A Positive Perspective Study of Online Game: Children's English Acquisition from Online Game Habit

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of online gaming is certainly a concern for all parents. Not only in Indonesia but also around the world. Ternate North Maluku is one of the cities in Indonesia that became the site of this current study, which explains the phenomenon of online games taking place and their role in children's autonomous English learning. This study is in Jerbus Village, South Ternate. To provide more honest and accurate data, the interviews were semi-structured with 11 children aged 7 to 12 years old. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the data analysis and interpretation used raw data, preparing data for analysis, collecting the data on the computer, coding data, relating themes, and interpreting the meaning of themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2009, p. 185). The results of this study explain that online games encourage children to learn English independently without any coercion from others. It also helps them learn English naturally and contributes to children's English acquisition. This research conclusion is that online games have so far only been considered to bring negative influences to children who have been addicted, such as the absence of socialization, lack of social interaction, affecting the quality of learning, and many other negative influences. This current study proves that online games also have a positive side. The positive role is to replace lost face-to-face social interaction with online interaction. In

addition, the online game stimulated children's communication using English.
Key words: Online Games; English Acquisition

INTRODUCTION

Learning English requires a lot of support in the form of attention from various educational actors. Liando (2012) says that successful English learning can be supported by the family environment, teachers, and the individuals themselves. This strengthens the researcher to have a statement that mastering English in children, of course, not only relies on the role of the teacher alone, but also the need for family support, and most importantly, self-motivation. The support and motivation in question is where a person has full awareness and interest in learning and mastering English with various ways and tools he has.

Along with the development of science and technology, a lot of knowledge is very easily accessed only by capitalizing on gadget tools and the internet, including English language acquisition. Children's awareness and efforts to learn English independently have been very rare from the past until now, but with the internet, children can learn and master English vocabulary only through tools or platforms provided online. For example, online dictionaries, cartoon movies, animated movies, online games, and many other platforms.Children's interest in self-learning English through online gaming has its pros and cons. In general, children who are only tied to online games are known to do more harm than good in their lives in terms of limited socialization, not studying diligently, and many more. A study conducted by Brazilai & Blau (2014) concluded that although games have a significant impact on learning, students must still be guided when using games so that they are more utilized in learning or directly linked to the needs of the discipline that is the need and purpose for learning. Ondang, et al. (2020) added that games will have a negative influence if their use is not balanced with valuable activities to the point of forgetting the main needs and goals of learning.

The phenomenon of online gaming is certainly a concern for all parents. Not only in Indonesia but also around the world. In Indonesia, according to data from https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/02/16/jumlah-gamers-indonesia-terbanyak-ketiga-di-dunia , there are 94.5% of online game players which is ranked 3rd in the world after the Philippines and Thailand. Like Indonesia, other countries such as the United States also have 67% of households play digital games (based on survey data from the Entertainment Software Association, 2010), as well as in Hong Kong there are 30.1 digital game players (Friend of the Earth, 2009) cited in (Chick, 2012). In terms of age, the data above includes adults, teenagers, and children. This data shows that online game enthusiasts are very much ranging from adults to children around the world. By looking at the number of online game enthusiasts above, of course, online games have their impact on their fans, not only as entertainment, online games have other possible impacts. To see how online games are not only entertainment for their players, online games have also been researched regarding their various impacts on their audience.In particular, some

previous research results discuss the effects of online games on English language learning. As discussed in Hasram et al.'s (2021) study, the application of online games can increase students' vocabulary. This study raises the effect of online games on English, but the subjects are students in formal schools where the learning has been designed by teachers and delivered neatly in class with appropriate methods. So far, the researcher has not found any research that raises the question of whether children who are addicted to online games can use the game as a tool to acquire English independently, both at home and in the play environment. Therefore, this research tries to see from another perspective how children who are involved as online gamers can utilize the online gaming platform to learn English independently. This study limits the subject and location. The subjects are children aged 7 to 12 years old and were conducted in Ternate, North Maluku.

