Exploring The Non-ELT Students’ Gaming Experience in Acquiring the English Vocabulary

Dhafa Bima Wijaya Putra1*
1English Language Education Department, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: dhafabima12@gmail.com*

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Abstract
Different digital technologies, especially video games, which are used to assist students in acquiring language, have been examined by researchers. However, studies exploring non-ELT students’ gaming experience in acquiring a second language (L2) vocabulary are sparsely investigated. Therefore, this study explores how non-ELT students’ gaming experience assists them in acquiring their second language (L2) vocabulary. The data of this study were gained from non-ELT students’ experiences. Four non-ELT students were interviewed, and the data from the interview were analyzed through thematic analysis. Several initial questions given to the non-ELT students were used to tell their game experience. The results of this study indicated that the games, notably Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA), First Person Shooter (FPS), Role Playing Games (RPG), have the potential to assist non-ELT students in acquiring second language (L2) vocabulary. Several principal reasons related to how the gaming experience helps the students in acquiring new vocabulary emerged in this study.

Keywords: Non-ELT student, video games, gaming experience, acquiring vocabulary

Introduction
In learning a language, both mother tongue and foreign language, vocabulary have an essential role. It is the basis of language, which is important to be learned by language learners (Ashraf et al., 2014). Vocabulary is one element that links the four language skills. As Wulanjani (2016) stated that vocabulary should be integrated into the teaching of those four skills-listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Lack of vocabulary can be a serious problem when learners need to practice their foreign language directly with the native speaker of that language. For those reasons, vocabulary should be regarded as one of the essential aspects of foreign language teaching and learning, and it should be given much attention in TEFL practices. However, in many regions, vocabulary teaching and learning seem to be neglected in TEFL (Ashraf et al., 2014; Asyiah, 2017).
In this era, the digital worlds and computers become part of our life with no exception (Aghlara & Tamjid, 2011). In this case, we should be able to find a suitable method to apply it for vocabulary learning, especially for Indonesian students considered Non-ELT learners. Using unsuitable methods can make the student bored quickly. It also does not make the memorization last long (Wahyuni et al., 2018). Using suitable techniques does not mean vocabulary learning becomes more straightforward. Instead, the students feel more comfortable, less bored, and less stressed. Students also do not realize they are studying while using video games to improve their vocabulary mastery. One of the methods of increasing vocabulary mastery is using video games. Using multimedia such as video games significantly increases students’ performance in learning a language (Salehi, 2017). Besides, video games make the environment friendly competitive, collaborative (Sorayaie-Azar, 2012), motivating (Ebrahimzadeh, 2017), interesting, and effective. One of the researchers (Nikoopour & Kazemi, 2014) stated that students could freely use video games to improve their vocabulary mastery outside of the classroom.

Research is reported to have been carried out; therefore, a case study was conducted to examine students’ experiences in vocabulary learning through games. This study contributes to the strategy and benefits of vocabulary teaching and learning for EFL students and teachers since many games have been used to facilitate language learning. Several studies have shown many potentials for students to acquire second language (L2) vocabulary (Nurfalah, 2019). This research uses the interview method to ask learners’ opinions about acquiring new vocabulary from playing video games. The learners say that video games can assist them in acquiring new vocabulary and make learning fun. Video games can motivate learners to learn new things, especially learning a new second language (L2).

Recently, Quantitative research related to the effect of particular games on vocabulary has already been done by many researchers. However, the qualitative study which reveals students’ experience in acquiring second language (L2) vocabulary through a game is sparsely investigated. Thus, this study explores how non-ELT students’ gaming experience assists them in acquiring their second language (L2) vocabulary.

Literature Review

Video Game

Not all learners are video game players (Godwin-Jones, 2016), and the language required to interact with video games can be overwhelming for beginner learners. But there are more than 2 billion video game players worldwide, and the variety of active learners of English is predicted to be more than 1.9 billion by 2020. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that many video game players are also language learners and that many English language learners choose to play games to improve their English. Different types of video game genres present different experiences. For example, role-playing games require decision-making and have branching narratives that change following player decisions. First-person shooter is a subgenre of shooter video games focused on gun and other weapon-based combat from a first-character perspective. The multiplayer online battle arena is a subgenre of strategy video games in which two groups of gamers
compete against each other on a battlefield. It is possible that language learning can occur by playing video games of these genres. Studies have reported positive effects, such as participation, pronunciation, and writing improvements due to playing games (Ahmad, 2012).

