

PERCEPTIONS OF VISUAL NOVEL GAMES IN EDUCATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY SELANGOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates University of Selangor (Unisel) students' perceptions of visual novel games as an aid to English language learning. Given the limitations of traditional learning methods, alternative strategies that align with students' digital habits are increasingly necessary. This study investigates how the interactive and contextualised nature of visual novel games helps to promote vocabulary retention among university students, providing insights for more effective language learning. Using a convergent parallel design, quantitative data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 40 Unisel students, while qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 5 students. Results showed that 85% of participants considered visual novel games as engaging learning tools, with 65% noting improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Respondents emphasised the benefits of interactive narratives, but expressed concerns about the complex language in some games. These findings point to the potential of using visual novel games to improve English language learning and the need for further research into game-based learning in education.

Keywords: perception, visual novel games, game-based learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital technology has significantly transformed the landscape of education, particularly in language learning. Traditional methods of English language instruction often rely on textbooks, classroom lectures, and rote memorization, which may not fully engage students or cater to diverse learning styles. The increasing use of digital tools and interactive media, innovative approaches such as game-based learning have gained traction in educational research. Among these are visual novel games, which have emerged as a potential tool for language acquisition due to their interactive and narrative-driven structure. Visual novel games, which combine text-based storytelling with audiovisual elements and player choices, offer a unique platform and opportunity for language learning. These games immerse players in contextualized narratives, requiring them to read and comprehend dialogues, descriptions, and story developments in real time. By engaging students in authentic language use within a compelling storyline, visual novel games may facilitate vocabulary retention, reading comprehension, and overall language proficiency.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore University Selangor (Unisel) students' perceptions on visual novel games as a tool for learning English. This approach allowed for the simultaneous collection of numerical data from a larger group while also capturing more detailed personal experiences through interviews. By blending these methods, the study aimed to provide a well-rounded perspective on the role of visual novel games in language learning. The convergent parallel design is particularly useful in education research because it enables researchers to cross-check findings from different sources, making the conclusions more reliable and comprehensive.

2.2 Participants & Instruments

The participants in this study consisted of two groups of University Selangor students. The quantitative sample comprised 40 students who completed an online questionnaire designed to measure their perceptions of visual novel games in language learning. Meanwhile, the qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with five students who provided more detailed reflections on their experiences with visual novel games. These participants were purposefully selected based on their prior engagement with such games to ensure they could provide meaningful insights into the learning process.

The study employed an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments. The questionnaire, designed using Google Forms, consisted of demographic questions and likert-scale questions to assess students' engagement with visual novel games, their perceived benefits, and any challenges they encountered.. The semi-structured interviews were conducted via Google Meet, enabling researchers to explore participants' opinions beyond the constraints of the questionnaire. These interviews focused on themes such as engagement, vocabulary retention, and reading comprehension, while also addressing any difficulties faced in understanding game narratives. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up questions that delved deeper into specific aspects, offering richer qualitative insights.

2.3 Data Collection & Data Analysis

Data collection followed a structured approach to ensure the reliability of the study. The online questionnaire was distributed through university channels and social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, iMessage, Telegram, and Instagram—allowing for a broad reach within the student population. Responses were collected over a two-week period, ensuring sufficient participation. Concurrently, qualitative data collection involved scheduling individual interviews with five students, each lasting approximately 5–10 minutes. The interview sessions, conducted with participants' informed consent, were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analysed through thematic analysis to identify common patterns and different perspectives.

The analysis of the data incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequency, percentage, and mean scores of students' perceptions of visual novel games. The statistical analysis focused on engagement levels, perceived vocabulary improvement, and reading comprehension benefits. The qualitative data from the interviews underwent thematic analysis, wherein recurring themes were identified and categorized based on students' narratives. This process involved coding the transcripts, grouping

responses into relevant themes, and interpreting the findings within the context of language learning theories. Thematic analysis ensured that patterns in responses were systematically examined, highlighting key trends and discrepancies in students' experiences.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The findings of this study revealed that 85% of students found visual novel games (VNGs) to be engaging and entertaining, making them highly effective as educational tools. This result is consistent with previous research on game-based learning, which suggests that interactive and narrative-driven formats enhance student motivation and engagement. The study's findings align with Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation in learning. VNGs fulfill students' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, making language learning a more enjoyable experience.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that visual novel games offer multiple benefits for English language learners, including:

- Increased engagement and motivation, aligning with Self-Determination Theory.
- Improved vocabulary acquisition, supported by Krashen's Input Hypothesis.
- Enhanced reading comprehension, consistent with Nation's extensive reading model.
- Lowered language learning anxiety, in line with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.
- Positive attitudes among tech-savvy students, highlighting the importance of digital familiarity in game-based learning.

While visual novel games are not a replacement for traditional language instruction, their interactive and immersive nature makes them an effective supplementary tool. Future research should explore which specific VNG genres and themes are most effective for different language proficiency levels and learning preferences.

Figure 1. Participants' engagement with video games

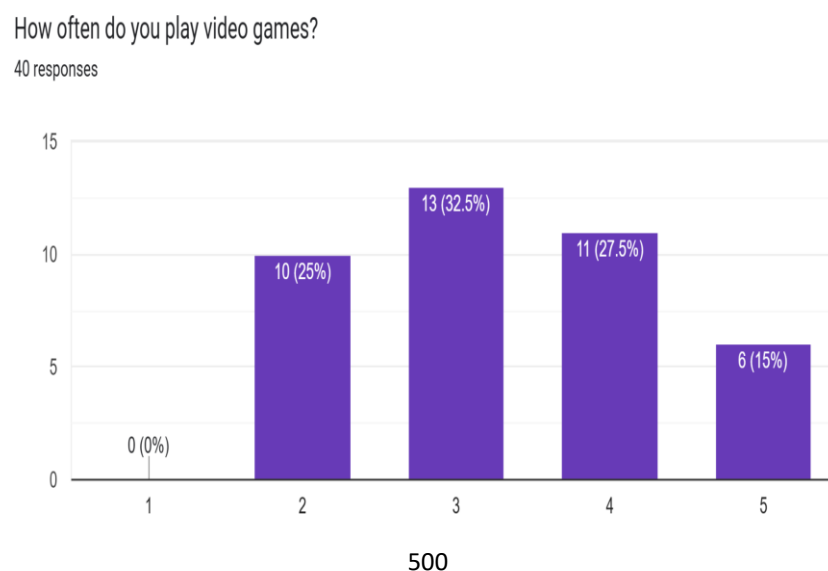
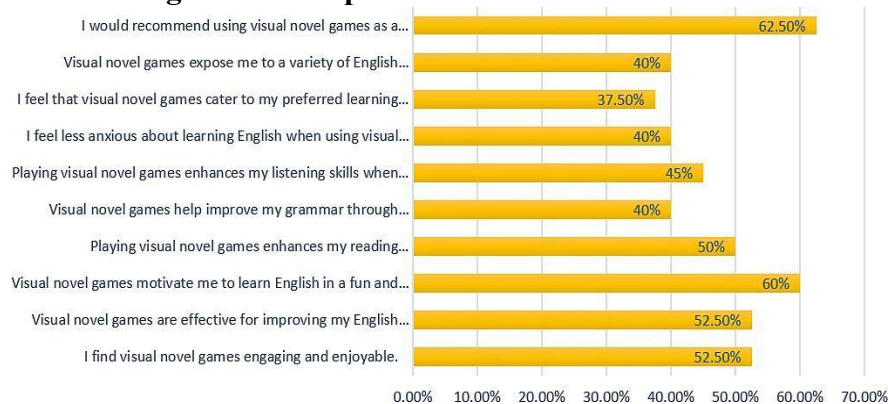


Figure 2. Perceptions of Visual Novel Games



4. CONCLUSION

Future studies should examine how visual novel games affect language acquisition over the long run, with a focus on reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. Although this study shows promising short-term results, longer-term research will be needed to figure out if these improvements last. A larger group of participants and more time spent playing visual novel games could give a better understanding of how regular use helps language development. Additionally, adding pre- and post-tests to gameplay could make it easier to track specific improvements in vocabulary and comprehension skills.

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