This research tries to contradict previous research that considered online games as mere entertainment for children. Online games have the possibility of positive things that can also be done by children when playing online games, such as learning English independently, which is presented through the "language setting" in the online game platform. From some of the literature studies and research gaps above, the researcher wants to see how the role of online games can also have an impact on gamers, even in formal situations. For these reasons, the researcher believes that the ability to acquire and understand English words can not only be relied upon through the school process but can also be gained from independent learning outside of school. Therefore, this study will reveal how an online game can contribute to children's English language acquisition at the age of 7 to 12 years old and prove that online games not only take up children's time or provide entertainment but will also prove the self-learning process carried out by online game addicts. The objectives of this study are as follows: 1. To find out how online games lead children, as online game players to learn English independently. 2. To find out the English language acquisition through English vocabulary in online games. 3. To discuss the positive impact for gamers.The significance of this research can help everyone who needs information and data about how online games do not only have negative impacts such as lack of socializing, not focusing on learning, and so on, as described in previous studies. This research contributes to conveying that online games are able to become tools for children who are addicted to making them as a means of acquiring and mastering English vocabulary in certain contexts. This research also proves how online games can be a solution for children who have a strong basic interest in learning English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to research by Zendrato (2022, p. 143), online games can affect the improvement of student learning, as seen in the decline in the seriousness and liveliness of children's learning. In other research related to English language learning that has been conducted by Asmiati et al. (2021), online games have a different impact on each child; some have a negative impact, but some have a positive impact. The results of other research by Iskandar and Rossi (2021)

explained that online games can directly erode three skills in children at once, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Thus, from the 3 theories above, it can be concluded that online games have a real impact on the lives of learners, especially for the improvement of learning English. However, the impact can be positive or negative, it all depends on each person. In addition, children who play online games directly reduce or damage three basic skills that are very important for the growth and development of a child, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Reinforced by a study by Sundara et al. (2020, p. 89), children with high online game dependence can reduce learning motivation and prevent them from socializing. This study reinforces the negative impact of online games examined in other studies.

Sundara, et al. Consider that online games trigger a person to be reluctant to socialize with their environment. In some studies of the negative impacts above, researchers also found some conflicting research. Judging from the positive impact, online games provide opportunities for enthusiasts to play their characters so that they can more easily understand the storyline of an online game. It is explained in research by Malik (2021) that the best thing about playing games is that users can get into roles and play characters according to the roles taken. So it can be concluded that with online games, one can learn how to live the meaning contained behind the character. Unfortunately, researchers did not find research results that more specifically stated that the positive impact as stated by Malik above, in addition to gamers being able to play roles in online games, can also increase vocabulary or English language skills for these gamers. However, the research underlines "meaning", which we can interpret to mean that gamers who play a role or play a character in a game can make it easier for them to understand and master the meaning of the game more quickly even though the game is set in a foreign language (English). All of the previous but recent studies conducted by several researchers described above explain all of the negative impacts of online games. This is in stark contrast to the research conducted here, which focuses on the process of self-learning by someone who has been addicted to online games and how the child can acquire and understand English vocabulary only through online games. Turgut & Irgin (2009) said that games do not only play a role in providing fun or entertainment for users, but they can also be used to promote learning. Games can also be a platform for students to engage in problem-solving (Dourda et al., 2014). As we can add, online games have become an important part for some addicts in terms of language acquisition, which can be further examined in the discussion of this research. The results of the previous research above also did not specifically examine the type of relationship between online games themselves and independent learning, but it is enough to be a guide for this research to follow up and see clearly how the role of online games for children at the age of 6 and 12 years.

According to Purba & Andiopenta (2013), the environment greatly influences the language acquisition process in both formal and informal conditions. The informal environment itself has a role in second language acquisition, which is largely determined by peers, the foreign speaker environment, and parents. The definition

of language acquisition, whether first, second, or foreign language, has the same position for each user. Krashen has a different opinion from Noam Chomsky, where according to Chomsky, language acquisition is only appropriate to be pinned on the first language (mother tongue), while Krashen considers second language acquisition also has similarities, which both lead to mastery of communication (Setiyadi, 2013).

