



CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

## Utilising the Elements of Popular Games in Improving English Language Skills Among Gifted Students of Kolej GENIUS Insan: A Qualitative Approach

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### ABSTRACT

In this preliminary study, research was done to determine the effectiveness of gaming elements in improving students' English language skills. This study utilises a qualitative method in eliciting data from the students. In the purposive sampling technique, six active gamers among students who played three popular games were interviewed to share their experiences in discovering the many aspects of the games they played to ensure they could play them successfully. Their responses were coded and analysed to understand their learning experiences better. From the analysed data, it was found that the students had done extensive research and that they had employed self-directed learning in improving their reading skills and increase their vocabulary to understand the many aspects of the games they played. The experiences and language learning strategies could be shared with other students who could reap the same benefits as they did. English teachers would see this as an option in the teaching approach for their students. With better understanding on the elements on gaming, this study could further discover the many benefits of gaming in students' language learning quest.

**Keywords:** *gaming elements; language acquisition; self-directed learning; gifted students.*

### INTRODUCTION

The study on the use of games in classroom has gained a steady momentum for the past decade. Popular games or educational games had been adopted by educators to instil interest and passion on certain subjects or topics (Silva, 2020). It has become an alternative strategy among educators as they seek to enhance the learning experience for their subjects. There are many factors that could lead to the popularity of gaming especially the school children (Rahmani, 2020). Among the reasons given was it is mainly used for entertainment and relaxing reason. During the early era of personal computer (PC), games were difficult to access as it required certain hardware configurations of the PC to enable the game installation. Gaming was restricted to only those with the access to premium PC with high-end configurations. The experience of playing games on desktop computer was also limited as the graphic card, memory, storage or screen resolution became the determining factors whether certain popular games would be able to be installed or played at lower resolution or limited setting, causing poor or unpleasant gaming experience (Silva, 2020).

With the availability of games in mobile devices such as mobile phones, tablets, iPad and iPhone, the leisure activity has continued to become popular among the young individuals (Udjaja et al., 2022). Today, games have been developed for

entertainment and education by large game developers and it has improved by leaps and bounds compared to the early days of PC gaming. The huge choices, access and availability of popular games are attracting many school students to be “serious gamers” and invested their time and energy in honing their gaming skills by doing their own research on the internet. The rich resources available online in the form of gaming websites, social media apps, YouTube videos and live-streaming gamers sharing sessions were their main references to study and learn all the important elements in the games they play. Thus, come the need for them to read, watch, listen and understand the information so that they could apply it in their quest to become better at the games they were interested in.

The language skills such as reading and listening become vital for them to assist in acquiring the relevant and useful information on the games. The game play, features, hidden elements, tricks and strategies were discussed at length in many websites and social media apps and it had encouraged their effort to learn new technical works, terms and phrases normally referred about the games they played. YouTube videos and live-streaming gaming sessions were available anytime anywhere should they need to learn specific detail or information of certain aspects of the game.

Experts define gamification as an innovation in learning which integrates the game features to non-game environments (Deterding et al., 2011; Kriyakova, Yordanova, & Angelova, 2014; Healey, 2018). Gamification employs a well- designed digital and non-digital games to stimulate learners' language, which includes elements of games or play into the learning environment to boost engagement and participation (Maloney, 2019). The nature of gamification itself is expected to increase the students' motivation and commitment, as well as to bring positive and competitive behaviour to them (Marczewski, 2013).

Introduction should state the novelty/objectives and/or statement of hypothesis, research problem/or significant of the work and provide an adequate research background, avoiding a detailed literature survey or a summary of the results.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative approach as it applied the focus group discussion (FGD) technique for the participants' interview (Creswell, 2015; Krueger, 2002). The session was video recorded and the interview questions proper was carried out by student researchers. There were six serious gamers volunteered for this study and they were recommended by their friends and the students' gaming community in the college. The participants were known as serious gamers among their friends as they participated in many tournaments online and offline. The list of general interview questions were shared with the participants prior to the session so that they could give a clear, relevant information in their responses and feedback. After the interview, the recorded session was transcribed for data analysis. The text was later coded and analysed for its main themes and ideas. The initial findings are shared in this paper and it will be further analysed for detailed discussion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In the interview session, participants talked passionately about the popular games that they had been playing. They started the conversation with the early stage of their involvement with games and how they decided to invest their time and energy in getting better in the games from time to time. In short, they had been involved in games

for more than a few years. Their friends online and offline had been encouraging them to explore the games in a serious manner—talking, discussing and sharing their experiences. They began playing games as a past time and develop stronger interest later by joining gaming community and entering games competitions with their friends.

The focus of the interview had always been on how they developed their skills and knowledge in understanding the many aspects of their game. They shared the efforts made in learning new vocabularies as their stride for more understanding in the information they obtained from the resources they adopted online such as websites and social media. Reading for more information and acquiring new updates from fellow gamers encouraged them to contact other gamers and communicate with them in informal way. They did socialise with fellow gamers when they watched live-streaming gaming events as they discovered many pieces of information about their preferred games.

Other than using the basic reading skills and writing for daily conversation, they had also been watching many videos explaining the game aspects and many other information that they needed to perform better in their games. They recalled how they would struggle to understand the spoken language in the videos they watched. With more focus and effort, they had been practising effective listening skills and managed to slowly gather the information and ideas needed from the videos they watched. Some participants employed multiple listening technique with the videos so that they could understand better.

## CONCLUSION

The participants' effort over the years had included the 'unofficial' hours of learning. Their language skills of reading and listening had been important for them during the long "study hours" that they had regimented themselves to. New vocabularies, technical gaming terms and phrases had been added and they might not be aware of positive language skills development they had acquired over the years. Gaming is not a subject in their school syllabus and it might be a formal course for language learning skills and activities. With proper adjustments, the use of elements in popular game could attract and motivate students in their language skills development in a more serious way than what they used to experience in the usual classroom.

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