

**“I Played Video Games and I Picked Up the Language”: Exploring L2
Acquisition Through Extensive Listening/Viewing**

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ABSTRACT

The development of 21st-century learning is marked by the use of information and communication technology. Video games are one of the media that can be used by students in learning languages, especially English. Learning using video games can motivate students more and help students adapt to the lesson. This study aims to determine what types of games are used by students to learn English and to determine students' perceptions about playing video games for learning English. In this study, the researcher formulated two questions. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design and the data collection technique that the researcher uses is interviews. The participants in this study were eight students of English language education department class at private university in Yogyakarta. Based on the data obtained by the researcher, there are several games played by students to learn English such as Mobile legend, League of Legends, PUBG, Pro Evolution Soccer, God of War, Dota2, Call of Duty, Mortal Kombat Shaolin Monk, Zelda, and Hidden Object. In addition, video games can also provide some benefits in learning English. The benefits obtained are make learning fun, increase motivation, facilitate students to learn new English vocabulary, facilitate students to practice their language skills such as reading, listening and speaking skills.

Key words: Video Games; Types of EFL Video Games; The Benefit of Video Game

INTRODUCTION

The use of technology aims to assist students in improving their knowledge and abilities. Not only students, but teachers can also feel the positive impact of utilizing this technology, one of which can be used as a learning method. There are several ways that teachers can do to help students learn English. The first way is by using media. The use of media can improve students' skills in the learning process and can generate students' motivation in learning English. Media that can be used in learning such as books, journal articles, or websites. The second way, the teachers can use video as a medium in learning English because video is easier to understand and interesting for students. Video is an audio and visual-based learning media. According to research conducted by Maryamah & Effendy (2019a), audio-visual media is media used in learning activities by involving hearing and sight at the same time in one process or activity. Maryamah and Effendy (2019b) found "The application of audio-visual media can encourage students' desires and interests, but it can also generate motivation and interest in learning, which allows communication between teachers and students." (p. 2). The third way, teachers can use video games as a medium for learning English. The use of video games is not only used as entertainment but can be used as educational material. Video games are audio and visual-based English learning media, so that the learning process can be carried out in an interesting and useful way.

With the development of technology today, it is not surprising that the learning process can be carried out using technology. The application of this technology can be very useful to help students' learning process. The application of the use of this technology can be in the form of the use of hardware such as mobile phones, PCs, and laptops. Not only that, software such as video games can also help students learn English. According to research conducted by Wibawa et al. (2021), game-based learning can eliminate one's boredom, besides that learning also becomes more effective and efficient. Video games or digital games are a form of electronic games that can be in the form of text or images that involve interactions between game software and can be played individually or in groups.

With the development of technology, video games have become one of the most popular recreational activities for many people. Video games are not only played by children, but many adults also love and play these digital games. Video games can also be played offline and online. Video games are not only played for fun, yet it can also be played as a means of education. Sakic and Varga (2015 as cited in Zikri, 2019) argue that video games are used for learning activities so that they can motivate students and help adapt to lessons. In using video games for language learning, usually most of the students learn by understanding the content of the available text or dialogue, especially video games that have an interesting storyline. According to Rafidiyah, Adhitama, and Wianto (2019a), this is reasonable considering that most video game texts and dialogues come from stories. The use of language in video games has also been widely used in English. That way, students will be indirectly forced to understand the information given in the text or

dialogue for themselves. When students do not understand the meaning, students will look for the meaning through a dictionary or tend to look at the scenes contained in the story so that they understand the plot of the story. According to Rafidiyah, Adhitama, and Wianto (2019b), this can be a big enough boost because when someone wants to know about something and tries to understand it themselves, the information will be indirectly stored in their memory.

There were several students at private universities in Yogyakarta who mentioned that they can understand and memorize vocabulary more easily when learning by using games. According to Bakhsh, the process of teaching and learning vocabulary using games can help children learn effectively (2016 as cited in Sahrawi et al., 2018). When playing games, they often come across new vocabulary, when the vocabulary is unfamiliar, they will look for the meaning through an online dictionary or an offline dictionary. Not only that, but sometimes players will also interact directly with other players from different countries.