Thomas (1989), in his research on "the acquisition of English articles by first and second language learners", says that the process of second language learners may not be the same as that of first language learners, but in certain contexts, such as referential contexts, they all have the same initial hypothesis. It can be concluded that many experts' opinions see that language learning does not always have to be distinguished in terms of the first language or the second language. Both have the right to be learned in almost the same way. The level of difficulty is also more or less the same because the ultimate goal of learning a language, both the first language and the second language, is to be able to master and communicate. In addition, other linguists also believe that the speed or slowness of a learner's English language acquisition can be influenced by many indicators, as explained by Paige et al. (2003, p. 179). Language learning also involves cultural learning, where there are strategies to deal with learning difficulties, as well as cross-cultural learning and interaction between languages. The point is that someone who has difficulty learning a language is caused by many factors, including culture. Because people who learn a language also need to understand their culture, it is easier to understand a language that is learned perfectly.

According to Thorne et al. (2009), language becomes a person's identity, so to develop this identity, a person needs to improve language skills through sophisticated practices and media. So we can emphasize the word media here as a means that can be chosen by someone to facilitate their language learning. Therefore, as a form of validation from researchers to see how an online game can be a positive medium in terms of children's English language acquisition at the age of 7 and 12 years. Autonomous learning can happen in many ways and with many media. According to Zhong (2008), autonomous learning can also be triggered by the internet, where the internet can be a supporting factor in the acquisition and ability, as well as the English level of its users. In another study by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012), autonomous learning is highly dependent on the mentality of individual learners, including some key statements, namely that learners need to evaluate their own learning progress, be confident in learning independently, know how to learn independently, and have strong motivation to learn. In another study conducted by Herrera et al. (2019), they applied a model called online pee-tutoring as a medium to see how the impact of the media can shape the learning independence of learners. This can be identified by understanding the concept of self-learning and can be seen to have a direct impact on learning comfort and the practice of self-direction. In another study by Han, B. (2019), artificial intelligence (AI) was used to design learning modules, and the results showed an effective increase in learning outcomes, both for the improvement of English learning in

students and English teachers in universities. The idea that autonomous learning of English will not work for a foreign or second language learner can be broken by a study by Guo, Y. (2007), which found that autonomous learning can improve students' pedagogical ability and build independent behaviour more closely. Interestingly, another study states that although autonomous learning has its principles and procedures and can be applied to both teachers and students, the understanding of autonomous learning has not yet been mastered by teachers and students themselves (Khotimah et al., 2019). Warschauer & Liaw (2011) suggest that many tools or devices can be used to encourage independent learning, especially in learning four language skills, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The tools used certainly depend on the needs of each learner, such as cell phones and iPads. Underscoring the words cell phones and iPads, the author concludes that many platforms or applications in gadgets can be utilized by users to acquire the target language to be learned.

METHOD

This research believes that autonomous learning can be encouraged by online games, where online games that have been considered an obstacle for children (online game users) can be used as a means for independent learning for children aged 7 to 12 years in Ternate, North Maluku. This research uses a type of qualitative research with a case study approach. Case study research is an in-depth study of events, environments, and situations that have the possibility to reveal something (Turner, A. B., 1994, p. 196). This research uses a deliberate participant selection technique (Creswell, 2009, p. 178), where initially the participants only numbered a few children, but due to data needs and considering additional participants can provide complete information according to the topic we are researching, the participants increased from 6 children to 11 children. Meanwhile, the data collection process prioritizes the following two things recommended by Creswell (2009, p. 175): Natural setting, which is by going directly to the field where the respondents are and taking and having experience with the issues we were discussing in this study. Researchers are key instruments, i.e., researchers collect data and study documents, observe respondents, and interview respondents.

