

USING VIDEO GAMES TO INCREASE MOTIVATION OF UZBEK STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract

Video games can also be used to aid the students in overcoming difficulties and problems that they face throughout the educational process. Analysis reveals that vocabulary acquisition is the key for proficiency in a language. Interventions that focus on improving vocabulary have demonstrated a positive impact on the academic performance of English as Second Language (ESL) learners in several different environments. When foreign children for instance, Uzbek children are learning the English language, they are acquiring new vocabulary, which they need to be able to retain for future use, in order to commit the new vocabulary to long-term memory. Games, from classic children's games to high-quality video games, are a valuable addition to a school's ESL program. The use of games in a learning environment is an effective tool to ensure vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency.

This article describes how games can be used as a vehicle to inspire foreign students to learn the English language, and how these games aid them to overcome difficulties and problems faced throughout the learning process. The benefits of using games to improve conversation skills of foreign students to prepare them for integration into university life will be highlighted. Furthermore, what makes computer games fun and a rewarding experience will be discussed. This article supports studies such as a study that examined learners using the computer game and whether playing the language game would develop additional English vocabulary or not.

Key words: *games, learning environment, reliability, visual, confidence, vocabulary.*

INTRODUCTION

With an increasing trend towards an online learning surroundings and the rise of technology, most researchers believe that using video games in the classrooms is taken into account a decent supply of diversion in the classroom that helps students learn and interact with given material in order to learn and acquire a new language. Video games could change the way students are acquainted with the learning whereas they sit passively in a classroom and expect the teacher to convey them the required data in order to learn the English language.

Games can be used as an efficient tool to reinforce students learning a new language as a result of the utilization of games breaks up the monotony of directions, offers a modification in routine and atmosphere, and provides students opportunities to observe English in an exceedingly safe environment. This article would be important to the teacher to supply the way to teach English language by employing a style of ways in teaching through the use of games to make the students interact with the language and support language proficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Games are usually utilized in learning environments to develop patterns of thinking about and interacting with tutorial content through active interactions with the materials rather than through passive learning in which the information is deposited into the learner's mind. The diversity of tools available through an online learning environment, of which games are an example, can be leveraged in such a way as to motivate the learner not just to interact with the material, but to also retain it more effectively [1]. The ESL environment is a perfect setting to investigate the effectiveness games may have on the motivation to learn. The number of ESL students enrolled in university programs abroad are increasing, particularly in health fields such as nursing. ESL students are also more likely to experience poor academic performance. Most of these challenges are directly related to English language proficiency. English proficiency is the key to success in any academic programs, and therefore ESL interventions should focus on the challenges most often blamed for poor academic performance: writing, exam questions, following lectures, digesting the large amounts of assigned reading, and locating and understanding relevant sources [6]. Immersion games that are content-focused (rather than simply vocabulary games) can play a role in a new approach to ESL instruction. Computer games are self-learning tools. Learners, therefore, need to have a basic grasp of English in order to understand the instructions, but once this is accomplished and the game progresses, language learners will begin to absorb vocabulary as the game is conducted. The enjoyable nature of computer games may increase motivation to play the game and increase vocabulary acquisition. For example, computer spelling games have been proven to help students overcome low performance on spelling tests. In research conducted on elementary ESL students, results indicated that the experimental group relegated to the spelling game spent more time preparing for the spelling test than the control group.

Research reveals that the traditional way of learning vocabulary in ESL programs, which frequently consists of presenting word lists for acquisition, is not very effective in increasing students' vocabulary. In a study conducted on English as a second language and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) ninth graders (third intermediate), students were randomly selected for certain vocabulary games, including Twenty Questions, Passwords, and Crossword Puzzles. While some of these games were in-class games, others were computer-based. A comparison of the treatment groups and the control groups supported the conclusion that games are an important technique for vocabulary retention. Games used to teach foreign language learners, including Uzbek students, the English language present a safe learning platform that addresses the issues of shyness, allowing learners to practice a language in the safety of the gaming environment. Particularly sensitive students may find it discouraging to practice their language in the

classroom. Fear of failure may cause some students to refrain from using their oral language, while students with stronger language skills may monopolize the classroom discussion. When instructors use games in the classroom, all students will be given a chance to observe in a safe learning environment, free from sarcasm or judgment from other students.

