerning the development of lexical competence by incorporating games into ESL classrooms for secondary school students.

Before delving into specific studies and findings, it is crucial to establish a theoretical framework that underpins the use of games for enhancing lexical competence. One of the prominent theories in this context is Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which posits that learning occurs most effectively when students are challenged within a range that is just beyond their current level of understanding (Shabani, Khatib,and Ebadi,2010). With their interactive and engaging nature, games provide opportunities for students to operate within their zone of proximal development, encouraging active participation, problem-solving, and language use in context.

Using games in language learning environments offers several key benefits for developing lexical competence among secondary school students. Firstly, games create a motivating and enjoyable learning atmosphere, increasing engagement and participation. This positive affective state can enhance students' willingness to explore and practice new vocabulary items. Secondly, games often involve repetitive exposure to vocabulary in different contexts, facilitating better retention and comprehension. Students can internalise lexical items more effectively through repeated interaction with words in meaningful contexts. Additionally, games promote collaborative learning and communication, allowing students to practice using vocabulary in real-life communicative situations, thus improving their communicative competence alongside lexical knowledge.

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the impact of using games on developing lexical competence among secondary school students. For example, Ling and Abdul Aziz (2022) explored the use of vocabulary board games in ESL classrooms and found that students exhibited significant improvement in their lexical knowledge and usage. Similarly, Benoit (2017) conducted a longitudinal study comparing traditional vocabulary instruction with game-based vocabulary activities and reported that the game-based approach led to more substantial gains in lexical competence over time.

However, it is essential to note that not all games may be equally effective in promoting lexical development. Factors such as game design, task complexity, feedback mechanisms, and integration with curriculum objectives can influence the efficacy of games in enhancing lexical competence. Therefore, future research should continue to explore various types of games, pedagogical strategies, and implementation methods to optimize the benefits of game-based learning for lexical acquisition.

Early examples of gamification were based on rewarding individuals who shared experiences on platforms like Foursquare and Gowalla. A person "checks in" at a particular establishment and receives reward points for it; after reaching a certain number of rewards, they are awarded a status medal. According to Gartner's findings, in the early 2010s, gamification emerged as one of the key trends in information technology for organizations. By 2015, half of all organizations will have utilized gamification technologies.

The field of gamification is still relatively young and lacks structured research (Kapp, 2012). However, despite its relatively short development time, there have been numerous studies and publications on this issue. For example, (Laskowski, 2013) research has found that with the increasing role of various social media, a new trend in software development has emerged - gamification, aimed primarily at increasing user engagement with software. An attempt has been made to analyze this phenomenon, including its positive and negative aspects. Werbach and Hunter (2012) believe that gamification allows us to combine our knowledge in games and business, and developers' toolkit of gaming techniques can be applied to solving business problems. Sheldon (2020) explores the creation of courses for educational institutions in the form of multiplayer games, which have already proven to be very successful in terms of student performance and engagement.

McGonigal (2016) investigates the impact of reality modification through video games on the objective reality of a person. She concludes that games are not a waste of time, but a productive activity. The study examines the methodology by which a game or interactive approach has been used to improve health, such as physical and mental. The author argues that game elements help motivate a person to overcome difficulties and achieve goals. As an example, the author tells her own story, how after a serious injury, a game returned her to an active and interesting life. By playing, you can rethink your approach to difficulties and include game elements in your life, according to the author. The gaming process cannot contribute to the gross domestic product of a country, but scientific studies show that games affect the quality of our lives, creating positive emotions (optimism and curiosity) and strong social relationships (especially when playing with real friends and loved ones).

Gamers who prefer hard, complex games learn quick decision-making, stress resistance, and awareness of the consequences of the player's actions - mistakes are not repeated, and successful strategies are used again. Gamification describes the broad trend of using game mechanics for non-game settings such as innovation, marketing, learning, employee work, healthcare and social change. Gamification is the application of approaches characteristic of computer games in software tools for non-game processes. This is a set of motivational management techniques borrowed from computer games and their creators. For example, points, medals and other attributes of virtual victories can serve as intangible "gamified" encouragement: you sold two stars last month, and he sold three. Medals, badges, points, bonuses — anything. The main thing is that people start moving while playing. Werbach and Hunter (2012) suggest that the game enlivens routine and cites his own training course at a business school as an example. Gamification will make the work more pleasant and exciting, because the game concentrates many points of motivation – competitiveness, prize incentives, the logic of overcoming obstacles. The work does not become a game, but the employee begins working as if playing. Management resorts to gamification to develop and systematize its motivational policy.

