



GAME-BASED LEARNING AND ITS EFFECT ON LISTENING COMPREHENSION AND LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN EFL CLASSROOMS



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Abstract: *Listening comprehension remains one of the most challenging skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly in contexts where learners have limited exposure to authentic spoken input. Traditional listening instruction often relies on repetitive exercises that may fail to sustain learner attention and engagement. In recent years, game-based learning has emerged as an instructional approach capable of creating interactive and motivating learning environments. This study investigates the effect of game-based learning on listening comprehension and learner engagement in EFL classrooms. A mixed-method research design was employed, combining experimental instruction, listening comprehension tests, learner questionnaires, and classroom observation. The findings indicate that learners exposed to game-based listening activities demonstrate improved comprehension, higher levels of attention, and increased engagement during listening tasks. The scientific novelty of the study lies in its integrated analysis of cognitive listening outcomes and behavioural engagement*



within a formal higher education context. The results contribute to applied linguistics by providing empirical evidence supporting game-based learning as an effective approach to listening instruction in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *game-based learning, listening comprehension, learner engagement, EFL classrooms, applied linguistics*

Annotatsiya (o'zbek tilida): *Mazkur tadqiqot ingliz tilini xorijiy til sifatida o'qitishda o'yin asosidagi ta'limning tinglab tushunish ko'nikmasi va o'quvchilarning darsdagi faolligiga ta'sirini o'rganishga bag'ishlangan. Tinglab tushunish EFL ta'limining eng murakkab jihatlaridan biri bo'lib, an'anaviy darslarda o'quvchilarning e'tiborini uzoq vaqt saqlab turish qiyin kechadi. Tadqiqot aralash metodologiya asosida olib borilib, eksperimental darslar, tinglab tushunish testlari, so'rovnomalar va dars kuzatuvlari qo'llanildi. Natijalar o'yin asosidagi ta'lim o'quvchilarning tinglab tushunish darajasini oshirish, e'tiborini kuchaytirish va dars jarayoniga faol jalb etishda samarali ekanini ko'rsatdi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *o'yin asosidagi ta'lim, tinglab tushunish, o'quvchi faolligi, EFL, til o'qitish*

Аннотация (на русском языке): *В статье рассматривается влияние обучения на основе игр на развитие навыков аудирования и учебной вовлечённости обучающихся в условиях обучения английскому языку как иностранному. Аудирование остаётся одним из наиболее сложных видов речевой деятельности в EFL-обучении. Исследование основано на смешанном методологическом подходе и включает экспериментальное обучение, тестирование аудирования, анкетирование и наблюдение. Полученные результаты подтверждают, что игровое обучение способствует улучшению понимания устной речи и повышению вовлечённости обучающихся.*

Ключевые слова: *игровое обучение, аудирование, учебная вовлечённость, EFL, методика преподавания*

Introduction



Listening comprehension is a fundamental component of communicative competence, as it underpins learners' ability to participate effectively in spoken interaction. In EFL contexts, listening is often perceived as one of the most difficult skills to master due to factors such as fast speech rate, unfamiliar accents, reduced forms, and limited exposure to authentic spoken input. These challenges are frequently compounded by instructional practices that emphasise passive listening and comprehension testing rather than active engagement with spoken language. Traditional listening instruction typically involves listening to audio recordings followed by comprehension questions. While such practices may develop certain receptive skills, they often fail to maintain learner attention or encourage meaningful processing of spoken input. As a result, learners may experience listening fatigue, reduced motivation, and limited improvement in comprehension ability.

Recent developments in applied linguistics and educational technology have highlighted the importance of learner engagement in successful listening development. Engagement involves behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, all of which contribute to sustained attention and deeper processing of input. In this context, game-based learning has emerged as a promising pedagogical approach capable of transforming listening activities into interactive and motivating experiences. Game-based learning involves the use of games or game-like tasks as the central instructional activity. Through elements such as challenge, feedback, competition, and collaboration, game-based learning encourages learners to actively process spoken input and remain engaged throughout the learning process. Although previous research has demonstrated the motivational benefits of game-based learning, its specific impact on listening comprehension and engagement in higher education EFL classrooms remains underexplored.





The present study aims to address this gap by investigating the effectiveness of game-based learning in developing listening comprehension and enhancing learner engagement. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does game-based learning affect listening comprehension in EFL learners?
2. What impact does game-based learning have on learner engagement during listening activities?
3. How do learners perceive game-based listening instruction?