Research suggests that in order for English language learners to fully comprehend written text, they need to be able to figure out 98% of the vocabulary. For the same learners to understand spoken communication, they must have a similar high percentage of vocabulary accuracy (95%). However, academic texts and instruction have an inherent assumption that language will be learned incidentally, through exposure to large amounts of reading materials and vocabulary lists. This may be the case for relatively high-frequency words (words that are encountered often in language), but this is often not the case for low-frequency words. Research does not support the conclusion that these traditional methods of language instruction results in greater vocabulary retention [4]. Indeed, more interactive and motivating alternatives must be considered for challenging vocabulary.

The ability to speak English fluently and with proficiency is directly related to a learner's ability to learn vocabulary. ESL learners, in particular, must be exposed to an oversized quantity of language to assist develop their vocabulary. Most computers worldwide are developed and run in English; therefore, the computer has become a valuable tool for vocabulary acquisition.

As for disadvantages of using video games it is necessary to note that some teachers, especially senior teachers generally unfamiliar with or reluctant to use different instructional technology, find that the use of games interrupts student attention and wastes valuable classroom time. Some of the weaknesses of using simulation in the classroom is that simulation requires a long learning experience that does not readily fit into a shorter class period. It requires a teacher to have experience in how to use simulations. Some roles in the game requires a student to speak more and some roles in the game require students to speak less, so the student who speaks less will not benefit from the simulation because they will not practice the language [2]. Some teachers believe that using a game in the classroom as a learning method will not give positive results, so they rely on the traditional method which is the use of a text book as a learning method to teach students English language. The use of games and other online learning tools is growing rapidly, but there are challenges to measuring the effectiveness of skill transference from the virtual world created in the game to the real world. One major obstacle is that the companies devoted to gaming are not necessarily skilled in the application of educational theory to gaming. As such, they favor the entertainment value (which will ultimately translate into sales) at the expense of the educational content, while companies that specialize in educational content may underestimate the entertainment value. The key is finding the perfect marriage between instructional design and entertainment, but in the world of commerce, this balance is hard to find [5].

Some of the long-held attitudes and opinions against using online learning games in the classroom may be cultural as well as generational. Older instructors, for instance, as a statistical percentage are much more dependent on textbook learning, as compared to online games, compared to their younger colleagues.

This research study used a quasi-experimental design and was supplemented with quantitative and qualitative methods. A quasi-experimental design is a type of evaluation that attempted to determine the intended outcome (for example, an anticipated effect) of a specific intervention or treatment on a defined target population. A true experimental design should have three elements: a pre/post test design, a treatment group and a control group that does not receive the treatment, and random assignment of participants to either group. As the root quasi means “having some, but not all of the features of” (Trochim, 2006), a quasi-experimental study design will lack one or more of these three components. A quasi-experimental study is an appropriate design for many social science experiments, particularly when random assignments of participants is impractical or impossible. The study applied the ARCS motivation model that consists of attention relevance, confidence and satisfaction. In addition, students had an opportunity to use the language to complete the task based on the task-based learning approach. This approach gave the students an opportunity to reflect on and to connect what they learned in the classroom and applied it outside the classroom [3]. For this research study, 30 adults who were Uzbek students, were randomly selected from a low-level ESL group. All of the students used a computer game to learn prepositions of places (i.e. in, on, behind, under, next to). Both groups had games with the same learning objectives, but different designs. This method was used in order to answer the question of which game designs or characteristics would motivate students to learn more English. The design used two methods to measure students’ quantitative and qualitative motivation. The quantitative method involves performance facts, attitude facts, observational facts, and statistical analysis and qualitative methods which includes open-ended questions, interview, observation facts, document facts, and video and recorded speech. For the quantitative measurement, students took a post-test while the qualitative measurement consisted of an interview to measure motivation after the students played the games. Questions for the qualitative interview were translated into Uzbek. The game had different designs to present the different levels of difficulty (i.e. random vs. easy to difficult), timing, and visual cues.

Before students were assigned to a group, there was a bowl with 30 small pieces of paper with either a 1 or 2 on each piece. The students chose a paper from the bowl based on the number they chose that was their group. The first group used the game that presented multiple-choice questions plus a visual cue, while the other group used the game that presented only multiple choice questions without a visual cue. Based on the ARCS model, the first game had a colorful spinning wheel that grabbed the student’s attention because they did not know whether the question coming to them was difficult or easy. This design built anticipation. The pyramid game required learners to click on a level to make the question appear. The learner also knew that the next question would be more difficult than the previous level. The spinning wheel game may be a better representation of attention that ARCS model described because it grabbed and maintained the student’s attention. On the other hand, the pyramid game was a good representation of relevance because the learner saw a picture of how the preposition was used to describe a real life situation. Both games designs were in line with the satisfaction and confidence components of ARCS model. The pyramid game presents the questions with increasing levels of difficulty while the spinning wheel design

presents the questions in random level of difficulty; however, both games stay within a range that is not too difficult or too easy for the learner, so they maintained their confidence.