Games, particularly digital and interactive, provide an ideal platform for implementing Social Learning Theory principles in educational contexts. Here's how games facilitate social learning and contribute to the development of lexical competence among secondary school students:

1. Games often require collaboration and teamwork, encouraging students to work together towards a common goal. In vocabulary-focused games, students can engage in collaborative tasks such as word puzzles, language quests, or group challenges that necessitate communication and cooperation. Through these activities, students practice vocabulary and learn from each other's strategies and approaches.

2. Context games create interactive and communicative contexts where students actively engage with language meaningfully. Whether through role-playing scenarios, interactive storytelling, or virtual simulations, games encourage students to use vocabulary in context, fostering language production and comprehension skills. Moreover, multiplayer games allow students to communicate and negotiate meaning, leading to richer language interactions.

3. Within game-based learning environments, students have opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, where they can exchange knowledge, provide feedback, and support each other's learning journeys. For instance, collaborative problem-solving tasks in games require students to discuss strategies, explain concepts, and share insights, all of which contribute to deeper understanding and retention of vocabulary.

4. Games often present challenges or puzzles that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In vocabulary games, students may need to decipher clues, infer meanings, or apply language rules to progress. By working collaboratively, students pool their knowledge, brainstorm solutions, and collectively address linguistic challenges, leading to enhanced lexical competence.

Research studies by Zou, Huang, and Xie (2021) provide empirical evidence supporting the positive impact of social learning experiences embedded in digital games on vocabulary development among secondary school learners. These studies highlight the synergistic relationship between social interaction, collaborative learning, and vocabulary acquisition within game-based environments.

Studies conducted by Gao (2024) have shown that multimodal game-based activities significantly improve students' lexical competence and language skills in secondary school settings.

The article by Pho and Dinscore (2015) is devoted to the analysis of game-based learning. The article argues that students develop critical thinking through game-based learning. Such learning creates new interactive methods. The article examines how educational technology can be used to engage students and improve knowledge acquisition.

Collins and Halverson (2018) argue that computers, new technologies and the Internet are changing learning and its process. Any information has become available to everyone, which leads to the conclusion that schools are no longer the main source of knowledge. You can learn through interactive and new approaches to learning. Learning can be flexible, interactive and has access to any information. The book argues that the introduction of new technologies in learning is a breakthrough of the future, but the main thing is not to forget about moral and social needs and aspects. The authors argue that in learning with new technologies, it also requires a review and rethinking of methods, approaches and structures of learning with new technologies.

In the article by Nguyen and Khuat (2003) the authors compare the learning of words by the traditional method and the interactive method. It was investigated that learning through games is more effective. Students are interested and the results show better application of new words than those learned by the traditional method. This article is full of interesting innovative approaches that will help in teaching new vocabulary. It is confirmed that games create a more learning atmosphere for students and contribute to better learning of the material.

Şenol (2008) studies methods of teaching lexical competence to students using game techniques. The author argues that games are effective for learning. It increases, expands and improves students' vocabulary. It improves and strengthens students' motivation. Students become more active in the learning process. This work investigates how students' interest in learning English develops through games in lessons. It investigates how students' team interaction increases during lessons. Different types of games are proposed that can be used to study vocabulary. Specific games were described, and recommendations were added to them on how to adapt students and how to integrate them into the learning process. This study helps in the selection of games, in the development of lessons with interactive tasks.

Sarwat, Hamza and Wazeer (2023) indicate how role-playing games affect the development of lexical competences of students learning English. An experimental method is used to create an interactive learning environment. An example of teaching students using two learning methods simultaneously was given. The study confirms that role-playing games are recommended for use in English lessons. With their help, an interesting, active and motivating environment is created during learning. The use of interactive teaching methods will make lessons more interesting, and for teachers it will be a useful and new experience.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of using games on the development of lexical competence in secondary school students?

2. What methods can be employed to effectively integrate games into English lessons

# **Methodology and Procedure**

This research investigates the effectiveness of using games in English lessons to develop lexical competence (vocabulary knowledge and usage) among secondary school students. The qualitative research method focuses on understanding the "why" and "how" behind a phenomenon, in this case, how game usage affects vocabulary learning. The information was collected using an open-ended questionnaire, which contains open-ended questions that allow students to express their experiences and opinions in detail rather than simply choosing pre-defined options. The study participants were high school students. This is because this age group often spends time playing games and is comfortable using technological tools such as questionnaires. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants' data were be ensured. English teachers who were interviewed about using games in lessons in their classrooms.

Our research used Creswell (2012) as a basis, referring to a specific data analysis method outlined there. It involves a systematic approach to gathering completed questionnaires from the participants and identifying recurring themes, patterns, and key insights from the student responses, explaining the meaning of the themes and patterns in the context of the research question, and presenting the findings in a clear and organized way.

