

**USING PLAY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES TO
DEVELOP LEXICAL COMPETENCE AMONG YOUNG EFL LEARNERS**

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Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada o'yin asosidagi o'qitish texnologiyalari yordamida young EFL learners — ingliz tilini o'rganayotgan yosh o'quvchilarda leksik kompetensiyani rivojlantirish masalasi yoritiladi. Socrative, Quizlet, Memrise kabi raqamli vositalarning lug'atni o'zlashtirish, uzoq muddatli xotirani shakllantirish va faol ta'lim jarayonini kuchaytirishdagi roli tahlil qilinadi. Yosh o'quvchilarning psixologik xususiyatlari va o'yin asosidagi metodlarni an'anaviy dars yondashuvlari bilan uyg'unlashtirish zaruriyati alohida ko'rsatib o'tiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, o'yin asosidagi texnologiyalar to'g'ri qo'llanganida, lug'atni eslab qolish samaradorligini oshiradi va motivatsion, interaktiv o'quv muhiti yaratadi.

Tayanch so'zlar: young EFL learners, o'yin asosidagi ta'lim, lug'at o'rgatish, raqamli vositalar, Socrative, Quizlet, xotira mustahkamlanishi.

Abstract. This article explores the didactic potential of play-based instructional technologies in developing lexical competence among young EFL learners. The study analyzes how digital tools such as Socrative, Quizlet, and Memrise can enhance vocabulary acquisition, long-term memory, and active learner engagement. Particular attention is given to the psychological characteristics of young learners and the importance of balancing play-based methods with traditional instructional approaches. The findings suggest that play-based technologies, when used appropriately, significantly improve vocabulary retention and create a motivating and interactive learning environment.

Keywords: young EFL learners, play-based learning, vocabulary acquisition, digital instructional tools, Socrative, Quizlet, memory retention.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается дидактический потенциал игровых образовательных технологий в развитии лексической компетенции у молодых изучающих английский язык (*young EFL learners*). Анализируется влияние цифровых инструментов, таких как *Socrative*, *Quizlet* и *Memrise*, на усвоение словарного запаса, долгосрочную память и активное участие учащихся. Особое внимание уделяется психологическим особенностям младших обучающихся и необходимости сочетать игровые методы с традиционными подходами. Результаты показывают, что при правильном использовании игровые технологии значительно повышают усвоение лексики и формируют мотивирующую, интерактивную образовательную среду.

Ключевые слова: *young EFL learners*, игровое обучение, развитие словарного запаса, цифровые образовательные инструменты, *Socrative*, *Quizlet*, долговременная память.

Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technologies into education has transformed the ways young EFL learners acquire vocabulary. Vocabulary forms the foundation of early language learning, and effective mastery at this stage has a long-lasting impact on subsequent communicative competence. **Play-based instructional technologies**, which incorporate elements of play into pedagogical processes, align naturally with the cognitive and emotional needs of young learners. These methods not only foster intrinsic motivation but also provide opportunities for multisensory engagement, repetition, and meaningful interaction.

Pedagogical Significance of Play-Based Instruction for Young EFL Learners

Play constitutes a central component of child development. When instructional activities incorporate game-like mechanisms such as achievement badges, point accumulation, challenge tasks, and interactive feedback, they support:

- enhanced motivation and curiosity;
- improved attention and engagement;

- context-rich language exposure;
- effective memory processing;
- reduced anxiety during learning.

Play-based learning supports the natural learning style of young EFL learners, making abstract linguistic input more concrete and enjoyable.

Balancing Play-Based Methods with Traditional Instruction

Scholars (Kaya & Balta, 2016) highlight that while digital and play-based tools offer numerous advantages, they should complement — not replace — traditional teaching practices. Overreliance on digital play can result in:

- decreased face-to-face communication,
- reduced teacher–learner interaction,
- overstimulation and distraction,
- passive consumption of digital content.

Therefore, integrating storytelling, Total Physical Response (TPR), role-play, repetition, and phonics-based instruction with play-based digital activities ensures a balanced and developmentally appropriate approach.

The Role of Socrative in Vocabulary Development

Socrative is a real-time assessment tool that allows teachers to conduct quizzes, polls, and interactive exercises. For young EFL learners, its main advantages include:

- instant feedback, which reinforces correct answers immediately;
- automatic error identification, helping children notice and correct mistakes;
- gamified quiz formats, which maintain attention;
- teacher-led monitoring, enabling personalized vocabulary support;
- parental involvement through the student interface.

Research shows that real-time feedback significantly increases learners' motivation and improves lexical retention over time.

Strengthening Long-Term Memory through Quizlet and Memrise

Quizlet and Memrise provide digital flashcards enriched with visuals, audio, spaced repetition systems (SRS), and competitive elements. According to Warren (2019), such tools improve long-term memory by:

- providing repeated exposure to vocabulary;
- engaging multiple sensory channels;
- enabling self-paced learning;
- encouraging recall through retrieval practice;
- increasing learner autonomy and confidence.

These tools follow the pedagogical principle that vocabulary must be “watered” regularly — revisited multiple times — to transition from short-term to long-term memory.

Psychological and Linguistic Advantages for Young EFL Learners

Play-based instructional approaches support critical cognitive and emotional needs:

- naturally high play motivation;
- preference for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning;
- short attention spans requiring dynamic activities;
- social learning through cooperation and simple competition;
- reduced anxiety when making mistakes.

As a result, vocabulary instruction becomes enjoyable, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate for young learners.

Conclusion

Play-based instructional technologies offer substantial benefits in developing lexical competence among young EFL learners. When integrated

purposefully with traditional methods, tools such as Socrative, Quizlet, and Memrise promote active engagement, strengthen long-term vocabulary retention, and create a positive learning atmosphere. Considering the psychological characteristics of young learners, play-based techniques can transform vocabulary learning into an effective, motivating, and interactive process.

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