Learning by using video games has its own advantages and disadvantages. However, from the researchers' point of view, learning with video games can motivate students in learning English, because video games are popular among teenagers and based on the observations of the researchers at a private university in Yogyakarta at the Department of English Education. Not a few students who play games as a means of their entertainment only. However, they unconsciously learn English by using the game. There are various kinds of games that are usually played by students, one of which is *The Sims*. Previously, the researcher had asked one of volunteers about this topic. The researcher found that there were some students who learned English by using video games. There are students playing conversation games. In this game students are required to answer questions in multiple choices. Usually, students play games in their spare time. According to the volunteer, she felt the influence of playing video games to learn English. She felt an improvement in her reading and listening skills and she was able to acquire new vocabulary.

According to the official website of Newzoo (2019) in last year's games, Indonesian players spent a total of \$1.1 billion, making it one of the largest gaming markets in Southeast Asia. Not only used for entertainment, but video games can also be used for learning, especially learning English. Based on the researchers' conversations with student of English learning education primary department, most of the video games played by students used English as their primary language.

In this regard, the researcher identified several key problems. First, most of the popular video games available today are in English, which presents a challenge for students who are not yet proficient in the language. Playing video games that use English requires players to understand in-game instructions, dialogues, and features, which indirectly pushes them to engage with and comprehend English content. Based on conversations with students from the English Education Department, it was found that the majority of video games they frequently play are in English. Second, in online gaming, players are often required to interact and

communicate with others from around the world, as these games are globally accessible. This creates additional challenges for students with limited English skills, as they may struggle to communicate effectively with international players. Based on these observations, this research aims to investigate which video games have helped students of the English Education Department in learning English and to explore their perceptions regarding the benefits of video games as a means of unintentional English language acquisition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

In this study, the researcher found several studies related to this research. These three studies will be the basis of the researcher's thinking in conducting this research. First, a study conducted by Zikri (2019) entitled "Student's perception on the use of video games for English language learning". This study aims to determine student perceptions of the use of video games for learning English in the English education department at a private university in Yogyakarta. This study uses a qualitative approach. The method used by researcher is an open interview. The results showed several statements related to the benefits that players can get from playing English video games, namely increasing students' vocabulary, having exposure to English conversation so that students can learn English through the given conversations, can increase student motivation, facilitate mastery of English by complete a quest given by students who have unconsciously learned English vocabulary or sentences.

The second research was conducted by Simatupang (2017) entitled "Video Games and the Improvement of English Learning: University Students Perspective". The purpose of this study is to get students perspectives about video games that relate to English learning. This study uses a qualitative approach. The method used by researcher is the task of writing about how video games help them improve their English. Participants in the study were 35 first semester students at Binus University in Jakarta. The results show that 100 percent of participants benefit from learning English from video games because some video games use English, so students are required to understand English. The students claimed that they recognized the progress of English from video games.

The latest research was conducted by Brianita (2019) entitled "Students' perception on the use of games in language learning at MAN 3 Sleman". The purpose of this study was to determine students' perceptions of the use of games in vocabulary learning at MAN 3 Sleman. This study uses a qualitative approach. The method used by researcher is interviews. The participants of this study were 3 students, 2 female and 1 male at MAN 3 Sleman. The results showed students' expectations that in English class there were activities that made it easy for them to remember the vocabulary they had learned and not get bored. The students claim that using

games in language learning can meet their learning needs and support them to learn foreign languages.

Video Games

Video games are games that are played in groups or individually. Video games are games that are quite popular among teenagers and adults. Around the world, many teenagers play video games either through smartphones, laptops and PCs. However, with the development of game technology that is played through game consoles, now it can be played through other electronic media. Video games can be played online or offline. According to Aji et al. (2014), a video game is a form of electronic game in the form of text or images, which involves interaction between game software, the person who plays it, and is bridged by the game processing hardware.