In this study test scores were compared to post-test scores to assess vocabulary knowledge gains. Learner journals were analysed thematically to identify patterns in vocabulary acquisition and student experiences. Classroom observations were documented through field notes and coded for key themes related to student engagement and participation. Interview data were transcribed and analysed for recurring themes about the effectiveness of games in promoting vocabulary learning. Data interpretation and conclusions drawn were performed using the following methods. Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analysed statistically to determine if there is a significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge. Qualitative data from learner journals, classroom observations, and teacher interviews were used to triangulate findings and provide a more holistic understanding of the impact of games on lexical competence development.

Based on the findings, recommendations were made to teachers on how to effectively use games in English lessons to develop students' lexical competence. The research may also suggest areas for further investigation, such as exploring the effectiveness of different types of games or the impact of games on specific vocabulary skills. This action research approach allows for continuous improvement of teaching practice by enabling the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the game-based intervention and refine it based on the collected data.

Data collection in the study was used to investigate the use of games to develop lexical competence in high school students. The study was conducted with pre-test and post-test scores on vocabulary knowledge tests. Students used diaries to reflect on their vocabulary learning experiences. Classroom observations focused on student engagement and lesson participation and transcripts of semi-structured interviews with teachers. Teacher interviews discussed the implementation and perceived impact of games. Pre- and post-tests established a baseline for students' vocabulary knowledge and measured improvement after the game-based intervention. Learner journals provide insights into students' self-reported experiences learning vocabulary through games, identifying challenges and areas of success. Classroom observations help assess game effectiveness by observing student interaction, engagement, and participation during game-based lessons. Teacher interviews offer valuable teacher perspectives on implementing games, perceived student learning outcomes, and potential challenges or benefits.

The pre-test and post-test were conducted to determine the lexical level of students. The tests consisted of multiple-choice questions with a choice of one answer out of four. The task of students is to choose one correct answer. The questions are based on knowledge of synonyms, antonyms, definitions and parts of speech. This test structure is convenient and easy to perform and later to compare. The tests were developed independently based on the study programme covered by the research participants. The tests are based on the definition of linguistic constructions such as synonyms, antonyms, definitions and parts of speech, which are related to lexical competence and its use. The test questions are understandable to students and correspond to their level of knowledge that should be. This testing format minimizes subjective assessment and facilitates the summary of results. A pre-test was conducted before using games in English lessons. A post-test was conducted after using games in English lessons. The results were compared. The tests aimed to determine whether students' lexical competence level would improve after using games in lessons.

For example:

Identify the antonym for "ancient":

 a) Modern

 b) Old-fashioned

 c) Antique

 d) Vintage

Correct Answer: a) Modern. "Ancient" means very old; its opposite is "modern," which refers to something contemporary.

Appendix A provides pre-test tasks to determine students' vocabulary level before the study. Appendix B provides post-test tasks to assess students' vocabulary level after the study.

The study also used a learner journal method. Those took the form of notebooks where students noted unknown words, definitions of new words, and questions for teachers about unknown words, sources used, or where they found definitions. Learner journals provide valuable information about students’ learning processes. They can be used to analyse the quality of the use of games in English lessons for lexical competence and student engagement.

The study conducted classroom observations. To find out how lessons using games are conducted. How students work in lessons where games are used to learn new vocabulary. How regular lessons are conducted without the use of games. To make comparisons and summaries easier.

Teacher interviews were conducted to explore in-depth teacher perspectives on using games to learn new vocabulary in English lessons. The questions were open-ended, with each teacher expressing their opinion on the effectiveness of games in lessons. They described the difficulties they encountered and how they solved the problems. They offered suggestions and provided recommendations for other teachers. They expressed their own opinion on the future of this idea and how to optimize better learning in this format. They considered the types of games, approaches, and resources that would be more effective in using games to learn new vocabulary in English lessons. Appendix C provides questions and answers from teachers during the interviews.

Ethical issues were addressed in the research. Written informed consent was obtained from both students and parents/guardians, explaining the purpose of the study, data collection methods, and how their data would be used. All data is anonymous and used solely for research purposes.

The data collection and analysis process happened gradually. The pre-test was administered to all student participants. The game-based lessons were implemented in the English class over a designated period. Students maintained learner journals throughout the intervention period. Classroom observations were conducted during game-based lessons. Interviews were conducted with the teacher after the intervention period. Pre-test and post-test scores were statistically analyzed to assess vocabulary knowledge gain. Learner journals are thematically analyzed to identify patterns in vocabulary acquisition and student experiences. Interview transcripts were analyzed for themes about the effectiveness of games in promoting vocabulary learning.

