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Technology in the English Language Teaching (ELT): The Impact of Digital Game-based Learning

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Abstract

Teachers must always be prepared to deal with new terms, concepts, and ideas in order to address any issues that develop in the field of education, particularly when technology is involved as needs grow and change. Hence, to enhance the teaching and learning process, teachers must create new strategies and solutions, test out those solutions, and then analyze the outcomes. Integrating online game-based learning (GBL), which has gained popularity recently, into the learning process is one of the ways teachers can inspire their pupils and as it can help and boost students' motivation to study in a classroom setting, this teaching technique has demonstrated positive outcomes on how integrating technology into the teaching and learning process is highly successful. This paper will examine and review how digital game-based learning can affect English language teaching (ELT) in the classroom, particularly towards the students and the benefits of the digital game-based learning in ELT in order to determine how the GBL has affected the students' learning and motivation in class. It is beneficial for teachers to understand how employing technology will support their pedagogical innovations since it will show them more effective ways to create new teaching techniques using technology.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, ELT, Game-Based Learning, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, 21st Century Skills.

Introduction

In this modern time, technology functions best when it is employed as a tool to address issues (Altun & Ahmad, 2021). However, what is technology? Technology is a procedure, approach, or body of knowledge applied to a problem and by using this definition, we describe technology as a learning task or instructional objective used within the context of this study that makes use of technological procedures, techniques, or information (Altun & Ahmad, 2021).

Nowadays, we are always in an endless debate about the needs of a new generation and the methods and instruments that schools should provide in order to meet those needs. As the needs increase and change, teachers must always be ready to face new terms, ideas,

and concepts to solve the problems that arise in the world of education especially when it involves technology. They have to develop new solutions and techniques, try out the different solutions and then analyze the results that will help them improve the teaching and learning process.

Hence, it is important to have the motivation to learn a language as according to Cheng and Dörnyei (2007), without resolute motivation, even the brightest learners might prove unable to achieve language proficiency. Exploring methods to improve students' motivation to learn English could create more competent English learners, which is the core goal of language educators and researchers (Gamlo, 2019).

One of the ways that teachers may use in motivating the students during the learning session is by integrating learning with the online game-based learning (GBL) as it has also risen in popularity recently. This teaching strategy has shown positive results on how incorporating games into the teaching and learning process is highly effective because it can facilitate and increase students' motivation to learn in the classroom setting. There is increasing evidence that, when implemented appropriately, digital games can improve learning results and motivation (Acquah & Katz, 2020).

To investigate how the GBL has impacted the students' learning and motivation in class, hence, this paper will examine and review on how digital game-based learning can affect the English language teaching (ELT) in the classroom, particularly towards the students and the advantages of the digital game-based learning in ELT.

This study aims

1. To investigate how game-based learning has impacted the students' learning and motivation in class.
2. To examine and review how digital game-based learning can affect the English language teaching (ELT) in the classroom, particularly towards the students.

English Language Teaching (ELT)

Since Malaysia gained independence in 1957, ELT has undergone numerous significant developments and despite those changes, English continues to be significant to individuals, having been used as the official language throughout the colonial era and being repositioned as a subject in the national curriculum (Idrus et al., 2019). The authors further elaborated that, in response to the challenges brought about by globalization, the Malaysian government used to restore the use of English as the primary language of teaching for Mathematics and Science, two of the most important topics taught in schools which starting from 2003 to 2012 and the ETeMS (English for Teaching Mathematics and Science) initiative was used during that period.

Moreover, the necessity of having an English-educated workforce, which is essential to transforming Malaysia into a high-income and economically developed country, is frequently linked to how important it is for Malaysians to be proficient in English and therefore, for Malaysians, mastering English is primarily for use in daily life (Renganathan, 2021). The author further explained that the English Language Standards and Quality Council's Road map for reforming the English language education system is the most recent attempt done to ensure that Malaysian students are fluent in English and as a result, a thorough development strategy for English language teaching (ELT) in Malaysia is created, using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a standard.

However, with the existence of the Internet era, the teachers need to change their English language teaching style as they have to switch their traditional lessons partially or completely to technology-based lessons which are also known as a "digital class" (Sumardi & Muamaroh, 2020). The authors further stated that a digital class is a teaching method where communication between teachers and students is made easier by internet-based technologies. With the advancement of technology, it will make the English language teaching session easier and more interesting especially for the students.