This study took 11 children aged 7 to 12 years old to observe their online gaming behaviour and was conducted in depth. The reason we limited the research subjects to children and not adults or teenagers is because we considered the naturalness of English learning from children. We think that children can provide more honest and accurate data for our interview needs. As for the interview time, we adjusted to the children's time where they were serious when being interviewed. The Researchers also took the information of children experience in online game as follow:

Table 1. Information of Children's Gaming Experience

No	Participants	Online Gaming Experience	Gender	Age (Years)

			Male	Female	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	AB	4 years gaming experience for 4 Years Old	v				v			
2	NH	3 years gaming experience for 4 Years Old	v			v				
3	NO	3 years gaming experience for 5 Years Old	v				v			
4	MF	4 years gaming experience for 4 Years Old		v			v			
5	AD	8 years gaming experience for 3 Years Old	v						v	
6	TE	7 years gaming experience for 4 Years Old	v						v	
7	DH	4 years gaming experience for 5 Years Old		v			v			
8	KH	7 years gaming experience for 5 Years Old	v							v
9	KY	7 years gaming experience for 5 Years Old	v							v
10	QI	6 years gaming experience for 4 Years Old	v					v		
11	CB	5 years gaming experience for 5 Years Old		v				v		

It is important to know children's gaming experience so that it is easy for researchers to analyse the contribution of online games to children's English language acquisition.

The interviews were semi-directed. The online gamers were asked about their interest in English and their strategies for memorizing English words through the online game. They used those English words they heard only during the game or for daily conversation. To do data analysis and interpretation, we used raw data, preparing data for analysis, collecting the data on a computer, coding data, relating

themes, and interpreting the meaning of themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2009, p. 185). All questions and answers between the interviewer and the interviewee were video and audio recorded. We interviewed the children while they were playing online games, but some interviews were conducted when the children were not playing online games. Conducting interviews when children are focused on playing online games has its own constraints. The obstacles we encountered were time-consuming, and the quality of the answers did not match the questions, but we took this step so that at the same time we could observe their behavior when playing online games. To control the possibility of inappropriate data, we timed the interviews when they were not playing online games, asking many questions using the children's local language as they communicate in their daily lives in Ternate, North Maluku.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Online games provide opportunities for gamers to learn English consciously and autonomously. Starting with the willingness to learn English, but due to parental permission issues, a child finds his way through online games that he always plays. This motivated some gamers and shaped their interest in learning English autonomously. There is a percentage difference, but learning English through online games and learning English in the course has an insignificant level of difference. Online games become a facility to learn English, as obtained at the course. The above figure convinced the authors to conclude a person's interest in English through online games. The freedom in everything, as written above, makes children prefer to spend time playing online games. They can play happily and without pressure, and most importantly, it can motivate them to communicate with their friends by choosing the language they will use in the game, including English. They can listen to English vocabulary and can also communicate it to friends. We present the findings of this study on children's autonomous learning and the role of online games in children's English language acquisition. Starting from how we statistically describe the gaming habit and English proficiency level of 11 children.

Children's Gaming Habits

Gaming habits were analysed in this study based on indicators of frequency and duration of gaming per day. Statistical data is presented in the form of pie chart below.
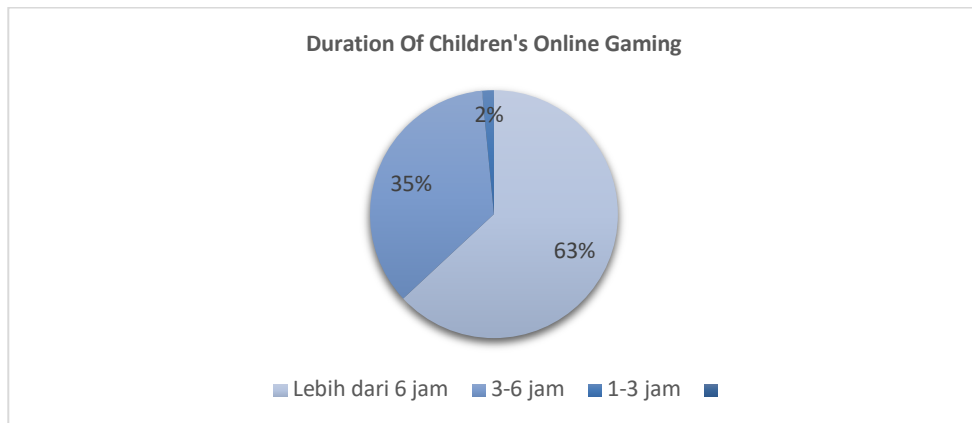
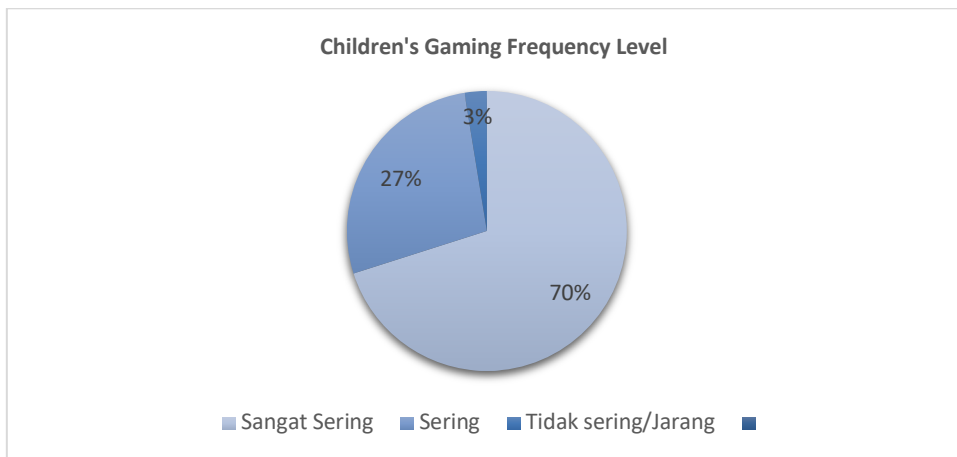**Chart 1. Duration of Children Online Gaming**

