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Research Article

Student's Perception on the Educational Uses of Computer Games for L2 Learning and the Challenges

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ABSTRACT

There were many method that have been implemented to improve the second language (L2) learning of our students in Malaysia but the output is still disappointing us. Computer games is a success method for L2 learning in the other country but not in Malaysia. The present paper aims to investigate student's perception on the educational uses of computer games for L2 learning in classroom as they have experienced on the use of computer games for L2 learning. Secondly, it aims to reveal the challenges found in the implementation. Quantitative research is being conducted with distribution of questionnaire to the subjects. From the investigation, this study has revealed the student's perception are: the use of computer games for L2 learning is fun and enjoyable, it helps them to remember well, games stimulates them to be more creative and innovative and it gives clear goals to students. Several challenges such as level of difficulties of the games, time limitation, games target objectives and distraction in L2 learning were also revealed. At the end of this study, subjects are all agree with the implementation of computer games for L2 learning as this method benefits them in L2 learning.

Keywords: L2 learning, computer games, student's perception, challenges

INTRODUCTION

Computer games in classroom is widely used in education system all over the world. This interactive media helps teachers to be more effective and creative in their teaching [1]. In traditional classroom, pedagogical is more to teacher's centered and teacher's creativity in teaching was limited to blackboard and chalks and indoor activity in the classroom only. For example, the reading comprehension among pre schools students, teachers in traditional classrooms read story books to the students. Teachers required to read verbally and explained to their students for comprehension. The concept was not wrong but using computer will be more effective for reading comprehension compare to traditional way. The reason is because computer games is more attractive as it is colorful, interactive,

fun and have many games or activities. Using computer games as a teaching tool put teacher at ease because teachers have varies of teaching materials in this computer games or online games web for L2 learning.

Using computer games in L2 teaching is a pedagogical approach that focuses on student's centered [8]. Many past studies have proved that interactive media such as games enhance student's learning comprehension. There are four skills in language learning which are listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Previous studies on digital games have proved that digital games has effectively improve student's listening and speaking skills. The video, the English communication skill, the pronunciation, the feature that can be replayed many times, have enhanced student's listening and speaking skills. Students became more proficient in

English speaking as they learnt to follow the words pronounce by the speaker in the video. Besides that, they became proficient in listening also as they listen to the games repeatedly and this has helped them to train their hearing ability especially to English communication.

Post independent in 1957, English subject remained to be taught in school and it is still a compulsory subject in national schools. Due to this language policy, English has become our second language and Malay is our official language. This shows that English is very important in our country since a long time ago. However, the statistics in 2013 shows the average of English proficiency among our students is still below the average.

Since 1990, our government has put on efforts to support L2 learning among Malaysian. Malaysian University English Test (MUET) was introduced back then. MUET aims to improve and focus on four skills for L2 learning which are reading, writing, listening and speaking. Besides that, English textbook has been changed to suit the need for L2 learning since the implementation of KBSR and KBSM. Later after that, we have Science and Mathematics in English in 2003 but it has been stopped in 2010 due to the poor results in the two subjects. In the classroom, from traditional to computer based learning, interactive materials for teaching has been implemented to improve L2 learning in the classroom but the output is still disappointing.

Malaysian students cannot speak well in English especially those who are in the rural areas because they have no motivation to learn English. The main reason why students are poor in English is because they are not expose to English environment [17]. In the classroom sometimes, students do not use English in their conversation. This is what R. Bushan [1] called as socio-cultural factor which refer to our student's study environment, where students used their mother tongue in the classroom. He added, some teachers used vernacular language in the classroom in order to comprehend their students. However, the result from this environment was students do not communicate much in English. Thus, computer games is one of practical method and easy to follow as students are playing while they are learning. They can feel more of English environment through the games and it will motivate them to learn better in L2 classroom. In Malaysia, the implementation of computer games for L2 learning is not that active. The reason might be because of few problems such as the time limitation in the class because we have fix lesson plan. Computer games consume much time for L2 learning comprehension. To overcome the problem, it is necessary for us to find out student's perception on computer games for L2 learning so that we can get a general idea on the

implementation of the method for effective L2 learning.

Thus, this paper suggested video games for L2 learning can help students to learn better. Past studies has showed digital games could be a platform for students to express themselves and at the same time could improve their language skills [8]. Besides that, digital games stories motivates students to learn and feel fun in learning English [5]. This study will not focus on the effectiveness of computer games for L2 learning as this is not an experimental study. The focus will be on student's perception on the educational uses of computer games for L2 learning. Student's perception is very important for us to know whether the educational games is really motivate them in L2 learning. In addition, this paper will discover the challenges in using computer games for L2 learning too.

2. *Research Objectives:*

1. To investigate student's perception on the educational uses of video games for L2 learning generally.
2. To find out the challenges in the educational uses of video games for L2 learning.

3. *Research Methodology:*

3.1 *Research Design:*

This study has been using a survey method. It is a quantitative research which has been designed to investigate student's perception on the educational uses of computer games for L2 learning and the challenges.

3.3 *Research Instrument:*

The research instrument used in this study was a 5 likert scale questionnaire adapted adopted from Gardner, Liu et. al and Letchumanan. The questionnaire was divided into three parts which were part A, B and C. Part A was for demographic background. Part B focused on difficulties and Part C focused on the solutions to the problems. There was only one open ended question in part C to find out student's opinion.

3.4 *Data Analysis:*

Data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed through frequencies and percentages. The results were presented in a table, bar and pie charts. It was a descriptive research analysis.

4. *Findings:*

Thus, from all of the results shown in all of the pie charts, it can be concluded that there are several challenges in using computer games for L2 learning. The challenges include level of difficulties, time limit, games target objectives and distraction in L2 learning.