Technology

According to Chong & Reinders (2020), tasks and technological advances are the perfect combination for a mutually beneficial relationship, which allows people to look into how the use of technology can enhance or facilitate the advantages of task-based language teaching (TBLT). In this research, it helps the researcher to examine exactly how the usage of technology or specifically the digital game-based tasks help students in learning English.

In fact, the existence of technology provides even hundreds of resources in real time to assist students, in which the students can use simplified dictionaries, make flashcards, and explore the internet in the language they are learning (Altun & Ahmad, 2021). It is further elaborated that the students will also find rich examples of the languages they study, not just static examples from traditional textbooks because the usage of technology may also increase the quality of language learning in traditional environments.

Furthermore, it has now been accepted that utilizing the current technology in the classroom will include the creative use of techniques, apparatus, materials, systems, and strategies that are specifically relevant to the instruction of the English language which will result in the achievement of objectives in the classroom (Prayudi et al., 2021). Besides, it is further added that the usage of the technology in the classroom will offer so many potential opportunities to improve the content and delivery of pedagogical methods that are frequent compared to the traditional English.

Despite the widespread use of technology, web-based technologies remain unable to gain acceptance in these developing environments and each student's readiness to absorb and use web-based learning tools differs from traditional classroom instruction (Shuang et al., 2019). It is important for the students to readily use the web-based technologies such as the digital game-based platform as the students' attitudes towards technologically based apps are a good indicator of how ready they are for technology in the learning scenarios.

It is also important to reassess the idea of using technology in the curriculum and in teaching in order to help the learning process because technology has slowly become a part of our daily life and this usage of technology will demonstrate how it enhances teachers' skills and gives them a variety of opportunities when teaching students, the English language (Altun & Ahmad, 2021). For example, playing English-language videos or songs that are relevant to the subject the teacher is explaining will help the students comprehend the material more quickly and have a more positive perspective on it.

Digital Game-Based Learning

Digital game-based learning has been applied in different fields, such as in education, defense force, marketing, governmental organizations, and health and wellbeing sectors (All et al., 2014). There have been a lot of games that are focusing on new knowledge that have been developed and adopted into education and language learning. An increasing number of educators has acknowledged that digital games can be exploited to help with language

acquisitions recently. With the belief that digital game-based learning can enhance students' motivation and enjoyment in learning language, more and more teachers have applied various digital games in language classrooms.

According to Gamlo (2019), students who use the digital game as a tool to study language had a higher level of instrumental motivation than integrative motivation. Students also believed that using digital games was beneficial in motivating them to learn English especially when the applications are easy to use and accessible, which really helps them to practice English more. The current study demonstrated a positive correlation between the use of games and English learning motivation as integrating games in EFL teaching can support traditional instruction with a variety of visual and fun activities, enhancing students' motivation to learn English and reinforcing their learning (Freitas, 2006).

As mentioned by Lee (2019), when students were asked about the digital game-based learning, the most frequently appearing words were "enjoy," "interesting/interested," "motivating," and "curiosity". This shows how game-based learning can make students interested, enjoy and motivated to learn and complete the tasks given. Other than to motivate students, narrative games also can pique students' curiosity, which were maintained and reinforced through the narrative.

The Impact of Digital Game-Based Learning in EFL

The purpose of adopting learning-supportive technology is to support and improve students' educational outcomes (Adipat et al., 2021). Therefore, it is very important to combine the traditional and technology-based learning approaches in the form of game-based learning to improve students' motivation to engage in the classroom. According to Wu (2015), application of the game-based educational strategy is facilitated by the increasing accessibility of technology and the increased time students spend playing video games, which has resulted in a gaming culture that ought to be capitalized upon by the education sector. With plenty of resources online, teachers should take this opportunity and assimilate gaming culture into the teaching and learning process.

Henceforth, this would maximize the students' learning experience while having them actively participate in classroom activities. As stated by Wardoyo et al (2020) the use of game-based learning is highly effective for improving learning outcomes. It is further discussed that GBL helps nurture cognitive ability and critical thinking amongst learners, especially in higher education.

Additionally, children's level of contentment will increase when they learn through the interactive mode that fully utilizes their problem-solving cognitive abilities, which means that by applying a game-based learning approach is good in achieving the classroom's contentment. As a lot of research shows significant increase in academic performance due to the gamification, the teachers play a vital role in implementing the game-based teaching approaches. Teachers should be able to meet the needs of students ranging from their performance level to their learning style. GBL especially benefits students who are of the low performing group. With the aid of visual, audio and the essence of fun in learning, it nurtures interest and confidence in students to participate in learning.