RESULTS

The findings of confidence indicated that the eight queries related to confidence were acceptable reliability, students in both groups felt assured. One of the students stated that Game A which had visual cueing next to each question, gave him a sense of confidence that he was able to choose the correct answer, as shown in Figure 1.



1. Game A with Visual Cueing

A student noted that Game B which had no visual cueing next to each query, the grades that she gained from the correct answers gave her a different feeling on her ability to reply all the questions correctly and end the activity successfully as shown in Figure 2.



2. Game B with no Visual Cueing

DISCUSSION

The research study illustrated that the students interact to play games no matter if the game had visual cueing or did not have visual cueing and if the game had random questions or games with increased difficulty. Students tended to be more motivated with games that included questions related to the conversation. Therefore, the design in Game B motivated students to learn more of the English language.

Possible benefits after playing the game

Train students to answer questions in a short period of time which helps them get used to answering questions faster on a test. Build / improve reading and writing skills when the students play the games.

Students are challenged and better to face difficult questions in the future. Give students the opportunity to practice what they learned in the classroom. Provide a good opportunity for students to learn about other games available on the website that teaches English language. Active students mind to focus in the material, improve memory through practice on the use of prepositions of place. Give an opportunity for students to have fun as well as to learn English.

Practical Implications

Implications for Teachers

In this study, two game designs were used, one presented questions of increasing difficulty to students and pyramid formation while the second used a spinning wheel to present students with questions of random difficulty. For teachers, specifically ESL teachers, who want to include technology in their teachings and want to include games as an essential method of teaching ESL, this section illustrates what game designs or characteristics should be used. The interviews and the surveys of students indicated that they played games often in their daily life. They enjoyed learning English not just from the book, but they also wanted to use other available features of technology to keep them motivated. Teachers must make sure to select games that contain these characteristics. The game should be similar to games students have already played and then have them play the games as an activity to keep students motivated such as games with visual cueing vs. no visual cueing, games with random questions vs. games with increased difficulty, and games which proved feedback. In this article, most of students were familiar with both games from watching them on TV. Teachers should stay alert to any new research related to game design and other studies in order to find other characteristics at the minimum. Teachers might find other games that have more features that are not covered in the games they have already played. For example, Game A has a picture of dog next to each question, so teachers might find a game that has both pictures and sound where the question is read to the students. This could motivate students to improve their listening skills while they play the game with new elements. The findings of this study will benefit future teaching methods that pertain to technology. It will help instructors with the use of other activities to teach English.

Teachers should adapt to these ideas to better help the students learn English. The reason being is mainly because students are showing that they are motivated, students are showing that these methods keep them engaged and interested to learn. Visual cueing helped students have a continuous motivation in learning the material being presented to them. The results of the game that had no visual cueing also had good results because it was something of their interest because they needed that information for their daily lives. The study showed that the difference if the games were just about the same because they both were game based and that thrill was something different and interesting. Furthermore, because most people's life revolves around technology, for example one can track their fitness and health from their phone which makes it more convenient and also motivates people to stay fit and healthy. Therefore, the findings of the study reveal the interest people have for technology which will help motivate them and keep them interested to learn.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research study that has been done was to use video games to extend the motivation of Uzbek students learning the English language. The findings provided details concerning what game designs or characteristics can be used in order to keep students motivated to learn English like visual cueing versus no visual cueing, games with random queries versus increase difficulty, and games that provided feedback. Based on the post-tests, surveys and interviews, the results demonstrated that there was not much difference between the two groups. All these results showed that games inspire students to learn more English. As to the question of what game designs or characteristics will motivate students, the study includes all. One game used in this research contained pictures and was designed as a pyramid, while the other had no pictures and was designed as a spinning wheel. Because there was so little difference between the two groups in the results we cannot draw any conclusions about game design or characteristics. Students enjoyed playing the games and were willing to see more ESL games activities to break the routine and take advantage of available technologies on the computer.

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