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Phenomenology Study: Learning English Vocabulary Strategies Through Action-Adventure Video Games

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

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This research is a phenomenology study about how two teens who like to play the action-adventure video game "La Noire" gained new vocabularies in English. The game is about criminal cases that happened in Los Angeles after World War II. An in-depth interview was used to dig into the teens' experiences to describe how they learned new vocabulary while playing the game. The results are that both participants liked the game and were curious about the cases, so they got attached and played for long times, around 3-6 hours. Sometimes they use a dictionary to find the meaning, but mostly they try to solve it from the context of the situation while they play the game. The repetition of the new vocabularies makes them maintain those vocabularies even though they also can pick up slang language and new culture. The next research may describe more about which kind of culture that interesting to learn new vocabulary.

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INTRODUCTION

English learning is synonymous with tension and stress. Many students are not happy to learn it, even though there are learning media that can be used to increase motivation to learn English (Purnomo and Purnama, 2013). Using games is one of the natural ways for a child to learn about his environment (Klimova, 2015). Kailani, Rafidiyah, and Farid (2019) stated that playing

games have become reliable teaching media. One of those games is video games. It is not common yet to use video games in learning English.

Video games are a "technological mediated experience" available in various forms, connected to a TV, desktop, website, or internet servers (Cășvean, 2015). Moreover, they are generally played by children outside the classroom, regardless of the supervision of parents and teachers. Many scientific kinds of research prove that video games can have positive or negative impacts on the brain. More gamers have sustained close attention to focus on visual and motor skills in completing tasks. At the same time, the negative impact is "internet gaming disorder" or gaming addiction (Nichols, 2017).

According to Gray (2018), research proves that video games can improve creativity, sociability, cognition, personal motivation, and emotions. On the other hand, video games can also impact the behavior and emotions of the players, such as aggressive, negative, or cooperative, and their attention (Quwaider, Alabed, and Duwairi, 2019). Furthermore, Halbrook, Donnell, and Msetfi (2019) proved that video games' positive effect on well-being is based on social aspects, violence, physical activities, and the players' motivations.

Video games have many genres or important features for organizing and accessing that are unstandardized and undefined (Lee *et al.*, 2014). Lindsay (2005) divided game types into action (games that offer intensity or action), adventure (games that offer exploration and puzzle-solving), puzzle (games that offer puzzles), role-playing (games that offer the player an opportunity to immerse themselves in the player character's situation), simulation (gameplay element of simulation is its ability to match real-world situations), and strategy (strategy games entertain through reasoning and problem solving), while game genres are drama, crime, fantasy, horror, mystery, science fiction, war and espionage, and western/eastern/frontier. Those types and genres can be combined to describe how the story is told and how the game can be played.

Rafidiyah, Adhitama, and Wianto (2019) mentioned that video games could be used to master English since the players must immerse themselves in the video game to win. One combination game genre that can affect language learning is action-adventure video games. Kosegaki's (2013) research is a qualitative case study about a Japanese 15 years old girl who plays "Shenmue". The result is that the girl can gain more English vocabulary after participating in the speech section. Rasti (2016) mentioned that video games could be a vocabulary teacher because of: the high level of motivation to study the new vocabulary, authentic contexts for learning, different types of repetition, various instantiations for words, rich context for dual encoding, video games enhance noticing, and various types of feedback.

Therefore, it is necessary to study the effect of games in mastering English vocabulary to accurately measure the positive and negative effects of video games in Indonesian settings. This study is about how action-adventure video game "La Noire". This game is about Cole Phelps, a World War II veteran and rising star in the LAPD, so the player has to solve the criminal Los Angeles based on actual cases Meslow (2017) to improve the way of mastering new vocabulary in English for teens with some English skills, so we can know the significant effect of video games on mastering new English vocabulary.

It is important to know gamers' strategies in overcoming their ignorance of the new vocabulary, especially so they can finish the game successfully. Action-adventure games were chosen because the English instructions are very intense, and if gamers want to solve cases in this video game must understand the instructions provided.

METHOD

This study aims to describe a phenomenon of how teens learn new vocabularies from playing an action-adventure video game. Therefore, to explain, we need to interview the teens about their strategies to gain those new vocabularies through a qualitative study using the phenomenology approach. Moustakas (1994) mentioned that phenomenology is to self-reflect on experience to describe how the teen played action-adventure video games comprehensively.

Two participants agreed to explain more about their experience while playing the action-adventure video game "LA Noire". The interviews were recorded and then transcript to be ready for analysis.

A semi-structured interview was used to describe individual experiences of the subject using snowball sampling while one teen led to the other (Mack *et al.*, 2011). Data analysis is "composite

textural and composite structural descriptions, and a synthesis of textural and structural meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The two teens are students in universities in Banjarmasin. Both P1 and P2 have played this L.A Noire game, but P1 has played 6 hours per session, and P2 has played three days a week and continues to play 3-5 hours. That showed they were into the game and immersed themselves in solving the cases for so long. Both of them love this game, and we can see from the comment by P1 "...because this game requires very high deductive skills and also a high understanding of English" P2 "...because it is so interactive, then we determine the net and continue to learn languages and also slang that's unique." We can see that the teens are picking up the language, even the slang ones.