Sadler et al (2020) in their study suggest that despite teacher concerns about the potential effectiveness of gaming to support learning among students in lower academic levels, game-based curricula can support learning of important biological content for students of varying academic levels and may, in fact, be most beneficial for lower-level students.

Therefore, with regards to technological advances and innovation, teaching and learning should follow suit and take a diverse form in order to meet the needs of global standards.

However, teachers' primary concern regarding this approach is related to its interruptive nature, where some teachers encounter obstacles in implementing the gaming aspects in the classroom while some others have no experience of gaming, which in turn hinder their ability to adapt the game-based learning approaches for educational purposes. So, understanding teachers' attitudes towards technology-based learning is essential for determining their willingness to implement and adopt gamification in education (Adipat et al., 2021).

Contributions

Nowadays, English proficiency has grown more crucial in our daily usage and along with the introduction of technology into the teaching and learning process, which has led to rapid changes in teaching approaches, English has become the operating system for all international communication (Azizi, 2019). With that being said, the demand for English proficiency globally has become more prominent these days along with the ongoing advancement of technology. Hence, it is important for all authorities which includes the government, schools, teachers and even parents to keep updated with the latest technology in their learning process in order to keep the students able to learn English efficiently.

Nevertheless, despite all the positive evaluations and advantages discovered by numerous empirical investigations, there are a number of barriers that need to be faced in order to fully profit from the new technological integration in classrooms which particularly parents and more experienced teachers, have insufficient knowledge of modern technologies and even argue that traditional teaching methods are significantly more effective than new technologies (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Moreover, teachers are the channel that helps to connect students and education. The role of the teacher is seen as the most critical factor determining the quality and effectiveness of education (Akhtar et al., 2019). Hence, teachers' negative attitude towards GBL is hindering GBL from optimally benefiting the educational system.

To avoid this situation, authorities should look further into adequate training and courses for teachers and educators. The lack of funding for training has been observed to be one of the reasons teachers could not successfully implement GBL in their classroom. Therefore, this research was done to examine the impact of technology integration in the classroom and help all individuals to look at how technology manages to help students especially in learning the English language. The emphasis given on how GBL could benefit ELT should encourage stakeholders involved in the educational system to make necessary insights into its implementation.

With this research, it helps the teachers to have an insight on how the usage of the technology would contribute to their pedagogical innovations as it will help them to discover greater ways of developing new teaching methods using the technology. This study will help the teachers to explore the potential of the technology in transforming the traditional way of teaching which helps to create better engagement with the students and improve their learning experiences in having a greater skill.

Considering the new concept of Malaysia Madani, pedagogical innovation is one of the great ways to pursue the innovation (*daya cipta*) in the communities' daily life and help the country to enhance the educational system in Malaysia. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim stated that he had suggested Malaysia Madani as a strategy for the country and its

ethnic and mixed society (News Straits Times, 2023) and with this study, it will enhance the teachers' knowledge in pedagogical innovation and creates a more convenient classroom learning experience.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To conclude, a game-based learning approach is advantageous for classroom activities as it has a lot of advantages when it comes to improving the students' motivation and their performances in learning. However, it is also important for the teacher to learn on how to adapt the game-based learning approaches as their classroom activities because without proper planning and observation, it might cause an opposite impact on the students.

This study is aimed to examine the impact of game-based learning approaches towards both students and teachers in the classroom. Within this context, a brief review of the literature regarding the impact of game-based learning towards students and teachers have been discussed. Based on the literature review, it was discovered that there is a need to study the teachers' readiness in implementing the game-based learning in class despite the positive outcomes that the game-based learning has towards the students and what it takes for them to familiarize themselves with various type of games in order to successfully integrating the approach into their classroom. It is hoped that this study will help in identifying the impact that game-based learning has in the classroom, both towards students and teachers.

In addition, using this research, it helps the Game-based learning approach to develop a theoretical framework which helps the teachers to know how this approach could promote engaging learning. This framework can be built by using several learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. In terms of contextual contribution, it helps the teachers to know how subjects can be fun to be taught by using a game-based approach helps the learning to be more effective. All in all, this GBL helps both theoretical and contextual contribution by improving conventional learning and making it more effective with the game-based approach.

For future work, it is recommended for the study to be done among the teachers themselves in order to examine thoroughly on how GBL could help the educators to enhance the students' learning experiences in the classroom and help them to improve their English language learning. However, it is hoped using this conceptual paper, it will help more young educators to use the pedagogical innovation as one of the effective ways to enhance the students' learning especially in improving their knowledge in English language skills.

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