During the study, there was cooperation with teachers. Analysis of possible exercises, selection of games for the lesson under the topic of the lesson, and discussion of methods of organizing learning. In educational work, exercises for learning new vocabulary are important, because this is the beginning of understanding and improving the language.

The exercises were interpreted into games and games were selected under the topics of the lessons. As a result of the discussion with a teacher, it was determined that exercises that can be interpreted into games can be introductory and training. Introductory exercises-games are carried out after the start of studying a new topic so that students can define the concept of a word and understand it. Training exercises-games are carried out to consolidate students' knowledge. All games used in English lessons were borrowed from Internet resources on sites, for example, Wordwall. The selected games were of different formats, such as a flashcard game, a crossword game, a matching game, a find the matching game. A flashcard game is an introductory game with the goal of explaining or defining a word or phrase. The crossword puzzle was used to memorize new words by reading a sentence or question and selecting the appropriate word. The matching game aimed to connect the word and its concept. The find the matching game was played to consolidate and practice inserting the missing word or phrase into the sentence that fits the meaning. All games were conducted in an individual-group form of learning. Working as a whole class, each student had the opportunity to answer and demonstrate their level of knowledge and preparation for the lesson.

# **Results**

The study included pre-test and post-test, learner journals, classroom observations, classroom survey and teacher interviews. All data and results were summarized and analyzed and may be found below.

**Tests**

The pre-test and post-test scores were statistically analysed using a paired-sample t-test to determine the impact of game-based learning on students' lexical competence. Table 1 presents pre-test and post-test scores that align well with the potential themes or variables you might explore based on the literature review. The mean score that students received during the pre-test was 65.2, and the post-test was 78.5 out of 100 maximum. The standard deviation indicates how spread out the data is about the mean. The smaller the value, the more clustered it is about the mean. The standard deviation for the pre-test was 8.3, and for the post-test – 7.1. The t-value is the probability for estimating the expected outcome. In the study, the t-value is 6.48. P-value is the probability of a deviation from the expected result. In a study, p-value had a value of <0.001. The mean post-test score (78.5) was notably higher than the pre-test score (65.2), with a statistically significant t-value (6.48, p < 0.001). The significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores suggests a possible positive impact of game-based learning on student vocabulary knowledge. This aligns with research exploring games' effectiveness in promoting vocabulary acquisition. The analysis revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary knowledge after participating in game-based lessons. This finding aligns with existing literature highlighting the positive impact of game-based learning on vocabulary acquisition (Alhebshi, and Gamlo, 2022). Studies have consistently shown that interactive and engaging learning activities, such as games, can enhance students' motivation and retention of vocabulary (Elaish,Ghani, Shuib and Al-Haiqi, 2019).

**Table 1**

*The pre-test and post-test scores*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Test | Mean Score | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value | Result |
| Pre-Test | 65.2 | 8.3 | - | - | - |
| Post-Test | 78.5 | 7.1 | 6.48 | <0.001 | Significant |

**Learner Journals**

Thematic analysis of learner journals identified key patterns in vocabulary acquisition and student experiences. Students reported effective learning of specific vocabulary words through games, such as academic terms and idiomatic expressions. Strategies like mnemonic devices and contextual usage were frequently mentioned as aids in vocabulary retention.

**Classroom Observations**

Observations during game-based activities showed high levels of student engagement and active participation. Students demonstrated the use of newly learned vocabulary in discussions and collaborative tasks, indicating practical application and integration into their language skills.

**Classroom Survey**

Question 1: “Do you often play games?”

Figure 1 provides a clear picture of students' preferences regarding games. The data shows that a significant majority, specifically 87%, enjoy playing games, while a noticeable minority of 13% do not share this preference. It is worth noting that mobile games constitute a significant segment in the realm of mobile applications. Users often demonstrate readiness to pay for gaming services, as indicated by Penttinen (2016). The accessibility and convenience of mobile games, available anytime and anywhere, contribute to their wide popularity among students. Additionally, many mobile online games available on platforms like the Play Store use English as their primary communication language. A broad vocabulary is necessary for communication in English through these games.

**Figure 1.**

*Students' preferences regarding games*

Question 2: “What language do you use to play the game?”

The data analyzed in Fig. 2 emphasizes that out of 30 respondents, 68% chose "English" as their preferred language for gaming, while 32% opted for "Ukrainian." None of the respondents selected "German" as their preferred language. Therefore, English is more widely used in games. Many games use English as their language because it is an international language, eliminating the need for developers to add additional languages to their games. Video games contain vast amounts of pre-written dialogue and text, offering players extensive linguistic exposure. Multi-player games facilitate communication among players, providing additional opportunities for language input.

**Figure 2.**

*The language which students use for games*

Question 3 “What genre that you usually play?”

