Video Games and the Improvement of English Learning: University Students Perspective

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Abstract
People say that video games give bad influence to people, especially young generation. However, with the development of technology all over the world, almost all people – from young to old – are playing games with their gadgets: a notebook, a computer, a tablet or smartphones. It means that playing games are the activities which cannot be separated from the gamers (mostly students). The good effect is video games that use English as the means of communication can help students of non-English natives to learn English. The purpose of this study is to get students perspectives about video games that relate to English learning. The participants are 35 Binus University first semester students majoring in Cyber Security, who love video games very much. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative. The students are asked to write in English their opinion about playing video games that relate to their English learning. The results prove that all of them (100%) declared that they improve their English from playing the video games. Besides the good things, 80% of the students admitted that video games either on-line or off-line give bad impacts, like addiction and wasting time. To avoid the negative influence of video games, the students suggest the gamers manage their time effectively. In addition, parents need to have a control to protect their children from bad effects of online games.

Keywords: Video Games; English learning; Students perspective

Introduction

Motivation is basically important in learning because the result will be unsuccessful without it. As Simatupang (2008:227) suggested that one of the factors that contributed to learning effectively is motivation. Students will do their best if they enthusiast to study and nobody can stop them. Nowadays learning in class is considered boring and students lose their appetite to study further. It is different when they play the games, online or off-line, they intentionally devote their time, effort, even money to play the games. This rightly supported by Prensky (2003:1) who remarked that the attitude of today's children toward their video and computer games is the very opposite of the attitude that most of them have toward school. Subsequently, students reluctantly perform their school assignments or discussion report. They accomplish their work due to the obligation they have during the school procedures. It will be contradictory when they debate about the remarkable video game programs, which they naturally and freely inform the others to play the same.

Games these days have already been parts of human's life, for example the physical games like hide-and-seek or board games like monopoly and chess. With the development of the technology, nowadays video games are more popular because they are more fun and contain a lot of categories can be found in the games. More youth have played the video games; mostly dedicating their time to take parts in the games. As the consequences, every "now and then" they waste their time with their games thus neglect accomplish other valuable activities. Particular youth constantly forget to eat simply for the games. No wonder that majority of parents or school teachers define games as gadgets that will corrupt the brain, damage one's heath, or the objects to be blamed when students got undesirable mischievous grades.

For students who tremendously adore playing the games, they cannot perceive the wicked impact on them. They certainly take pleasure in their lives with playing games. What, then, the motivation for students to play the games? Malone (1981) in Kirriemuir and Mcfarlane (2004) stated three main ways in which games were able to motivate players: fantasy, challenge, and curiosity. Those are the reasons why

more students like to play the video games. If this phenomenon is difficult to stop, we should then see the positive effect of playing games. Is it true that games only give negative sides? What are the positive aspects of playing games? Prensky (2003:2) argued kids attract and 'glue'to todays' video dan computer games because of the learning the games provide. Modern computer and video games provide learning opportunities every second, or fraction thereof. Furthermore, Liu and Chu (2010:630) claimed that the evaluation results of the learning outcomes and learning motivation demonstrated that incorporating ubiquitous games into the English learning process could achieve better learning outcomes and motivation than using non-gaming method. It means that games give beneficial effects to students. I also believe that video games provide good impact in learning English. When I taught *English for Business Presentation* to the first semester students of Bina Nusantara University, I noticed that their English proficiency is fabulous. I just astonished how they improved their English in such a way that they have 'excellent' English. The students' major is Cyber Security – for those are familiar with computer – and all of them fancy to play the video games. This study aims to address the research questions:

1. How can the video games help university students to improve their English?

2. What video games help university students to improve their English?

3. What are the good effects of playing video games?

4. What are the bad impacts of playing video games?

5. What are their suggestions to limit the bad sides?

Method

Research design

This study applied descriptive qualitative method. The participants are 35 first semester students of Binus university in Jakarta, majoring in Cyber Security. Data were taken from the students' writing assignments about how video games help them to improve their English. The data then were analyzed in order that the perception and interpretation sufficiently elaborated.

Result and Discussion

Enhancing English Learning

The results of this study indicated 100 percent of the participants got advantage of learning English from the video games since most games use English as means of communication. Although the games are not purposely designed for learning English, the students admitted their English advancement from the games. They were forced to understand English in order to skillfully play the video games. However, a number of students should consult the dictionary every time they discover unfamiliar words. From the start till the end the games are in English, so students should understand every single word. As a result, their vocabulary increases significantly from time to time. Playing the challenging games and intentionally learning English in a fun way forces students to comprehend English free from anxiety. This is in line with the research of Ranalli (2008) who discussed that [his] mixed-methods study [computer simulation games] found statistically significant improvements in vocabulary knowledge.