Methods

The study employed a mixed-method research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of listening development and learner engagement. Participants were 74 undergraduate students enrolled in an English language programme at a higher education institution. All participants demonstrated an intermediate level of English proficiency and were divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received listening instruction through game-based learning activities over a twelve-week period. These activities included audio-based quizzes, interactive listening games, information-gap challenges, competitive listening tasks, and problem-solving games requiring comprehension of spoken input. The control group followed traditional listening instruction based on textbook recordings and comprehension questions.

Data collection instruments included pre- and post-listening comprehension tests, learner engagement questionnaires, and structured classroom observations. Listening tests measured comprehension of main ideas, specific details, and inferred meaning. Engagement questionnaires assessed behavioural, cognitive, and emotional



involvement in listening tasks. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and comparative statistical methods to identify differences between groups. Qualitative data from observations and open-ended questionnaire responses were analysed thematically. Reliability was ensured through standardised testing procedures and inter-rater agreement, while validity was strengthened through triangulation of multiple data sources.

Results

The results revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups following the instructional intervention. Pre-test results indicated no statistically significant differences in listening comprehension between the two groups at the beginning of the study. However, post-test results demonstrated notable improvement among learners exposed to game-based listening instruction. Learners in the experimental group achieved higher scores in listening comprehension tasks assessing understanding of main ideas, specific information, and implied meaning. These improvements were particularly evident in tasks involving fast-paced or dialogic speech, suggesting enhanced processing of authentic spoken input.

Classroom observation data revealed higher levels of learner engagement in the experimental group. Learners demonstrated sustained attention during listening activities, actively participated in game-based tasks, and showed greater willingness to repeat listening attempts. Engagement questionnaires further confirmed increased interest, enjoyment, and concentration during listening lessons. The findings indicate that game-based learning positively affects both listening comprehension and learner engagement, highlighting its dual cognitive and motivational impact.

Discussion

The findings of the study provide empirical support for the effectiveness of game-based learning in developing listening comprehension and enhancing learner engagement in EFL classrooms. From a cognitive perspective, game-based listening activities encourage repeated exposure to spoken input and promote deeper processing through active task involvement. This aligns with contemporary views in

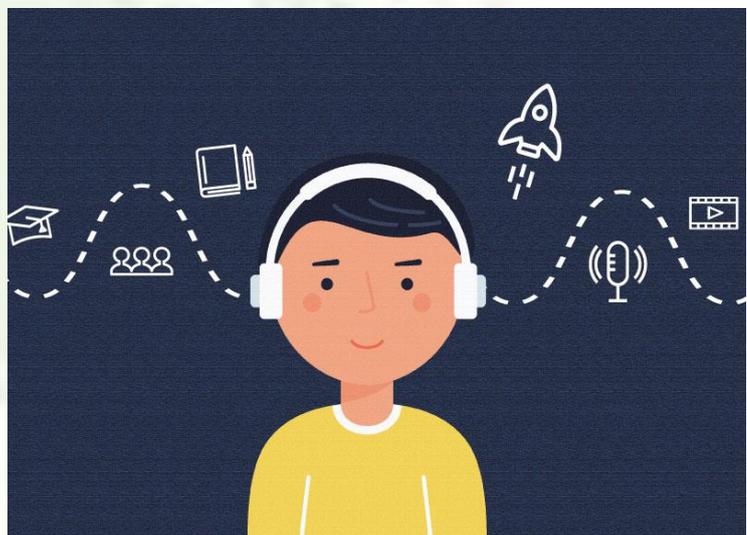


applied linguistics emphasising the importance of attention and meaningful input in listening development. From a pedagogical standpoint, game-based learning transforms listening from a passive activity into an interactive experience. By incorporating challenge and feedback, games maintain learner attention and reduce listening anxiety. This supports learner engagement, which has been identified as a key factor in successful listening comprehension.

The results also resonate with interactionist perspectives on language learning, which highlight the role of meaningful engagement with input. Compared to traditional listening instruction, game-based learning provides opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, predict content, and respond actively to spoken language. Unlike studies focusing solely on motivation, the present research demonstrates measurable gains in listening comprehension alongside increased engagement. The study contributes to applied linguistics by extending existing research on game-based learning to the domain of listening instruction, an area that has received comparatively limited attention. It demonstrates that game-based learning can be systematically integrated into listening pedagogy to support both comprehension and engagement.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that game-based learning constitutes an effective pedagogical approach for improving listening comprehension and enhancing learner engagement in EFL classrooms. The scientific novelty of the research lies in its



integrated analysis of listening outcomes and engagement within a formal academic context. Despite limitations related to sample size and instructional duration, the



findings offer valuable implications for EFL pedagogy and applied linguistics. Future research should examine the long-term effects of game-based listening instruction and explore its applicability across different proficiency levels and learning environments.

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