**Vocabulary Mastery**

Vocabulary is needed in students’ lives and future opportunities (Faliyanti & Sari, 2018). They explained that before mastering English language skills, it is better if the students must master vocabulary first. As stated by Asyiah (2017) that the more vocabulary is learned, the better English language skills they will have. Similarly, (Sukrina, 2012) said that vocabulary mastery is significantly needed to perceive language skills, communicate fluently and write excellent writing. Many students learn new words by copying the teacher and finding it in the dictionary. (Marzuki, 2015) stated in his study that there are several ways that students need to do in vocabulary mastering: students need the motivation to train themselves by practicing and memorizing English vocabulary during the teaching and learning system, students need to follow the course or make a small group discussion at school or home which could help them to learn vocabulary, students have to practice their language inside or outside the school that can enhance their vocabulary mastery.

**Games and Vocabulary Learning**

Games as “teaching devices” are perceived as mere time-fillers, “a break from the monotone of drilling,” or playful activities. Games cannot be successful if the teacher does not explain the tasks and roles of students clearly in playing games. Games require all students’ involvement, and they promote friendly competition. Therefore, students must have a cooperative attitude. The students usually speak in their mother tongue to discuss the problematic vocabulary while playing games (Ruzmetova et al., 2020). Franciosi et al. (2016) suggested that simulation games present a means of achieving desired learning outcomes and engaging learners. Their results suggest that gameplay with a simple simulation may be beneficial in acquiring foreign language vocabulary.

Silsüpür (2017) claimed that the EFL students had a good time and were not bored while playing vocabulary games. She revealed that games contribute to vocabulary learning because students have a chance to learn and practice the language. Therefore, using games may promote motivation and vocabulary acquisition. Alzahrani (2018) states that mobile technology games with virtual reality assist vocabulary development for second language learners, such as using short message serve, mobile-based games, and mobile-based flashcards, and that students have positive attitudes s toward using mobile technology in learning new vocabulary. Alfadil (2020) stated virtual reality influences the vocabulary acquisition of intermediate school students. He suggested that integrating virtual reality in teaching EFL is a promising strategy and can be more successful than the traditional learning method for vocabulary acquisition. The
literature review contains some theories and citations based on the topic existing and related to the theme discussed as an example (Rommie, 2023).

Methods

Descriptive analysis with qualitative research was selected to investigate the Non-ELT students’ gaming experience in acquiring a second language (L2) vocabulary. This design provides an ‘all-encompassing method’ for systematically describing a phenomenon within a real-life context, which is, in this case, the contribution of video games to the acquisition of students’ English vocabulary. The respondents of this study were four Non-ELT students who have already played games for a long time and still play the routine of the game in their daily life now. Various games played by the respondents could make the analysis of this study too broad; each respondent played the game daily with a range of playing duration from 30 minutes to 2 hours per day. In this study, the researchers used structured interviews. Transcribed data from the interview were analyzed through thematic analysis. To validate the data taken in this study, triangulation is used to drive it all right. Triangulation or examination of members consolidates the three methods used in research.

Findings and Discussions

Type of games that make learning vocabulary.

Every student is interested in the type of game they want to play. The types of games that are often played are MOBA, FPS, and RPG.

“MOBA is the type of game I play. I can get English vocabulary in the voice audio as well as the text on the game.” (p-A)

“I play different types of games, RPG and FPS. In RPG games, I get English vocabulary through the dialog that occurs in the game. I get English vocabulary for FPS games through contact with players from other countries.” (p-D)

The four participants of this study played MOBA, FPS, and RPG games. From MOBA, they can get vocabulary from audio (such as double kill, triple kill, maniac, and savage), text in the game (such as the name of roles like mage, assassin, tank, fighter, and support), and the gameplay itself. In FPS, they can communicate with other players from various countries and acquire vocabulary by following commands from the training mode in the game. Finally, in RPG, they can get vocabulary in the game story and dialog that occurs in the game.

Handling complex vocabulary while playing games in the mother language

Students already have ways to enjoy and overcome if they encounter difficult words when playing the game.
“According to students, students avoid playing in competitive mode by playing in certain game modes such as classic mode or practice to enjoy the game.” (p-C)

“According to students, when finding difficult words, students use translators and ask friends” (p-D)

In overcoming difficulties in English vocabulary, participants often ask friends and use a translator to interpret the difficult words. In addition, participants also coped by trying and finding out the usefulness of in-game features or playing casually in specific game modes.