How do games help students to improve their English? Some student stated that when playing these kinds of adventure games (Grand Theft Auto V, Counter Strike, The Sims), it is identical to watching a movie, but they are controlling the main character. The character will interact with other characters in the game, and the students have to understand the language in order to pass the mission. With the

technology, using on-line games, students interact with other people from different countries, making friends with them, working together to complete the game, and practicing a lot of English at once.

According to Chen (2005), benefits of using games in language-learning can be summed up in nine points. Games:

- are learner centered

- promote communicative competence

- create a meaningful context for language use

- increase learning motivation

- reduce learning anxiety

- integrate various linguistic skills

- encourage creative and spontaneous use of language

- construct a cooperative learning environment

- foster participatory attitudes of the students

The video games, for students whose native language is not English, will facilitate or even force them to grasp English while having fun since most video games use English: their dialogues, story options, explanation, and tutorials. It requires the players to have decent knowledge of English; otherwise they never win the games because of language barriers. Inside the video games, the developer usually gives a story line like a cut scene, or an Easter eggs that makes the games more exciting and alive. It causes the players live in the character they are playing, but they will not gain the message with English shortage. The games felt just like regular ones which actually have excellent story behind them. This will challenge and motivate the players to learn English.

Table 1. Summarizing video games that help students to learn English

No.	Game Names	Explanation
1.	Counter Strike, Call of Duty First-Person-Shooter (FPS)	These games have a voice chat feature, so a player can speak English directly to other players, provided a microphone attached to their PC.
2.	Smite, an on-line game	Smite has a Voice Command that are written in English. Thus making communication and coordination team must be refined. This improved writing communication.
3.	Assassin's Creed series	These games are inspired from historical event, which means that the students learn the history as well. They improve students' English and a knowledge of other languages like Italy, Spain, and French

	Dota 2, a competitive match between two teams consisting of five players each	Teamwork is one of the most important elements to win the game. The exposure to English communication eventually improves the students' proficiency dramatically.
4.	Skyrim, Role Playing Game (RPG)	The characters' dialog in English are well developed, with various words and terms in English that people rarely hear nowadays. The characters will speak and give orders, quests, and errands. Furthermore, the gamer will be given various choices of responses.
5.	Civilization	Some ways to win the game: a player must conquer all nations, attract tourists to your country, spread the religion to more than 50% of the population
6.	Harvest Moon, Role Playing Game (RPG)	It is a game that has an English story line and dialogues between the player and the characters of the
7.	FIFA 17, a football game	There is a mode called 'Journey' in which the gamer creates a character. He/she will determine the life goal of the character. Everything should use English that eventually the gamer will improve his/her English.
8	L.A. Noire, an action-adventure game	This game helps students learn English because in the features Detective Cole Phelps (one of the characters) interviews a witness or interrogates a suspect. In order to win the game, the students have to listen and understand every single statement the witnesses or suspects said so that they can determine if the witnesses or suspects telling the truth or lie statement.

The benefits of playing video games

A part from learning English, the participants of this study stated that video games give good impacts to learning in general. The first reason is that games can release the stress and simultaneously stimulate the brain to solve problems. They can also increase concentration, focus, memory skills, and teamwork. Furthermore, they are challenging and imaginative. The best of all is that students can learn as they are having fun. The students can also learn to work together in one team to compete other teams (for instance, counter strike) as how to be the winner. Griffiths and Davies 2002 in Mitchell and Savill-Smith, 2004 supported that such games can encourage cooperative and competitive behavior within a strategic context and therefore may have been stronger potential for education than 'traditional' games where the player interacts only with the computer.

The bad impacts of playing games

Some of bad impacts of playing the video games mentioned by the students are: time consuming (addicted), bad impact for eyes or health (playing for too long), bad impact for children's behavior if not suitable to their ages, increasing one's aggressive behavior, confusing between reality and fantasy, getting rotten words, and lazy.

The games can be very addicting on certain times, even to the point of abandoning education itself, skipping classes and ignoring homework just for another hour of gaming. This addiction, nevertheless, can be easily avoided by using one's own conscience, prioritize, and manage one's own schedule. One should manage their time and create a balance between education and entertainment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, playing games can provide additional education in English language. However, game in itself cannot replace the value of education and learning. It is more appropriate to put a harmony in education and games to provide the optimal learning experience. To avoid the addiction in the games, the players should be able to manage their time between learning and playing games. Furthermore, young students should select games that facilitate learning and avoid the addiction. The truly significant issue is that the video game player should have terrific time management. Not all games are negative, but not all games are positive. We should be smart to choose. At last, parents need to control and remind their children so that they prioritize their study first; and playing the video games next.

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