When we asked them what made them interested in playing it, P1 answered, "... because in this game we play as a detective and the cases are very interesting, and the story is also very good. Therefore, I like to play". While P2 said, "I am interested because I am curious about the game." In this case, the participants thought playing the game was so interesting, especially related to their curiosity to solve the case.

The problems for both are about how they can understand the language or the culture of the setting game. P1 said, "Difficult to hear when listening to the characters speak and also when playing thinking about difficult puzzles." In comparison, P2 said that he could not understand the culture abroad, especially in solving criminal cases. Those were different from the ones in Indonesia. Somehow, they said they played the game themselves without any assistance from others.

We asked them if they were looking for excitement in the game or wanted to add a new vocabulary. P1 answered that he wanted to find the story, then what happened to the characters in the game itself. While P2 wanted to find out how the detective solved the case, "... because I had read Conan Comic Detective and others, hmm, how do I interrogate, so I was curious about the cases."

When they played the game for the first time, there was confusion about solving the problem. P1 answered, "So in the game, there was about the interrogation session, in the interrogation session because just playing a bit confused, this person lied or stated that there was evidence or there was no evidence, so looking for details is difficult." While P2 answered, "First, it must be confused, because the game's narrative is easy, understanding the instructions from just general words, so the instructions are there, and in terms of the language it is easy and easy to understand, because there are also expressions of the perpetrator and also from the investigator." They think the whole game process was easy since they already have the basic language to play it.

The next question was whether they use a dictionary or google translate when they do not know the vocabulary in the game, so the answers of P1 and P2 were different. P1 said, "I do not use a dictionary or google translate when playing because I play them on PS rentals, so there are not any, so when I am confused, I see texts from the conversation itself; for example, there are words that are less difficult or words that do not understand, so I listen to the answers from other characters, that means oh so the intention of this character is this and this." While P2 mentioned that "I sometimes use the dictionary, but for basic languages or words so coupled with a sentence structure that is easy to understand, usually see the expression on the face of the game, Karen, the emotion of the game is easy to see and understand."

Both P1 and P2 got new vocabularies after playing this game, but P1 gets some new words, usually, words that are related to detective and related to the game's period of 1945's; there are some specific words there, and also there are unique words related to detectives and police. Moreover, P2 got lots of harsh words. They both got a new vocabulary, but P1 got about the detective and who related to the 1945 game period, and P2 is more to the harsh words.

P1 mentioned that he did not know how much vocabulary he got because he played that game long ago, and P2 said that he also got some vocabulary. They were happy to get a new vocabulary. P1 said, "if you are happy, the reason must be because now you are using it, even though you did not think it was, you are now unconsciously using the new words." Furthermore, P2 said, "Yes, I am quite happy because I know these harsh words, so I know to use good and correct language.". P1 mentioned that the vocabulary obtained was not used, and P2 mentioned that a

little used the same reason that the game was used during the war during that era; somehow, they said that after playing those games, they became quite proficient in English.

P1 told a story about the game and the conversations that occurred during the first murder. "There is a shoe shop watchman who saw the murder, so we interrogated it, it was one of the people who saw the incident we interviewed him when we asked him a few topics, he lied, there were some honest ones, it was one of the most I remember because it is the first." P2 said, "I am tired, I do not know what the woman's name is, I have killed, but I have many of them the way you look at me I forgot after that, you know I hate the fucking day, afterward forgot to remember me." Amazingly, those teens can still remember some dialog or scene from the game.

When we asked the teens to tell a short story when they were playing the game, P1 answered, "Okay, so the story from the LA Noire game tells the story of a policeman who initially patrol division continues to be appointed as a detective, so he was included in the four detective divisions, the first division was like an accident and so on, the second division was murder, the third was about illegal drugs, and so on, the fourth one was a fire, so he went up that level, and finally the game he was brought down to the ground which is a case of water pipes or sewers in New York, continued to use plan towers to kill the mafias and he ended died because they were drowned in the underground water, so the end of the story was the grand burial of the police. In the game, there are divisions, each division has several cases, such as chapters, so in one of the chapters, there are several cases related to the story." While P2 said, "What I like about this game during the time of the second world war and his death, so the flashback illustrates how the background of the policeman is."

From the interview, we can see that the teens are very intense while playing "LA Noire" action-adventure video games, and because of that, they can gain several new vocabularies. This result is in line with Kosegaki (2013) and Rasti (2016). Learning new vocabulary needs lots of repetitions. It is clear that if you play for 3-6 hours, we are doing it repeatedly. The more they play the game, the more they understand and maintain the vocabulary. The interesting thing is how the player thinks that different cultures also helped them understand the language throughout the cases in the game that could be solved.

CONCLUSION

Playing action-adventure games, especially for long periods, can help someone gain new vocabulary and maintain it. LA Noire considers one of the action-adventure video games that made the participants play more because of the strong story and the detective cases that brought curiosity. Regardless of the negative impact of playing that game for a long time, at least the participant mentioned that they could master English better than learning English through reading books.

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