

THE EFFECT OF ONLINE GAMES ON ENGLISH STUDENTS' VOCABULARY MASTERY

Windra Faresyah¹, Fita Heriawati², Dzul Fikri³

Universitas Islam Malang^{1,2,3}

windrafaresyah123@gmail.com¹, dwifitaheriyawati@unisma.ac.id²,

dzulfikri1175@gmail.com³

Abstract: Online games are one of the keys for learning and acquiring vocabulary by creating an interactive and motivating context to acquire new words. Online games potentially benefits in vocabulary acquisition as people can meet the person from another country to practice their knowledge about the vocabulary. Thus, the researcher is interested in studying the effect of playing online games on students' English vocabulary mastery. This study used ex post facto research design involving 42 students from the 5th semester of the English department from the University of Islam Malang. The data are analyzed independent sample t test to measure the difference of vocabulary mastery of frequent and moderate gamers. In result shows that there is significant correlation between students' habit in playing online game and students' vocabulary mastery. This indicates that the better students' habit in playing online games using English setting the better their vocabulary mastery. However, the result indicates that there is no significant difference between frequent and moderate gamers because the mean score of frequent gamers have slight difference with those of moderate gamers.

Key Words: Online gaming, vocabulary mastery, comparison

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, online games are one of the solutions for learning and improving vocabulary in this technology era. As Ashraf (2014) stated that playing online games, creates an inspiring learning context as well as an interactive learning environment. In language, learning vocabulary holds an important role in the language learning process, as vocabulary knowledge supports understanding to communicate with other people. Moreover, Richards and Schmitt, (2010) stated that vocabulary knowledge is the amount of vocabulary that a person actively uses. Vocabulary stands as the accumulation of words which generally arranged in the alphabetic sequence that is

known as lexicon, the stock of words applied in the language of an individual. There are many kinds of vocabularies, including receptive and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to the words we understand through reading and listening” while productive vocabulary refers to a set of known words that individual use to produce language in communication (Hanson & Pauda, 2011). The acquisition of sufficient vocabulary is important for assuring success in EFL as a wide amount of vocabulary allows language learners to use the structures and functions for understandable communication (Alqahtani, 2015).

There are many ways for language learner to acquire vocabularies, vocabulary can be learned outside the school or campus environment by playing online games. According to Shariarpour and Kafi (2014) great amount of video games contains storyline, instructions, guide, and conversations, that were primarily set using the English language as the language used worldwide. Despite the old-fashioned beliefs that playing video games was a waste of time, unproductive, and non-utilitarian. Several researchers claimed that communication environments provided by MMORPGs offer valuable opportunities for the language development of an individual. In this study, the researcher focused on games that involve more language and playing games in English language settings such as RPG and multiplayer games that expose the players to the English language.

Online games have the potential to be an easier and more enjoyable method of increasing vocabulary nowadays. As kusumawardani, (2015) stated that “online games are games that are only playable when the device is connected to the internet.” This allows the player to connect with others who play the game at the same time. Online games represent a productive form of language use and practice of language elements especially when the game offers English words that need to be understood in order to play the game. There are many examples of gaming vocabulary including technical terms such as "NPC" non-player character, "AI" Artificial intelligence as well as a game or story-related vocabularies such as "AOE" Area of Effect and "gears" which refers to any equipment that the player uses in the game.

Learning and acquiring vocabulary from playing games had received a lot of attention from many scholars. Furthermore, Donmus, (2010) perceived that "The value of educational games has been increasing in language education since they help to make language education entertaining". Online games become an interesting topic to increase people's interest in learning vocabulary. Levent (2009) said that the use of online games can create an enjoyable atmosphere that encourages the student's willingness to engage in communication using other languages as they communicate with other gamers. In this case, as most players in the world communicate using English, online games have the potential to expose the player to more English vocabulary and skills.

In terms of online games, most MMO or mobile games are played online where the players come in and play on various servers or communities. Online games are the media that are mainly used for entertainment and pleasure which is useful for reducing stress, still, acquisition of the English language through games by involving the players in communication online using English might develop their proficiency in all aspects of the English language skills and elements including vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, it is easier to understand English in more enjoyable situations outside the classroom learning activities, in addition to classroom learning.