The data analyzed in *Fig. 3* reveals that 26% of respondents consistently choose the "Puzzle" genre when playing games. Another substantial portion, comprising 42% of respondents, prefer the "Adventure" genre, while 32% opt for the "Action" genre. In today's era, nearly every student engages with different genres of games based on factors such as their age, maturity level, and available opportunities. Each student may gravitate toward particular roles within games, leading to varied experiences where they encounter different words or meanings based on their perspective (Alemi, 2010). Furthermore, Sundqvist and Wikström (2015) acknowledge the benefits of video games for vocabulary acquisition, they do not specify which games might be the most suitable for this purpose.

**Figure 3.**

*Game genres that students choose*

Question 4 “Can playing games enlarge your vocabulary?”

The analysis of data in Figure 4indicates that 84% of respondents agree with the statement that playing games can increase personal vocabulary, while 16% disagree. This is attributed to the fact that students have the opportunity to engage their imagination and creativity during activities like games in the classroom, which in turn motivates them to learn. When students are interested in the material, they tend to pay more attention to the lessons. Games can enhance students' vocabulary in a flexible and communicative manner (Nguyen, and Khuat, 2003). Donmus (2010) emphasized the importance of using learning games with the support of social networks in foreign language education, where students benefit from continuous interaction while playing games.

**Figure 4.**

*Games and vocabulary*

**Teacher interviews**

Teacher interviews highlighted positive feedback regarding the implementation of game-based lessons. Teachers reported increased student enthusiasm, improved vocabulary recall, and enhanced speaking skills among students. However, some teachers noted challenges in managing game logistics and ensuring equitable participation.

*Can you elaborate on the specific ways you observed games impacting student vocabulary acquisition? Did you see any changes in student confidence or motivation to learn vocabulary?*

Teacher response: "I noticed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition through games. They were more engaged and enthusiastic about learning new words, which boosted their confidence in using vocabulary in various contexts. Games made vocabulary learning fun and interactive, leading to higher motivation levels among students."

*Were there particular game mechanics or features that seemed most effective in promoting vocabulary learning?*

Teacher response: "Games that incorporated repetition, context-based challenges, and immediate feedback were highly effective. Interactive quizzes, word puzzles, and vocabulary-building games encouraged active participation and retention of new words."

*How did the game-based approach compare to traditional vocabulary learning methods in your experience?*

Teacher Response: "In my experience, game-based learning surpassed traditional methods in terms of student engagement and retention. Students were more likely to remember and apply vocabulary learned through games compared to rote memorization or flashcards."

*Can you describe the biggest challenges you faced when implementing game-based lessons in the classroom?*

Teacher response: "One of the challenges was balancing game time with curriculum objectives and time constraints. Ensuring that games aligned with learning outcomes while keeping students focused and on task required careful planning."

*How did you address issues like time constraints and varying student engagement levels?*

Teacher response: "I implemented a structured schedule for game-based lessons, allocating specific time slots for different game activities. Additionally, I used a variety of game formats to cater to different learning styles and maintain high student engagement throughout the lessons."

*What suggestions or recommendations would you give to other teachers who want to integrate game-based learning into their vocabulary instruction?*

Teacher response: "Start with simple, engaging games that align with learning objectives. Incorporate feedback mechanisms to track student progress and adjust game difficulty levels accordingly. Encourage collaboration and competition to enhance motivation and learning outcomes."

*In your opinion, how can game-based learning be further optimized to enhance student vocabulary development?*

Teacher response: "Personalization and adaptive learning features in games could further optimize vocabulary development. Tailoring game content to individual student needs and providing targeted challenges based on proficiency levels can enhance learning effectiveness."

*Are there specific types of games or approaches you'd like to explore further in your classroom?*

Teacher response: "I'm interested in exploring virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) games for vocabulary learning. These immersive technologies can create highly engaging and interactive learning experiences for students."

*What kind of support or resources would be most helpful for teachers who want to integrate game-based learning effectively?*

Teacher response: "Access to a variety of educational games, professional development workshops on game-based pedagogy, and collaboration with experts in educational technology would be valuable resources for teachers looking to integrate game-based learning effectively."

These responses provide insights into teachers' experiences with game-based vocabulary learning, implementation challenges, and recommendations for optimizing game-based learning experiences in the classroom. Summary of feedback are listed in Table 2

**Table 2**

Summary of teacher’s feedback

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Feedback Area | Summary of Feedback |
| Іncreased Student Enthusiasm | Teachers observed a noticeable increase in student enthusiasm and engagement during game-based lessons. |
| Improved Vocabulary Recall | Teachers reported that students showed improved vocabulary recall after participating in game activities. |
| Enhanced Speaking Skills | Teachers noted enhancements in students' speaking skills, attributing them to the interactive nature of games. |
| Challenges with Game Logistics | Some teachers highlighted challenges in managing game logistics, such as technical issues or setup time. |
| Equitable Participation | Teachers mentioned the need to ensure equitable participation among students during game-based activities. |

Figure 5 depicts that 80% of the surveyed teachers gave a positive assessment of the implementation of game-based lessons, while 20% expressed a negative viewpoint.