The Benefit of Video Games as Unintentional English Learning

Apart from being a means of entertainment, video games can also help students in facilitating learning English. The use of video games has many benefits for students especially in facilitating their English learning. One of them is a video game that uses audio visuals. Maryamah and Effendy (2019) found “The application of audio-visual media can encourage students' desires and interests but can also generate motivation and interest in learning” (p. 2). In addition, there are benefits that players can get from playing video games to learn English:

1. Motivating Students

Video games are usually defined as a source of pleasure. But what if learning is combined with games, then it will have a positive impact and motivate students to learn more. Learning using video games can increase students' motivation in learning because video games provide an attractive appearance, such as graphic images, audio-visuals, and stories given. According to Hurban and Maletka (2019), motivation is one of the most influential factors for successful learning. With motivation, students can more easily adapt to the lesson. Therefore, the use of video games can be used as a means of learning the subject.

2. Vocabulary Acquisition

The use of video games can be used to assist students in acquiring new vocabulary. Playing video games can help and encourage students to learn vocabulary in a fun way. Fun learning can help students remember and learn new words faster. According to Derakhshan and Khatir (2015) games can be more effective in learning new vocabulary. By learning to use video games, students can have the opportunity to learn languages in a way that is not stressful. That way, learning using video games can help students memorize new vocabulary more quickly.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to explore students' perceptions of the unintentional use of video games as a medium for learning English. This approach was chosen to gain in-depth insights into students' experiences, as qualitative research focuses on understanding phenomena through participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2012). The research was conducted in June 2022 at the English Education Department of a private university in Yogyakarta, where students were known to frequently engage in English-based video games. The participants consisted of eight purposively selected students who regularly played English video games—at least twice a week—and reported gaining English vocabulary and other language skills through gameplay. Criteria for selection included familiarity with various video games such as *The Sims*, *Harvest Moon*, and *Resident Evil*, as well as a perceived benefit in language acquisition. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities and encourage open sharing of experiences.

Instrument and Procedure

The primary data collection technique used in this study was structured interviews. The interviews aimed to explore students' perceptions regarding the unintentional use of video games as learning media in the English Language Education Department. This method was chosen to allow the researcher to understand participants' experiences in depth. Interviews are considered intimate and flexible tools for collecting insights about participants' thoughts and experiences (Moriarty, 2011). The researcher used structured interviews based on a prepared guideline to ensure consistency. This allowed the same set of open-ended questions to be asked to each participant, promoting a fair and systematic data collection process (Mathers et al., 2002). Open-ended questions encouraged participants to express their ideas freely in their own words, which enriched the data collected (Creswell, 2013).

The procedure began with the development of an interview protocol containing research-related questions to ensure the validity of the results. Next, participants who met the study criteria were identified and contacted to schedule interviews. Interviews were conducted either offline or online, using Indonesian as the primary language to make the process more comfortable for participants. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and ensured that participants felt at ease. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and was recorded using an audio device for accuracy. The researcher expressed gratitude to the participants after each session.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher carefully reviewed the transcripts to identify recurring patterns, themes, and significant statements that reflected participants' perceptions. This process involved coding the data, grouping similar responses, and interpreting the findings to answer the research questions. Themes were then organized to highlight how video games contributed to unintentional English learning and what benefits students perceived from these experiences. The analysis aimed to provide a clear, evidence-based understanding of the role of video games in English language acquisition among the participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Video Games that Facilitate Students in Learning English

Based on interviews with eight students from the English Language Education Department, the study found that a variety of video games were used by participants to support their English learning, either intentionally or unintentionally. These games not only provided entertainment but also served as informal tools for improving English language skills, particularly in speaking, listening, and vocabulary acquisition. The findings are presented below, categorized by video game genre.

1. Action Games

Action games require players to engage in physical challenges such as shooting, fighting, or survival missions. Participants reported that such games often required real-time communication and quick comprehension of English instructions or dialogues.

