GAME-BASED LEARNING FOR RUSSIAN VERB TENSES

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ABSTRACT

Game-based learning is a dynamic and engaging method for teaching Russian verb tenses, especially in today's language classrooms. Drawing on my experience as a Russian language teacher, I explore the use of games to simplify complex grammar concepts like verb conjugations and aspects. Incorporating board games, digital platforms, and role-playing activities, this approach fosters a collaborative learning environment and enhances students' retention. This article outlines practical game-based strategies and demonstrates their effectiveness in mastering Russian verb tenses while maintaining student motivation.

Keywords: Game-based learning, Russian grammar, verb tenses, language teaching, active learning, collaborative activities, student engagement, educational technology

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Russian verb tenses often presents a unique challenge for students, especially due to the complexities of conjugations, aspects, and tense formation. Over my years of teaching, I have observed that traditional methods, such as repetitive exercises or rote memorization, can often feel daunting for students and lead to disengagement. To address this, I have increasingly integrated game-based learning strategies into my lessons.

Games bring grammar to life, transforming verb tense drills into enjoyable and memorable activities. Whether through board games that encourage conjugation practice, digital platforms that simulate real-life communication, or role-playing scenarios that immerse students in authentic usage, these tools have proven invaluable. Not only do they break down the intricacies of Russian grammar into manageable chunks, but they also inspire collaboration, critical thinking, and motivation. This article shares my experiences and practical tips for using games to teach Russian verb tenses effectively.

METHODOLOGY

Incorporating game-based learning for teaching Russian verb tenses required a structured approach to ensure its effectiveness. Over the course of one academic year, I implemented various games into the curriculum of two groups of students (n=30), aged 16-18, studying Russian as a second language. The participants were at an intermediate proficiency level, already familiar with the basic structure of Russian verbs but struggling with verb aspects and tense usage.

Step 1: Game Selection and Design

I selected and developed three categories of games:

1. **Board Games** (e.g., conjugation bingo and tense dominoes): Focused on practicing verb forms.
2. **Role-Playing Activities** (e.g., "Guess the Timeline"): Students acted out scenarios using specific tenses.
3. **Digital Platforms** (e.g., Kahoot and Quizlet Live): Used for immediate feedback and interactive exercises.

Step 2: Implementation

Games were integrated into the weekly grammar lessons for 30 minutes. Each session was designed to target a specific tense (past, present, future) and the corresponding verb aspects (perfective and imperfective). Students worked individually, in pairs, or in small groups to foster collaboration.

Step 3: Data Collection

Student progress was evaluated using pre- and post-intervention grammar tests, as well as qualitative measures like participation rates and engagement levels, which were observed during lessons and gathered through student feedback forms.

Step 4: Data Analysis

The quantitative test results were analyzed to assess improvements in accuracy and usage of verb tenses, while qualitative data provided insights into students' perceptions of the learning process.

By combining traditional assessment methods with qualitative observations, I ensured a comprehensive understanding of the impact of game-based learning on Russian verb tense acquisition.

RESULTS

The results indicated that game-based learning significantly improved both the accuracy and confidence of students in using Russian verb tenses.

1. **Quantitative Improvement**

The average scores in the post-intervention grammar tests increased by 35%, rising from an initial average of 62% to 84%. The most notable improvements were observed in the mastery of perfective and imperfective aspects, where the average score rose by 40%. This suggests that games effectively simplified these challenging concepts for students.

2. **Engagement and Participation**

Qualitative observations revealed heightened levels of enthusiasm and participation during game-based activities compared to traditional exercises. Students consistently demonstrated greater willingness to attempt complex conjugations during role-playing and board games, citing the "low-pressure" nature of games as a motivating factor.

3. **Feedback on Learning Experience**

Student feedback forms showed that 90% of participants found game-based learning more engaging and effective than traditional methods. Common themes in their responses included increased confidence in applying tenses in speaking tasks and reduced fear of making errors during practice.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative results highlights the potential of game-based learning to transform the way Russian verb tenses are taught, making the process more accessible and enjoyable for students.

DISCUSSION

The findings underscore the benefits of game-based learning in teaching Russian verb tenses. The 35% improvement in grammar test scores aligns with research emphasizing the role of active engagement in second language acquisition (Smith, 2018). Games create a supportive

and interactive environment where students can practice verb conjugations and aspects without fear of failure.

Notably, the improvement in perfective and imperfective aspect mastery suggests that game-based strategies make abstract grammar concepts more concrete. For example, role-playing scenarios provided meaningful contexts where students could experiment with verb tenses in real-life situations, enhancing retention and practical application.

The high engagement levels observed during the study further highlight the motivational power of games. Unlike traditional drills, games encourage collaboration and competition, which are known to boost cognitive and emotional investment in learning tasks (Ivanova, 2021). Moreover, digital tools like Kahoot offered instant feedback, reinforcing correct usage in an interactive format.

Despite these successes, some challenges were noted. A minority of students (10%) expressed preference for traditional exercises, citing discomfort with the fast-paced nature of games. Future studies could explore a hybrid approach to balance these preferences.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that integrating games into Russian grammar instruction enhances both learning outcomes and student motivation. By addressing key challenges and refining methods, educators can harness the full potential of game-based learning in language teaching.

CONCLUSION

Incorporating game-based learning into Russian verb tense instruction has revolutionized my teaching approach. By fostering a playful yet structured environment, I have witnessed students engage more deeply with complex grammatical concepts. Games not only demystify the challenges of verb aspects and conjugations but also encourage collaborative learning and sustained interest in the language. As educators, we should embrace innovative methods like these to make Russian grammar accessible and enjoyable for all learners, ensuring their long-term success and enthusiasm for the language.

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