**Figure 5.**

Teachers` thoughts of game-based lessons

Teacher feedback provided valuable insights into the overall effectiveness of game-based learning in developing lexical competence. Teachers noted increased student engagement, improved retention, and practical application of vocabulary in spoken communication. These findings are consistent with prior research that emphasizes the role of teacher support and instructional design in optimizing the benefits of game-based learning (Alaswad, and Nadolny, 2015). Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences and reinforcing vocabulary acquisition through games.

The qualitative analysis of learner journals revealed that students employed effective strategies and tools for vocabulary acquisition while engaging in game-based activities. Mnemonic devices and contextual usage were prominent strategies mentioned by students.

Comparing these findings with existing literature on vocabulary learning strategies, we find similarities in the effectiveness of mnemonic devices (Amiryousefi, and Ketabi, 2011). Contextual usage, particularly within meaningful contexts like games, has also been recognized as a powerful tool for vocabulary retention (Zou,Huang, and Xie, 2021).

While the results demonstrate the positive impact of game-based learning on lexical competence development, several limitations should be considered. The study's sample size, duration of intervention, and specific game types used could influence the generalizability of findings. Future research should explore a wider range of game formats, consider longitudinal studies for sustained impact assessment, and delve into the transferability of acquired vocabulary to real-world contexts.

# **Discussion**

What is the impact of using games on the development of lexical competence in secondary school students? Learning new vocabulary among high school students is one of the most important aspects of language learning. Lexical competence is the foundation for students’ knowledge. After all, vocabulary is needed for all language skills in English. With the help of interesting games and interactive methods, students can be involved. Games in English lessons captivate students of all ages. Because ordinary vocabulary games become more interesting in the form of a game, the study helps to determine how game-based learning strategies can be used in English lessons. The study highlights the potential of incorporating games into traditional teaching approaches. The study was conducted with English teachers and eleventh grade students. By focusing on the development of lexical competence, the study contributes to improving students’ vocabulary acquisition and usage skills, and also emphasizes the value of a student-centered methodology for improving the language learning experience. The study shows that game-based learning is an effective means of building lexical competence in high school students. The study highlighted the implications for language teaching and learning using a game-based approach. The implications are influenced by many factors, such as the need for innovative approaches, students’ language learning needs, and teaching practices. Games are an important tool for improving vocabulary in an interactive manner. Eleventh grade students participated in the study. Because adolescents often spend time playing games and on their phones. In this study, pre-test scores were compared with post-test scores to assess vocabulary gains.Quantitative data were analyzed to determine whether there was significant improvement in vocabulary. The results of this study, including the improvement in students’ vocabulary after game-based lessons and the effectiveness of the strategies/tools identified for vocabulary learning, are closely aligned with the research questions and the existing literature. When comparing the results with existing studies on the effectiveness of games in vocabulary learning, our findings are consistent with previous studies indicating a statistically significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge after game-based lessons. This supports the idea that game-based learning can effectively improve vocabulary acquisition among middle school students. The results support the hypothesis that game-based learning can positively influence the development of lexical competence among middle school students. The interpretation of the results directly relates to the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. In particular, it confirms that game-based learning is an effective method for improving students’ vocabulary and usage, which replicates the findings of previous studies (Alhebshi, and Gamlo, 2022).

A classroom survey was conducted during which students shared their thoughts. Students identified that the majority often play games. Mobile games are available anytime and anywhere. It is worth noting that mobile games occupy a significant segment in the field of mobile applications. Users often demonstrate a willingness to pay for gaming services, as indicated by Penttinen (2016). Nowadays, many games use English as their language because it is an international language. And most students choose English as their language for games. Today’s students engage in a variety of game genres. Each student may gravitate towards certain roles in games, leading to a variety of experiences as they encounter different words or meanings based on their perspective (Alemi, 2010). Sundqvist and Wikström (2015) acknowledge the benefits of video games for vocabulary acquisition, they do not specify which games may be most suitable for this purpose.Games can expand students’ vocabulary in a flexible and communicative way (Nguyen, and Khuat, 2003). Donmus (2010) emphasized the importance of using educational games with social media support in foreign language teaching, where students benefit from constant interaction while playing. And the survey confirmed that vocabulary can be increased through games.