The researcher considered previous studies in constructing this research. The first research study by Derbouche (2015) reveals that playing online games is effective as an independent learning strategy for EFL students in vocabulary acquisition and meets the requirements of a language learner to master the target language vocabulary in an enjoyable way. Moreover, the second research study conducted by Saputro (2020) shows that playing online games significantly gives a negative influence on the development of technology and information vocabulary. Meanwhile, the third research study conducted by (Risnawati, 2021) show indicated that the level of dependency on online games played by the students is categorized as medium. Furthermore, the learning motivation of student non-gamers is higher than student gamers. However,

there are no differences in English learning achievement between student gamers and student non-gamers

The differences between the previous studies and this present study are in the participants of the study, and what kinds of vocabulary used in the research as this study focused on gaming vocabulary which is related to the topic. Therefore, further research about how online games can be implemented in developing vocabulary is necessary. The researcher is interested in studying the effect of playing online video games with English as the primary language, related to the purpose of studying English learning styles outside the classroom environment and language acquisition.

METHOD

This study was carried out using ex-post facto research with a quantitative descriptive approach. Quantitative research is an analytical research method using statistical and numerical data to find associations that describe the causes based on social facts that indicate the relationship between variables and analyze them. The researcher implements an ex-post facto design because this research involves the treatment that already happens during the research which is playing video games. The ex-post facto is also done as the treatment happens without the researcher's interference. This study involves two variables, the independent variable was students' habit of playing online games in the English language and the dependent variable was their vocabulary mastery. The research is done by comparing students with low habits in playing an online game in the English language and those with high-level habits in playing games. The researcher conducted the research in the fifth semester of English students of Universitas of Islam Malang. The sampling technique is using random sampling where the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the fifth-semester students regardless of their gaming experience to see the differences.

In collecting the necessary data about the influence of the online game on vocabulary mastery, the researcher uses a questionnaire about students' behavior in

playing English games online and a vocabulary mastery test. The questionnaire includes 20 items of statements about behavior in playing games in the English language in the form of Likert Scale. The researcher used a self-constructed questionnaire, and conducted a validity and reliability test with tryout before the research the result all items have the probability score for validity test in Corrected item-total Correlation more than r-table of 0.288 for 41-45 sample, this indicated that the questionnaire used in the study is valid. In terms of the reliability test, all items have Cronbach Alpha score higher than desired 0.7 with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.850, this indicated that the questionnaire items are reliable. Meanwhile, the vocabulary mastery used in this study consists of 40 items constructed based on common English vocabulary that appears in games and frequent English terms used by gamers. The researcher used the common gaming vocabulary in google to construct a vocabulary test. The data analysis is done by using Statistic Package for Social Science (SPSS) application. The analysis will be in the form of a comparison analysis using an independent sample t-test to compare the vocabulary score of frequent gamers and non-frequent gamers. The analysis started by grouping frequent gamers who have a score in the online gaming frequency questionnaire above 75 and those lower than 75 was categorized as non-frequent gamers. After the grouping was established the researcher created a dummy variable 1 for frequent gamers and 0 for non-frequent gamers, then the researcher used independent sample t-test to compare the score of vocabulary mastery in terms of gaming vocabulary

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study was acquired through data collection and data analysis which aims to answer the problem of the study. The result of the descriptive statistic shows that the number of responses which means the participants that participated in this study is 42 participants. In terms of vocabulary mastery test results, the score ranges from 40 which is considered low to 95 which is considered a very high score with the mean score of 66.40 which is considered moderate. In terms of online

gaming habits, the score ranges from 58 to 91 with a mean score of 74.57 and 8.411 standard deviation.

In answering the research problem, the researcher needs to measure whether there is any difference between gamers with more gaming habits and those who have lower or moderate gaming habits.

Group Statistics

FreqGamers		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Vocabulary	Moderate Gamers	24	62,88	14,807	3,022
	Frequent Gamers	18	71,11	15,978	3,766

The result shows that there are more students with moderate gaming habits than those with frequent ones. The data also shows that frequent gamers have a better vocabulary mean score of 71.11 compared to moderate gamers with 62.88. The standard deviation of both data is lower than the mean score, thus, the analysis is a good representation of the data.

Independent Samples Test

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	,040	,843	-1,725	40	,092	-8,236	4,775		-17,888	1,415

Equal variances not assumed			-1,706	35,169	,097	-8,236	4,829	-18,037	1,565
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The data above shows that the mean difference between frequent and moderate gamers is 8.236 with a significance of 0.097 which is larger than 0.05. Therefore, the difference between frequent and moderate gamers' vocabulary mastery is confirmed but not significant. Each standard deviation is also lower than the mean difference which indicates that the result is a good representation of the data. The result indicates the difference between frequent and moderate gamers but is not significant. This result happens because there are other factors causing the development of vocabulary mastery other than online gaming habit variables that are not included in this study such as independent vocabulary learning, vocabulary learning strategies, and exposure to other English language materials such as English songs and movies. However, the significant correlation between the two variables shows that playing games in the English language are considered one of the considerable language exposures that have the potential to develop vocabulary mastery.