Motivation to memorize the English vocabulary.

Motivation has a vital role in remembering and learning English. Students have their ways to be motivated in remembering English vocabulary.

“To understand the storyline in the game and to be able to understand every sentence in the game.” (p-B)

“I like playing games; in games, I can find new terms in English, especially the vocabulary.” (p-D)

Playing games can motivate students. Participants can be encouraged to remember English vocabulary in games because it can facilitate them in playing games, such as storylines or procedures for playing the game. As a result, some participants can find new terms in English, and indirectly they can learn and memorize the vocabulary. The study (Solak & Cakır, 2015) finds out if motivation plays a crucial role in learning as it affects learning success. Moreover, a positive correlation exists between students’ motivation and academic achievement. Therefore, playing games can motivate students. Participants can be encouraged to remember English vocabulary in games because it can facilitate them in playing games, such as storylines or procedures for playing the game.

However, boosting students’ motivation to learn the language is not easy, especially in learning vocabulary, which many students see as tedious activities. Using games is one of the ways to improve students’ motivation. By playing games, the students are motivated to learn new vocabulary and new terms without feeling forced, as well as; students can find new words in English, and indirectly they can learn and memorize the vocabulary.

Practice the vocabulary in a real context.

Every student has various ways of remembering the vocabulary in the game.

“Frequent gaming allows me to remember some vocabularies in the game.” (p-A)

“I often repeat each word I find several times and write down the words I got in the game so that I can remember them.” (p-D)

Participants have a way to train to remember the English vocabulary obtained in the game. One way to do this is by noting the word and repeating the word several times. However, some participants play games too often so that they can subconsciously remember the vocabulary without being learned.
According to Rohmatillah (2016), once students have found out the meaning of a word, they have no reason to attend to it anymore, and it will be forgotten easily. On the other hand, participants have a way of training to remember the English vocabulary obtained in the game. One way to do this is by noting the word and repeating the word several times. Both results are contradictory because the participants play games too often, so they can subconsciously remember the vocabulary without being learned.

MOBA games and FPS games provide animation with audio and visualization, which help the students portray the context in their imagination and interact with the situation. Therefore, in subconscious learning experiences, even at a particular time, they realize that they are learning, and the context provided in the video games assist the students in acquiring the second language (L2) vocabulary. Putting words in context will give the students new vocabulary meaning, and it can lead to meaningfulness, making it get into long-term memory. Moreover, context can boost students’ learning process (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015). Even though they do not intend to learn, they finally realize they learn something by playing games. Especially when they find new vocabulary in video games and then find it in a real-life situation, they realize that games contribute to their language mastering.

**Mobile technology games help to acquire vocabulary.**

Each game has various features, such as audio, chat, and game modes. These features can help students in gaining English vocabulary in the games played.

“I acquired the English vocabulary by learning how to play the game on the tutorial mode in the game I play.” (p-B)

“When playing games, I often meet other players from different countries; when communicating, I often get new vocabulary in English.” (p-C)

The four participants already know much about the game’s features, such as global chat, audio chat, tutorial, gameplay, and voice-over. In international chat, participants often get vocabulary when communication occurs between players from various countries. In audio chat, participants get vocabulary from interacting directly with other players and constantly listening to the game audio. In tutorial mode, participants get vocabulary by paying attention to every word and pronouncing it in that mode. In gameplay, participants get vocabulary from various environments and storylines in the game. Finally, in voice-over, participants get vocabulary by practicing and repeating every word or sentence they get.

**Conclusion**

This study shows that games, mainly three types of video games, which is Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA), First Person Shooter (FPS), and Role-Playing Games (RPG), are the potential to facilitate Non-ELT students in acquiring a second language (L2) vocabulary for several initial reasons. The first is that video game provides a subconscious learning experience in a particular context. Non-ELT students do not intend to learn by playing the game, so they play for pleasure in a relaxing environment and the specific context.
provided in the game. This condition supports students’ learning experience. Secondly, video games provide various strategies to learn English so that non-ELT students acquire a second language (L2) vocabulary in many ways. The last reason is that video games motivate non-ELT students to learn new things, especially learning a new second language (L2) vocabulary. By playing the game, the non-ELT students were encouraged to finish the mission and win, so they made some efforts to achieve their goals.

References


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