PlayerUnknown's BattleGrounds (PUBG)

Two participants mentioned that PUBG helped improve their speaking skills, particularly through team communication with international players. Wildan shared, "Yeah, I play PUBG. It helps me improve my speaking skills, to be more communicative between a team, communicating with each other and voicing each other's opinions." Similarly, Yulia noted, "Usually, PUBG helps me improve my English more, especially speaking. Sometimes in PUBG games, players can play with players from abroad, so I can practice my speaking skills." These findings are in line with Gajdoš and Korpaš (2020), who reported that PUBG encourages players to communicate in English for extended periods, thereby enhancing speaking fluency.

Call of Duty

One participant, Ridho, explained that playing Call of Duty helped expand his English vocabulary. He stated, “*When I play the video game, and there are some words I do not know, I would immediately find out the meaning. That is where I learn English.*” He further emphasized the role of in-game dialogue and subtitles in improving his vocabulary. From this, it can be inferred that exposure to contextual language in gameplay encourages incidental vocabulary learning.

2. Action Role-Playing Games

These games combine action gameplay with character development and storytelling, often requiring players to interact with various characters and follow missions that involve English instructions or dialogue.

Mobile Legends and League of Legends

Four participants mentioned that playing these multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) games contributed to their English development. Wildan noted, “*Not all players from Indonesia play this game because the game is based online, so many players from various countries play this game.*” He also stated that such games improved his speaking skills through team coordination and voice communication. Bagas added, “*Yeah, I use that game. I feel I can improve my listening and speaking skills because I like listening to the voices of heroes, especially Nana’s voice.*” He also mentioned occasionally playing with foreign players, which allowed him to practice speaking English in real-time.

This finding is supported by Diantoro, Mulyanti, and Halim (2020). They delivered that in the mobile legend game, players interact with other players spread all over the world. Based on the statement above, the researcher concludes that students may play in groups with players from different countries. That way, they can practice speaking in English.

Dota 2

The interview results show that two participants play this game to learn English. Wahid described, “*If I play online games, sometimes I meet players from abroad and indirectly communicate using English. I can test my speaking skills*”. Tommy explained, “*I feel the influence of this online game. I become more confident when communicating with players from different countries*”. He added, “*By playing this game, my writing and speaking skills can improve*”. It is in line with the finding of Simatupang (2017) that playing games are the process of communicating students’ English that will ultimately improve their abilities. Based on the statement above, the researcher can conclude that students cooperate with foreign players to win the

game. Indirectly, they are required to be able to communicate using English. In the end, they may improve their speaking skills.

3. Action Adventure

The action-adventure is a combination of the action and adventure genres. This game not only includes physical skills but also provides an adventure that includes an appealing storyline. The game challenges players with their fighting and problem-solving skills in various situations, so all character movements will affect the game's storyline.

God of War

From the interviews, two participants played the God of War game. Wahid echoed, "If I play a game with a storyline like God of War, I can learn English because I listen to the storyline. Sometimes I get new vocabulary too". Vandy also expressed, "From playing God of War, in my opinion, there are only three skills: speaking, listening, and reading". He added, "To advance to the next level of the game, accuracy is required. Therefore, reading carefully and comprehending the instructions are both necessary". It is supported by Sakic and Varga (2015a) highlighted that video games are often connected with stories and can evoke players' emotions. Besides, Sakic and Varga (2015b) identified that rapid changes in scene, music volume and tone of voice trigger the formation of coordination between brain cells. Based on the statements above, the researcher may conclude that playing story-mode games attracts students' interest in learning English. Students play by listening to random words spoken and reading the available subtitles so that they can increase their vocabulary.

Mortal Kombat Shaolin Monk

From the results of the interview, there was one participant who played this game. Bagas mentioned, "Because there is a lot of dialogue between characters in the game, so I often get new vocabulary, and I also often imitate the dialogue between characters in the game to help my ability to speak English". It is supported by the results of the study from Sahib (2019) that students' involvement in learning English by using dialogues in games can affect their achievement in speaking skills. From Bagas' statement, it may be concluded that students learn English by listening, reading, and imitating the dialogues in the games.