This finding is reinforced by the theory of Nation (2006) that vocabulary grows by the time language learner exposed to a target language. Another theory that supports the result of this study is the Second Language Acquisition theory by Krashen (1980) that vocabulary developed as the learner acquires comprehensible language input from the activity as well as the surroundings that involve the use of language. In terms of vocabulary growth due to playing games, Levent, (2009) stated that playing games have a supportive atmosphere that motivates the player to progress further and sate their curiosity by learning the language within it.

There are also many studies that support the result of this study. From the previous studies, it is shown that this study is supported by the finding of Derbouche (2015) that found the effectiveness of using games to enhance students' vocabulary mastery in a more enjoyable way. This finding is in line with the result of the current study where frequent gamers have more vocabulary mastery scores compared to moderate gamers. Moreover, another study by Risnawati (2021) indicated that using video games improves students' vocabulary mastery. These similarities happen because two previous studies involve general vocabulary that includes some gaming vocabulary that is compatible to be learned via online games as the player sometimes conversates with other online players that are native speakers.

However, the study is in contrast with the study conducted by Saputro (2020) which indicated the negative influence of playing online games in improving technology and information-related vocabulary. The difference in the result seems to happen that this particular previous study did not specialize in the variable of playing online games in English as this research does. Moreover, this research is focused on vocabulary that mostly appears in games or gaming vocabulary. The difference is, that technology and information vocabulary is different from gaming vocabulary, and games itself is entertainment, as online games require the internet and technology to play but it is not necessarily related to the topic of technology and information. The other different result is shown in the study by Risnawati (2021) that there is a significant influence of playing online games on vocabulary mastery while in this current study the effect is not significant. This result happens because of the difference between the participants of the research used by Risnawati (2021) that focused on high school students who have more leisure time to playing online games compared to university students applied in this current research.

The result shows that playing online video games in an English language setting has a positive potential for developing vocabulary, especially those that usually appear in the game such as gaming terms and languages. This result is in line

with the statement of Derakhshan (2015) that games also can help the teachers to develop suitable contexts where the language is beneficial and meaningful as well as motivate students to engage more in vocabulary learning. Moreover, Derbouche (2015) also stated that by integrating video games in learning, the teacher could create an enjoyable learning environment. In addition, Jannah, (2019) stated that when the students play video games, they might encounter new vocabulary to learn. More importantly, Ashraf, (2014) stated that online games allow the students to interact with other players around the world and enhance their language competence gradually. Therefore, the study suggests that it is important not to discourage students to play online games but to encourage the students to use English as the basic language used in games as well as motivate them to communicate with English natives around the world to promote their vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

From the study, the researcher concludes the final conclusion based on the findings and discussion. The result concluded that there playing online video games in an English language setting has a positive potential for developing vocabulary, especially those that usually appear in the game such as gaming terms and languages. This conclusion is shown by the higher score of vocabulary mastery for frequent gamers compared to moderate-level gamers. This result indicated that vocabulary development is also determined by other factors that were not included in this study such as other language exposure like English songs and videos. Moreover, the frequent gamers are confirmed to have better vocabulary mean scores but are not significant. The result is not significant because the mean score of frequent and moderate gamers only has a slight difference. The result is indicated as congruent with two previous studies that have related variables studied in their studies. However, there are also different results caused by unrelatedness of online gaming habits and the target assortment of vocabularies as well as different participants who have more leisure time to play online games.

Based on the result of the study, the researcher provides suggestions for the students, teachers, and lecturers as well as the next researcher as follows. For the students it is suggested to use English setting and language when playing video games as it has potential benefits in developing English vocabulary, it is also suggested to communicate with the international player as most of them use English in communication. For English teachers and lecturers, it is suggested not to discourage students to play online games in their free time, but rather to encourage them to play in an English setting as well as motivate them to communicate with international players around the world. For the next researcher, it is suggested to do more research about online games in English settings related to general vocabulary mastery. Moreover, it is also suggested based on the limitation of this study that did not include what kinds of video games to measure online gaming habits. This is necessary as some types of game like RPG and strategy games contains more vocabulary compared to MOBA or FPS games.

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