Chart 2. Gaming Frequency Level

Based on the above data, it can be concluded that the 11 children in this study had a high gaming habit.

"Shoot dia….!"

It is a mixture of two words with different languages, that expresses the meaning of ordering members of the gamers to shoot the opposing team.

"Jagan dihelp…! Atau jangan kasih space!"

It is a combination of two words in different languages (English and Indonesian) to emphasize that there will be no chance for the opposing team to win.

"Escape woyy..!"

"Escape woyy..!" in this context is used during the game to encourage team members to save themselves before being shot by the opponent.

"Help me kawan..!"

"Help me kawan" is a mixture of Indonesian combined with the word *"help+me"* to invite his teammates to help him when he is shot or other critical situations.

The English proficiency level of children who play online games can be determined through in-depth interviews and observations of participants. The current English proficiency level of these children provides evidence of the positive impact of online games, although some children still struggle with English communication. Based on the research findings, several participants acknowledge the beneficial effect of online games on their English language skills, as they can freely select the language they prefer while playing. Thus, by playing a specific type of game, they can naturally comprehend the game's contents, including English, which could be unfamiliar to these youngsters (Malik, 2021). A study conducted by Ashraf et al. (2014) found that lower-intermediate EFL children in Iran can acquire a significant amount of English vocabulary through the use of online games. It is important to note that these findings are based on objective evaluations and follow a clear and concise structure with logical connections between statements. Overall, these results suggest that online games can be a valuable tool for language learning in certain contexts.To determine the effect of online games on an individual, an objective evaluation must be made taking into account who introduced the games and for what purpose. Therefore, it is essential to consider individual differences among children to understand the impact of online games on them. Asmiati et al., (2021) found that the impact of online games on a child can either be positive or negative, depending on the child's characteristics. Research by Iskandar's (2021), online gaming can negatively affect three types of intelligence in children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. However, this study contradicts those findings by demonstrating the positive impact of online games on language development. The present study has the potential to challenge the previously discussed negative impact.

By way of comparison, Sundara et al. (2020) developed a theory from their research findings indicating that individuals with high online gaming habits exhibit diminished motivation to learn and socialize. Additionally, Kustiawan's (2019) research, titled "Don't Like Online Games," portrayed games as having a consistently detrimental impact, yet our study presents an opposing perspective. Our interviewees revealed that playing online games motivated them to learn English, including memorizing vocabulary and communicating with others. They explained that communicating with fellow gamers through online games fostered reciprocity rather than socialization. As a result, natural learning motivation in games can help children learn without feeling pressured (Kuo & Mei-Jen, 2007). There is an enthusiasm in acquiring English language proficiency through playing online games. This is because online games offer opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals who share the same hobbies (Putra et al., 2019). Data acquisition in this latest study states that, 10 children with high level of gaming habit demonstrated their English proficiency levels. Online gaming was shown to enhance their English vocabulary. In-depth Interviews with the children confirmed that online games helped in incremental language acquisition and communication. The findings of this study align with Malik's (2021) indicated Thus, it can be concluded that online game users with high self-control are capable of regulating

their online gaming activity to avoid becoming immersed. They are able to use online games when necessary, and they can integrate online activities with other aspects of their lives. In contrast, online game users with low self-control lack the ability to direct and control their online behavior (Ariantoro, 2016).