Zelda

Based on the results of the interview, there was one participant who played the Zelda game. Wildan pointed out, "For example, the Zelda game helps comprehensive reading. When I play adventure video games, it is more like oh, the clue is like this. I have to follow the clue here. It also helps to add new vocabulary". This finding is supported by Chen and Hsu (as cited in Ludvigsen, 2022) that

learning vocabulary through playing games is easy as the game provides several clues so that players can more easily understand and learn the words and their meanings. According to Ningtias (2017), apart from helping students increase their vocabulary, hints may also make the game more challenging. Based on the statements above, the researcher can conclude that students play the game by reading the instructions contained in the game. After that, students must follow the instructions by connecting the clues so they may proceed to the next stage.

4. Simulation

A simulation game is a game that is similar to activities in real life. This game focuses on simulation to try to imitate real-life events or activities in the form of a game.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2019

Based on the results of the interviews, four participants learned English by playing football games. According to Vandy, “I play football games because the commentators in the game use English. From that, there are some words that are foreign to me”. He continued, “There are two lessons I can learn from it: how to pronounce and listen to the commentator speaking. Several times, I repeat what the commentator said I find interesting”. This finding is supported by Simatupang (2017) proposed that the language used in the game is English, so players will indirectly be able to improve their English skills. Based on the statements above, the researcher may conclude that the football game is not only played for fun, but some students use this game to learn English. They learn how to pronounce and listen to the commentator speak. Furthermore, students repeat what the commentators say so that they can improve their speaking skills.

5. Puzzle

Puzzle games test the players’ skills in solving a puzzle. They are tested to complete the game by recognizing patterns, completing words, or solving sequences. Examples of puzzle games are Word Connect and Hidden Object.

Hidden Object

The results of the interview presented that there was one participant who used this game to learn English. Yulia revealed, “I often play games where the contents are looking for objects which are in English”. She added, “As long as I play this game, I get a lot of new vocabulary”. Hong, Shen, Chin, and Chen (2020) said that hidden object games help and motivate students in recognizing and retaining their vocabulary. Based on the statements above, the researcher can conclude that students learn English by using games to find objects around that use English. Finally, students learn some new vocabulary from these object-search games.

Students' Perception of the Benefit of Games as Unintentional English Learning

In this point, the researcher shows several findings related to students' perceptions of the benefits of playing video games in English learning. From the interviews, the researcher stressed four benefits of utilizing video games in learning English. Some students stated that playing adventure, sports, action, and puzzle games helps improve their English skills. With the development of technology, video games can also be played online so that they interact with other people from different countries. They may work together to complete the game.

According to Klimova and Kacet (2017), playing video games for learning a foreign language has many advantages, including greater engagement, exposure to the target language, language improvement (especially in vocabulary and grammar), and speaking skills. Video games can be used as learning media, especially for students who do not master English. Video games motivate students to learn English since they are required to understand the game, so indirectly, they get new vocabulary.

Make Learning Fun

Based on the results of the interviews, the researcher underlined that students benefit from playing video games: learning is not boring. Wahid argued, "I feel the benefits of games for learning English. Learning English will not be as boring as studying in class because I can play and learn at the same time". He continued, "I think using video games in learning English can be very useful because it is an alternative learning that is fun and not boring". In addition, Vandy asserted, "I think it is okay to use video games using English because I do not feel bored if I learn while playing".

It is in line with Simatupang (2017) that playing challenging games and deliberately studying English in a fun way help students understand English without feeling anxious. Based on the statements above, the researcher may conclude that learning English using video games makes students not feel bored quickly, and learning becomes more fun as they learn while playing. The games that students play is also varied, so they can enjoy the games they play. A pleasant learning atmosphere increases their interest in learning English.