Interviews were conducted with teachers to explore teachers’ views and opinions on the use of games to learn new vocabulary in English lessons. The teacher interviews provided valuable information on the effectiveness of games in promoting vocabulary learning. Teachers found that game-based lessons were relatively easy to implement and noted a noticeable impact on students’ vocabulary acquisition. However, challenges such as time constraints and varying levels of student engagement were noted. The implications of this study for teaching practice are significant. Educators can use game-based approaches to create engaging and interactive learning environments that promote vocabulary acquisition and retention. The inclusion of mnemonics, contextual use, and interactive game elements is consistent with best practices in language teaching (Landers, Armstrong, and Collmus, 2017). It is argued that games are effective for learning and how they increase student interaction during lessons. The author suggests different types of games that can be used for vocabulary learning and describes specific ones. Students can be adapted and integrated into the learning process. This study helps in the selection of games, in the development of lessons with interactive tasks (Şenol, 2008).

The study also used the student diary method. In the diaries, students provide valuable information about their learning processes and possible difficulties. The diaries were analyzed and it was found out how the lessons using games were conducted according to the students. Analysis of the students’ diaries revealed several key themes. Students often mentioned specific vocabulary words that they had effectively learned in the games, such as “A”, “B” and “C”. They also highlighted strategies such as mnemonics and repetition as useful for remembering new vocabulary. Problems identified included difficulties with pronunciation and contextual understanding of words found in the games. Classroom observations showed active student participation during the game activities with a high level of collaboration and interaction between students. Students demonstrated the use of new vocabulary in conversation, indicating the practical application of vocabulary acquired in the games. Moreover, the observed improvement in language learning outcomes, as evidenced by post-exam assessments, suggests that integrating games into the curriculum can lead to a significant increase in students’ language proficiency. It is argued that new technologies and the Internet are changing learning and its process. One can learn through interactive methods or innovative approaches using technology. Learning with an interactive method improves students’ knowledge and students have access to any information and tasks. The authors even suggest reviewing methods and approaches to learning and starting to implement innovative approaches with new technologies (Collins, and Halverson, 2018).

It has been argued that the game-based approach has led to greater gains in lexical competence over time. Benoit (2017) compared traditional vocabulary training with game-based vocabulary. Much depends on the design of the game, the complexity of the task, the feedback mechanism, and the integration with the curriculum objectives, can affect the effectiveness of games in increasing lexical competence. And much depends on the teaching methods. Because in our study One of the strengths of this study is the use of a mixed methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data to fully understand the impact of game-based learning.

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data confirms the general conclusion that game-based learning has a positive effect on the development of lexical competence of secondary school students. Sarwat, Hamza and Wazeer (2023) argue role-playing games affect the development of students' lexical competence in learning English. The use of the experimental method helps to create an interactive learning environment. Games are recommended for studying lexical units in English lessons. The use of games makes lessons more interesting and active. Students become more motivated during such learning. Teachers are recommended to use the interactive method for the interest of lessons and new experiences.

The convergence of test results, student diaries, classroom observations, and teacher interviews strengthens the argument for the effectiveness of games in vocabulary learning.

By studying the use of games in English lessons, possible rules that can be used both for teaching and learning English were analyzed. In educational work, exercises for learning new vocabulary are important because this is the beginning of learning and improving the language. The main types of games are word games. Word games. can be found on online platforms such as Wordwall or created independently on this online platform. Such a type as role-playing games are very practical to use in the classroom because they work in pairs and in groups. By studying the use of games in English lessons, possible rules that can be used both for teaching and learning English were analyzed. In educational work, exercises for learning new vocabulary are important because this is the beginning of learning and improving the language. The main types of games are word games. Word games. can be found on online platforms such as Wordwall or created independently on this online platform. Such a type as role-playing games are very practical to use in the classroom because they work in pairs and in groups. By collecting and analyzing a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of how games influence the development of vocabulary competence in secondary school students. The findings will be compared with existing literature to contribute to the body of knowledge on effective game-based language learning strategies.

Our study confirms existing literature that highlights the benefits of game-based approaches in language learning. However, it also identifies challenges that need to be addressed, such as pronunciation difficulties and ensuring sustained student engagement throughout lessons.

The study may also suggest areas for further research, such as examining the effectiveness of different types of games or the impact of games on specific vocabulary skills. This action research approach allows for continuous improvement in teaching practice by allowing the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the game-based intervention and refine it based on the data collected.

Based on the findings and limitations identified, several recommendations for further action and areas for future research can be formulated:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term retention and transferability of vocabulary learned through game-based methods.

2. Conduct research on the effectiveness of different types of games (e.g., digital and physical, competitive and collaborative) on vocabulary learning outcomes.