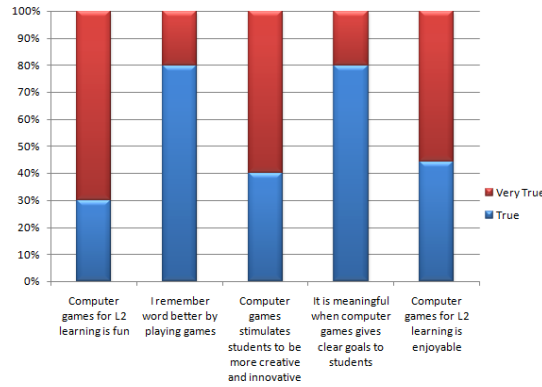


Chart 4.1: The Five Perceptions on Educational Uses of Computer Games for L2 Learning.

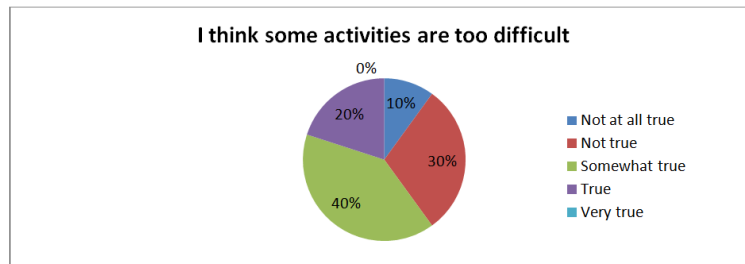


Chart 4.2: Challenge 1: Some Activities are too Difficult.

I have limited time to play games for L2 learning

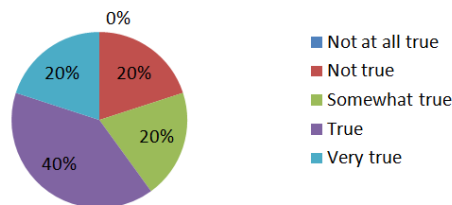


Chart 4.3: Challenge 2: Limited time.

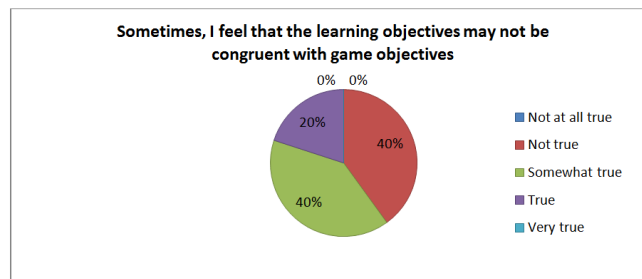


Chart 4.3: Challenge 3: The Objectives May Not be Congruent with Game Objectives.

4.1 The Challenges In Using Computer Games For L2 Learning:

The following charts indicate the challenges in using computer games for L2 learning:

Conclusion:

To maximize L2 learning, it is very important for us to obtain information from the L2 learners

regarding their perceptions toward the educational uses of computer games for L2 learning. The results of this study is like receiving feedback, opinion and response towards the implementation of educational uses of computer games for L2 learning in UKM. Their perceptions are very important for the future research and the implementation of educational computer games in English classroom.

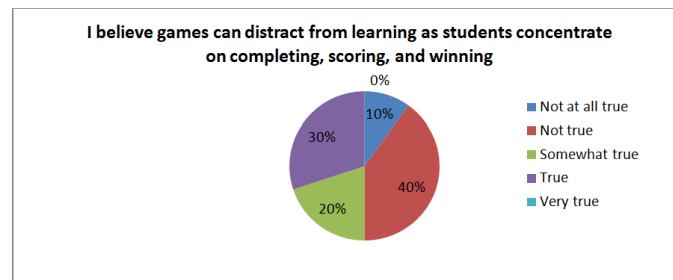


Chart 4.4: Challenge 4: Games can Distract from Learning.

From this study, we found that students believe learning through computer games is fun and enjoyable like what has been stated by C. Kuramoto. This researcher also claimed that students will feel motivated to learn better if the teaching method is fun and enjoyable. Next, it can be concluded that active learning such as using computer games in the classroom helps students to remember well the words or vocabulary in the target language. Theobald came with this statement by saying that computer games or interactive media help students to enrich their vocabularies because they can remember well through the fun activities. Lastly, this method is creative and innovative if being implemented well within suitable period of time and every games objectives will gives clear goals to students in their learning process.

Besides that, this study has found out several challenges in the implementation of computer games for L2 learning. The challenges are level of difficulties of the games, time limitation, games target objectives and distraction in L2 learning. All of these challenges are the reasons why Malaysia is not active yet in using computer games for L2 learning in the classroom. From the open ended question, this study has revealed that students are all agree with the implementation of computer games for L2 learning as the method is fun and enjoyable, can help them to enrich vocabularies and improve their language skills.

Thus, it can be concluded that this research has achieved the research questions which are firstly, to investigate the students perception on educational uses of games for L2 learners and secondly, to find out the challenges within it.

Recommendation:

This study has been conducted upon 30 students who are currently doing their master in English too. For future research, I recommend this study to be conducted on non English learners as most of the English learners are proficient. We might find other perceptions on students who have different background. Their perception might slightly different from English learners. Besides that, the population of this study could be expand to outside of UKM. Secondly, this is a research on perceptions. In the future, I recommend an experimental study on

this topic to find out the effectiveness of computer games for L2 learning. Lastly, I would like to suggest the future research to be more specific on how computer games in L2 learning could enhance language skills like reading, speaking, listening and writing. thus, it will contribute more in TESL field of study.

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