Increase Motivation

Based on the results of the interviews, video games can motivate students. Wahid clarified, "I feel the benefits of games to learn English. It motivates me to learn English. Besides, it can be a motivation for people who are not interested in learning to be interested in learning English". He added, "The use of video games motivates

me to learn English. If I had not played games since my childhood, I would not have anticipated that my English had progressed this far”. Based on the statements of the two participants, video games have great potential increasing students’ motivation. This finding is supported by Persson and Richtoff (2022) that motivation is one of the significant factors that may affect success in learning a language. The researcher concludes that learning English using video games can motivate students more. Moreover, learning English by using their favorite video game has great potential to increase their motivation. By playing their favorite video games, students will be more excited and will maximize their performance for learning than when they learn in class.

Facilitate Students to Learn New English Vocabulary

Based on the results of the interviews, the researcher found that video games can add new vocabulary. Based on Bagas’ statement, he claimed, “Video games can expand my vocabulary to get new vocabulary”. Tommy also confirmed, “It is very useful in expanding vocabulary, but maybe learning English in depth is not very efficient”. According to Wildan’s statement, Vandy, Ridho, and Yuli agreed that playing video games may add some new vocabulary. Based on all participants’ statements, the use of video games improves their English vocabulary. This finding is supported by a study from Cabraja (2016) that students who play video games have higher vocabulary levels test scores than those who report not playing video games. According to Derakhshan and Khatir (2015), games can be more effective in learning new vocabulary. The researcher concludes that students like to play video games in English. Students are required to understand the game, so they indirectly get new vocabulary. The use of video games may increase vocabulary. Additionally, students who play video games tend to acquire more new vocabulary than those who do not play video games.

Facilitate Students to Practice Their Language Skills

Based on the interview results, the researcher notes that playing video games can improve English language skills. Based on what each participant mentioned, they all see the advantages of playing video games for improving their English. Bagas declared, “From the video games I play, these games affect writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills”. Wahid delivered, “From reading game subtitles, I can improve my reading skills, while when listening to characters’ conversations, my listening skills also improve”. He added, “When playing online games, sometimes players will meet other players from abroad so that they can practice their speaking skills”. Tommy described, “The skills I got are writing and listening”. Vandy explained, “I got the ability to speak, listen and also write”. Mochita also echoed, “Video games can improve reading and listening skills”. Ridho expressed, “The language skills acquired are writing, reading, and speaking”. Besides, Yulia highlighted, “Video games can improve English skills, especially reading skills”.

Based on the statements of all participants, the researcher can conclude that using video games improves students' English skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is in line with the findings of Hang (2017a) that it has been suggested that using video games to assist students to improve their speaking skills. Furthermore, Hang (2017b) identified that video games are an effective way to practice listening skills. According to Sarah (2014), by using games, students can be more motivated to read.

The use of video games improves their English skills. By reading the clues contained in the game, they may improve their reading skills. Not only writing, but sometimes some games use audio clues so students can increase their listening skills. Voice chat is a feature that many games use to interact with people around the world. In addition, students may mimic the game's dialogue, which helps them get better at speaking.

CONCLUSION

According to the data gathered by the researcher, all video games, particularly those with a story mode, can be used for language learning. However, in playing video games to learn English, most students only focus on the games rather than language learning. From the results of this study, ten games could help students learn English. These games include: 1) Mobile Legend and 2) League of Legends make students can practice speaking in English. 3) Pro Evolution Soccer 2019 improves listening skills and pronunciation. 4) PUBG makes students may work together with players from abroad, so they indirectly improve their speaking skills. 5) God of War provides subtitles so that they increase their vocabulary. 6) In Dota 2, they are required to be able to communicate using English. 7) In Call of Duty, students play by listening to random words spoken and reading the available subtitles so they can increase their vocabulary. 8) Mortal Kombat Shaolin Monk makes them learn English by listening, reading, and imitating the dialogues in the games. 9) In Zelda and 10) Hidden Object, they got some new vocabulary. It can be concluded that the benefits of using video games in learning English are fun learning, increase motivation, facilitate students to learn new English vocabulary, facilitate students to practice their language skills such as reading, listening and speaking skills

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