3. Provide teachers with professional development opportunities to effectively integrate game-based approaches into language teaching practices.

4. Research the role of contextualized learning environments in games in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency.

These recommendations aim to build on the findings of the current study and contribute to the ongoing development of effective game-based language learning strategies. Future studies with larger samples and longer-term follow-up may provide a deeper understanding of the sustained effects of game-based learning on lexical competence.

# **Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the impact of game-based learning on the development of lexical competence among secondary school students. The main research question focused on exploring the effectiveness of game-based approaches in enhancing vocabulary knowledge and usage within the context of English language learning.

The research process involved a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores with qualitative analysis of learner journals, classroom observations, and teacher interviews. This comprehensive approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the research topic and provided rich insights into the effectiveness of game-based learning strategies.

The findings of this study revealed a significant improvement in students' vocabulary knowledge following game-based lessons, as well as the identification of effective vocabulary acquisition strategies and positive teacher feedback on the impact of game-based approaches.

The research conducted through surveys provided valuable insights into students' preferences, language use, genre choices, and perceptions regarding games and vocabulary acquisition. Across four pages of analysis, several key findings emerge.

In conclusion, the research underscores the significance of games as engaging tools for vocabulary acquisition, driven by factors such as accessibility, language use, genre preferences, and motivational aspects. Understanding these dynamics can inform educators and developers in designing effective game-based learning experiences that promote language skills and cognitive development among students.

The key contributions of this research lie in the validation of game-based learning as a viable and effective method for promoting lexical competence among secondary school students. The study's findings underscore the importance of interactive and engaging learning experiences in language education.

Implications for language teaching and learning include:

1. The integration of mnemonic devices, contextual usage, and interactive game elements to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

2. The role of teacher support and instructional design in optimizing the benefits of game-based learning.

3. The potential for game-based approaches to foster student engagement, motivation, and practical application of language skills.

These implications have significant implications for pedagogical practices in language teaching, highlighting the need for innovative and student-centered approaches to language learning.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the growing body of research on game-based language learning by providing empirical evidence of its effectiveness in developing lexical competence. The critical reflection on the research process and findings underscores the validity and reliability of the study's outcomes, while also acknowledging areas for further exploration and improvement.

Overall, this research serves as a foundation for future studies and pedagogical innovations aimed at enhancing language teaching and learning through interactive and engaging methodologies.

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# **Appendices**

**Appendix А**

Tasks to determine the lexical level of students before the study.

Pre-Test Questions:

1. Choose the synonym for "abundant":

 a) Scarce

 b) Plentiful

 c) Limited

 d) Sparse

2. What is the correct definition of "elaborate"?

 a) Simple

 b) Complicated

 c) Brief

 d) Vague

3. Identify the antonym for "ancient":

 a) Modern

 b) Old-fashioned

 c) Antique

 d) Vintage

4. Which word is an adjective?

 a) Run

 b) Happy

 c) Jump

 d) Fast

5. Select the word that means "to make clear":

 a) Confuse

 b) Clarify

 c) Complicate

 d) Obscure

**Appendix B**

Tasks to determine the lexical level of students after the study.

Post-Test Questions:

1. What is the synonym for "punctual"?

 a) Tardy

 b) Late

 c) Prompt

 d) Delayed

2. Provide the opposite of "expand":

 a) Shrink

 b) Enlarge

 c) Increase

 d) Grow

3. Choose the word that means "to persuade":

 a) Convince

 b) Deter

 c) Discourage

 d) Dissuade

4. Which word is a noun?

 a) Swim

 b) Running

 c) Runner

 d) Run

5. Select the correct definition of "ambiguous":

 a) Clear

 b) Uncertain

 c) Specific

 d) Obvious

**Appendix C**

Teacher interview questions

***Effectiveness of Games:***

* Can you elaborate on the specific ways you observed games impacting student vocabulary acquisition? Did you see any changes in student confidence or motivation to learn vocabulary?
* Were there particular game mechanics or features that seemed most effective in promoting vocabulary learning?
* How did the game-based approach compare to traditional vocabulary learning methods in your experience?

***Implementation and Challenges:***

* Can you describe the biggest challenges you faced when implementing game-based lessons in the classroom?
* How did you address issues like time constraints and varying student engagement levels?
* What suggestions or recommendations would you give to other teachers who want to integrate game-based learning into their vocabulary instruction?

***Future Considerations:***

* In your opinion, how can game-based learning be further optimized to enhance student vocabulary development?
* Are there specific types of games or approaches you'd like to explore further in your classroom?
* What kind of support or resources would be most helpful for teachers who want to integrate game-based learning effectively?