INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LEARNING FRENCH: THE ROLE OF GAME-BASED EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract. *This article explores contemporary approaches to learning French through the integration of game-based educational technologies across face-to-face, blended, and digital learning environments. The primary objective is to analyze recent scholarly evidence and formulate an instructional framework grounded in communicative language teaching and task-based pedagogy. A structured review of peer-reviewed literature was conducted, focusing on key learning outcomes such as motivation, vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence. The findings demonstrate that game-based approaches significantly enhance learner engagement, increase retention of lexical material, and improve overall learning efficiency when game mechanics are meaningfully aligned with linguistic objectives and supported by continuous feedback. The most consistent improvements were associated with adaptive learning systems, spaced repetition techniques, and communicative task design. However, poorly implemented gamification may result in superficial engagement without measurable learning gains. The article concludes that effective use of game-based technologies requires pedagogical coherence, personalization, and active teacher facilitation.*

Keywords*: game-based learning, gamification, French as a foreign language, communicative competence, adaptive learning, digital pedagogy, language acquisition.*

Introduction

In recent years, foreign language education has undergone significant transformation due to the rapid development of digital technologies and innovative pedagogical models. Traditional approaches, which primarily emphasized memorization and grammar translation, are increasingly being replaced by interactive and learner-centered methods. Within this evolving educational landscape, game-based learning has emerged as a powerful instructional strategy. French, as a widely spoken international language, plays an important role in diplomacy, academia, and global communication. However, mastering French presents several challenges for learners, including complex grammatical structures, phonological difficulties, and the need for communicative fluency. These challenges are further intensified in contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic language use.

Game-based educational technologies provide a promising solution by transforming learning into an engaging and interactive process. By integrating elements such as goals, challenges, feedback, and progression, these approaches can increase learner motivation and facilitate deeper language acquisition. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends not merely on the presence of game elements but on their alignment with pedagogical objectives. Game-based learning and gamification are often used interchangeably, yet they represent distinct pedagogical concepts. Game-based learning refers to the use of complete game environments in which language learning occurs through participation in structured gameplay. In contrast, gamification

involves the application of individual game elements –such as points, badges, and leaderboards – to non-game educational contexts.

Both approaches can support French language learning, but their effectiveness depends on how they are implemented. Research suggests that superficial use of game elements may increase engagement temporarily but does not necessarily lead to meaningful learning outcomes. In contrast, well-designed game-based environments can promote cognitive engagement, problem-solving, and communicative interaction. According to Ergashevich, K. M. (2021), game technologies serve as a strong motivational factor and contribute significantly to the development of communicative competence in foreign language learning. This highlights the importance of integrating games into language teaching practices.

The theoretical basis of game-based learning is rooted in constructivist and communicative language teaching principles. Learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and meaningful use of language. Games create a context in which learners are required to use language purposefully, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. This study employed a structured literature review methodology to analyze recent research on game-based learning in foreign language education. The review focused primarily on studies published between 2020 and 2024 in peer-reviewed journals and academic databases. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Studies addressing game-based or gamified language learning;
- Research reporting measurable learning outcomes;
- Clear description of instructional design and implementation.

Data were systematically extracted and analyzed according to several variables, including:

- Learning outcomes (vocabulary, grammar, speaking, interaction);
- Instructional design features;
- Learning environment (online, blended, classroom-based);
- Research methodology and duration.

The analysis involved thematic coding to identify patterns in effectiveness and to determine which design elements contributed most significantly to successful learning outcomes. The most consistent findings across the reviewed studies indicate that game-based learning significantly improves vocabulary acquisition and retention. This is largely due to the integration of spaced repetition and retrieval practice within game mechanics. Learners engage in repeated exposure to lexical items in varied contexts, which strengthens memory consolidation. Additionally, gamified systems encourage frequent practice through short, manageable learning sessions. This increased time-on-task contributes to more stable and long-term retention of vocabulary.

The impact of game-based learning on grammar development is less consistent. While some studies report improvements in grammatical accuracy, these gains are primarily observed in contexts where grammar is integrated into communicative tasks. In contrast, isolated grammar drills embedded in gamified systems tend to produce limited transfer to real-life communication. This suggests that grammar learning is most effective when it is contextualized and linked to meaningful language use.

Game-based technologies show potential in improving pronunciation and speaking skills, particularly when they incorporate multimodal input and immediate feedback. Interactive tasks that require learners to produce spoken language can increase confidence and fluency. However, the effectiveness of such tools depends on the accuracy of speech recognition systems and the quality of feedback provided. In many cases, teacher guidance remains essential for achieving

reliable improvements. One of the most significant advantages of game-based learning is its ability to enhance motivation and engagement. Learners are more likely to participate actively in tasks that are structured as challenges or missions.

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between short-term engagement and long-term motivation. While game elements such as rewards and competition can increase initial interest, sustained motivation requires meaningful learning experiences and a sense of progress. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of game-based learning depends on the degree to which it is aligned with pedagogical objectives. Simply adding game elements to a lesson does not guarantee improved learning outcomes. Instead, successful implementation requires careful design that integrates linguistic goals, communicative tasks, and meaningful feedback. Adaptive learning systems that adjust difficulty based on learner performance are particularly effective in maintaining engagement and supporting individual progress.

Collaboration also plays a crucial role. Cooperative game formats encourage interaction and communication, which are essential for developing communicative competence in French. In contrast, excessive competition may negatively affect less confident learners. Based on the findings, an effective game-based instructional framework for French language learning should include the following components:

1. Alignment of game mechanics with linguistic objectives;
2. Integration of communicative tasks;
3. Use of immediate and informative feedback;
4. Adaptive progression based on learner performance;
5. Combination of digital and classroom-based activities;
6. Evaluation based on learning outcomes rather than engagement alone.

Game-based educational technologies represent a highly effective approach to learning French when implemented within a coherent pedagogical framework. They enhance motivation, improve vocabulary retention, and support communicative language development.

Conclusion

However, their success depends on thoughtful design, appropriate integration into teaching practice, and active teacher involvement. Future research should focus on long-term effects and the development of reliable assessment methods for communicative competence.

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