In conclusion, while online games can have a positive impact on children, they may also have negative effects (Asmiati et al., 2021). This study specifically examined the positive impact of online games, specifically in terms of English language acquisition and self-learning. This study specifically examined the positive impact of online games, specifically in terms of English language acquisition and self-learning. However, it is important to note that these findings are limited to only those two areas and do not explore all potential impacts of online games. Thus, it is crucial to consider previous studies' numerous negative impacts, enabling parents to exercise more control over their children, mitigating potential harm to their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development (Iskandar, 2021). Additionally, limited opportunities for real socialization activities should be addressed (Sundara et al., 2020, p. 89). According to findings in Table 3 regarding English proficiency levels, it is possible to infer that a child can possess a vocabulary of roughly 500 words. It is important to note that technical terminology should be explained when first used and that biased language should be avoided. In the process of learning a foreign language, children can pass through stages such as early production and speech emergence. Consistent formatting, precise language, and proper grammar should also be utilized. During early production, a child is capable of producing nearly 500 words and speaking solely in short phrases. Speech emergence occurs when a child is able to speak in sentences but still makes errors (Pollawagau and Rasna, 2022). Krashen posits that second language acquisition shares similarities with first language acquisition, both leading to mastery of communication. This diverges from Chomsky's belief that language acquisition should only be addressed in relation to the first language (Setiyadi, 2013).

This research aligns with Krashen's viewpoint that language acquisition, both for first and foreign languages, follows the same rules. Among these, English is identified as a foreign language acquired by participants through online games in this study. Thomas (1989) suggests in their study on the "acquisition of English articles by first and second language learners" that the process of learning a second language may differ from that of the native language. However, they share the same initial hypothesis in certain contexts, such as referential contexts. Experts believe that language learning need not be differentiated by first or second language. Both languages can be learned in a similar way, as the level of difficulty is roughly equivalent. The ultimate objective of learning either a first or second language is to achieve mastery and effective communication. During the language acquisition process, the environment plays a crucial role in determining an individual's language readiness (Purba & Andiopenta, 2013). According to Tyas, Perdhani, and Budiana (2022), the environment provides an opportunity for individuals to interact with the language openly. In accordance with this research, playing online games and freely interacting with others allows gamers to acquire English through

significant amount of English vocabulary. The term "free" refers to the level of interaction where there are no restrictions or limitations. Because children learn English through the popular medium of online games, which not only enhance hobbies, but also support language acquisition (Turgut & Irgin, 2009). Learning English can be challenging for children, but online games provide a solution by facilitating acquisition of vocabulary (Dourda et al., 2014) and enhancing problem-solving efforts (Putra et al., 2019). As such, online games represent a valuable tool for developing language skills of children ages 7 to 12 who identify as gamers, as they benefit from these interactive and engaging platforms (Thorne et al., 2009). It is because the application of online games can increase students' English skill (Hasram et al., 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigates the autonomous English learning and acquisition of English among children of ages of 7 and 12 residing in Jerbus village, South Ternate. Specifically, this study seeks children's English language proficiency as result of playing online games. An extensive analysis was used to analyze interview data collected from 11 children at Jerbus, South Ternate. The findings highlight the positive impact of online gaming on the language proficiency of children aged between 7 to 12 years old. Online games play a significant role in children's language acquisition. They offer children independent opportunities to learn English effectively. It is concluded that online game players who are motivated to use online games as a learning tool will be able to acquire English to suit their needs. In contrast, children who lack the motivation to learn English will not be able to utilize online games in a positive way. This research contributes to English language learning field and linguistics in English language acquisition.

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