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Video games as a method for learning English

The article evaluates the effectiveness of the method for learning English through video games of different genres. The action-adventure game «It Takes Two» is considered in detail. A survey of Russian students and schoolchildren about video games was conducted, the conclusions were made and recommendations were given on how to study English more effectively with the help of video games.

Key words: video games; language learning method; game technology; vocabulary; listening comprehension; sociological survey.

The popular portal IGN, citing a study by DFC Intelligence, reports that 3.1 billion inhabitants of the Earth are gamers. It follows that about 40% of the world population plays video games [3, p. 12].

The most popular games are considered: «Minecraft», «Grand Theft Auto V», «Tetris», «Wii Sports», «PUBG: Battlegrounds». All of them are developed in English and translated into different languages. We can consider each of them, except Tetris, as almost a full-fledged way to learn English.

The main advantages of this method are:

1. Uninhibited memorization of new words, that is, an increase in vocabulary;
2. Improved listening comprehension and easier understanding of grammar;
3. Mediated immersion into the English-speaking environment;
4. Natural human interest, motivation to achieve the goal.

This happens because high interest and an emotional background create favorable conditions for assimilation of information. Emotions spur the brain to create new associations, and when playing, there are many more of them. And memorization occurs as if by itself – without any extra effort on the part of the person [2, p. 154].

It is possible to learn English with the help of any genre of the games. Starting from single quests and ending with multiplayer games, where a player interacts with other people. Consider this method on the example of the action-adventure game «It Takes Two».

The game should be played in pairs, on the network or on a single device. That is, in addition to the pleasure of the game, gamers get a number of additional tools that will help in learning the language. This is communication with another person, learning together. You can play and practice your spoken English at the same time. If you do not know some words, your partner in the game can tell you or you can figure out together what you do not understand.

The game has subtitles in both Russian and English. Everyone can choose what they are most comfortable with.

The developers offer a delightfully explosive gameplay, as well as an interesting story about the relationship between the characters. The essence of the game is to go through various quests, while we are told a story about a family in which there has been a rift. As the game progresses, we reconcile the characters and at the end, a happy conclusion awaits us. Excellent soundtracks accompany the interesting narrative. Thus, during the game, puzzle-solving skills are developed, listening to English speech is trained, and the music and colorful design allows for aesthetic pleasure.

As part of this study, a sociological survey was conducted among Russian schoolchildren and students about how interested they were in video games and learning English through them (see fig.). More than 150 respondents participated in the survey.
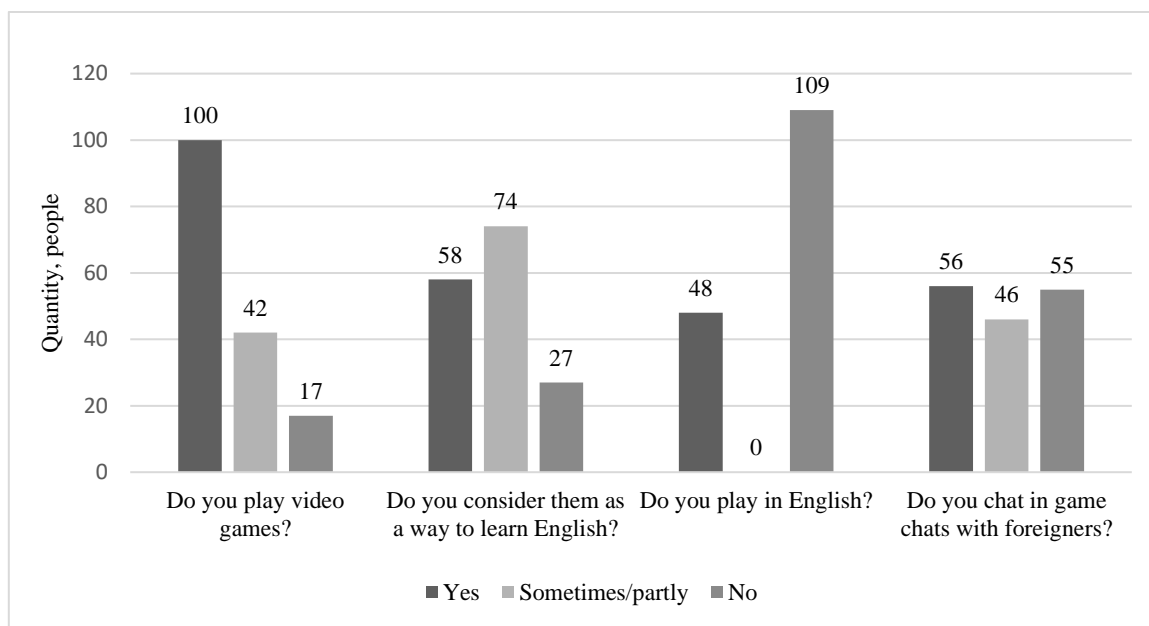

Fig. Results of a sociological survey

According to the results, 89% of those surveyed currently play games or have played before, with only 30% of them playing in English. Most of them noted that they consider video games as a way to learn English, and these people also communicate in game chats with foreigners. Here we can see that

games act not only as a direct way to learn a language, but also as a linking mechanism between people from different linguistic backgrounds.

This low rate of users choosing English for gameplay may be a consequence of the low level of language proficiency among schoolchildren and students and the fear of missing something important during the game because of it.

Regardless of the genre of the game, you can learn English. Somewhere you will learn more vocabulary, somewhere you can practice your grammar, and somewhere the opportunity to practice with other native speakers is realized. All of this is combined in the genre of role-playing games, which are considered the most appropriate for learning English. However, it is not necessary to choose these games.

The main recommendation to make this method the most effective is to choose a game that will bring you the most pleasure. You can play alone, or you can practice English with friends or people from other countries.

In addition, this method can be introduced in the educational process of educational institutions [1, p. 164], choosing some simple games that do not require a lot of time and high skills in this field. Video games can help learners to learn English on their own in addition to the main lessons. This can be implemented both on the phone and on the computer, so a person can play and learn the language anywhere. For example, even existing applications for learning English («Lingualeo» and others) use game technology to make learning and memorization more effective.

An important part of any learning experience is tracking progress. This method is no exception. You should be tested periodically to determine your English level in order to develop the most effective learning trajectories and to identify the games that bring the most benefit.

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