

Exploring EFL Students of Game Based Activities in Enhancing Their Receptive Skills

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Abstract

This research study explores the effectiveness of game-based activities in developing the receptive skills of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with a focus primarily, but not exclusively, on listening and reading comprehension. In a climate of limited exposure to authentic English and generally low rates of student engagement, games offer an attractive alternative to traditional teaching. This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, using a literature review to analyse previous empirical studies from reputable journals involving both traditional and computer-based games. The analysis revealed that traditional games such as Chain Whisper, Whisper Race and Tic Tac Toe effectively improved students' auditory comprehension, focus and motivation. Additionally, digital games, including America's Army, Grammarian Android, Classcraft, Quizizz and BTS Island: In the SEOM, are associated with enhanced reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and engagement of learners. The outcomes align with significant language learning theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Self-Determination Theory; specifically, they espouse the idea that comprehension and sustained learning are optimized in contexts where enjoyment is prioritized and there is low anxiety. This study suggests that employing game-based activities in EFL teaching may lead to more meaningful, participatory, and autonomous learning that improves students' receptive skills and interest in learning English.

Keywords: Game-based learning, receptive skills, EFL learners, listening comprehension, reading comprehension.

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1. INTRODUCTION

At present, in this globalized era, English is a critical language for communication, education, and technology. As a global lingua franca, it allows individuals to also access a vast amount of information and communicate with one another across cultural boundaries. Within the context Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and is seen to be one of the important subjects in schools. However, many EFL students in Indonesia still struggle to develop their English proficiency, especially comprehension of spoken and written texts which refer to their receptive skills (Richards & Renandya, 2020).

Receptive skills, which include listening and reading, serve an important role in language acquisition. Listening allows language learners to comprehend spoken input, while reading allows learners to understand written text. In combination, learners can build on each of these skills and continue both their development of the English language and serve as the basis of communication (Brown, 2019). Yet, EFL learners in Indonesia continue to struggle with listening and reading comprehension because of restricted exposure to authentic English, engaging materials, and low motivation (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). As a result, teachers need to do more to follow up on engaging learning strategies that can encourage students' comprehension.

One way to approach these issues is through game-based learning (GBL). Game-based activities combine educational content with gamification features (competition, feedback, and rewards) to encourage students' engagement and motivation (Gee, 2020). Via games, students can practice listening (by interpreting directions, recognizing sounds, and responding to oral instruction), and can develop reading (through interpreting written text, clues, and dialogue in the context of a game). Previous studies have shown that game-based learning helps create an overall positive learning environment while also enhancing students' understanding and engagement (Yolageldili & Arikan, 2021).

However, the majority of literature investigating game-based learning has focused on productive skills (speaking and writing) or vocabulary and grammar (Huang, 2020; Derakhshan & Shirmohammadli, 2021). There is little research regarding how game-based activities foster students' receptive skills, particularly listening and reading in EFL contexts. As a result, it is important to investigate students' experiences

and perceptions of game-based activities as a tool to improve their understanding and engagement.

In sum, this study will investigate EFL students' experiences and perceptions of game-based activities which can enhance their receptive skills, paying particular attention to how game-based activities can enhance their listening and reading comprehension. We expect the findings to help complement the already substantial literature on innovative practices in English language teaching, and provide more understanding of how game-based activities can provide a more meaningful and motivating experience for EFL learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Games and digital-interactive media have increasingly played a vital role in enhancing students' receptive skills, especially in listening and reading comprehension. Not only are games enjoyable but they can also work well as pedagogic strategies that facilitate active engagement, alleviate learning anxiety, and provide meaningful input. Because they foster interactivity, games build a fluid learning space with more student participation, wherein they can confidently advance comprehension and vocabulary learning. The results show different game-based activities that were found in other studies. These games have been proven to be effective in helping EFL students enhance their receptive skills, particularly listening and reading.

2.1. *Chain Whisper Games*

Chain Whisper Game is a second-class game that teaches students to listen carefully and share oral scales. A quasi-experimental study conducted by Kartika and Rahman (2023) in *Journal of Qalam English Education* investigated the effect of SEPF Diamond approach on the listening comprehension of EFL learners. Adopting a quasi-experimental approach, the post-test results of students were found to be significantly higher after the intervention. Rumor has it Students whisper the message through a peer train, works on pronunciation, attention, and recall in memory. The interactive game encourages active involvement, reduces tension, and encourages peer learning. Theoretically, the approach is grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of learning in which he asserts that knowledge gained via social interaction shall be more developed than knowledge gained individually. Methodologically, the

study provides empirical evidence that low-preparation, straightforward games can serve to be effective replacements for traditional listening drills by arousing motivation and attention in an enjoyable classroom environment.

2.1.2. America's Army Game

In one study (Anderson, Reynolds, Yeh & Huang, 2020) the America's Army video game was used in EFL listening courses at a University. The study implemented an experimental mixed-method design by subjecting the participants to in-game instructions, dialogues, and collaborative missions. The results showed that the material from America's Army did have an effect on the students' listening comprehension and their retention of words and phrases were high, because of authentic spoken input and contextualized clues, in a Virtual Reality game setting. Players had to attend to oral instructions, react in real time and interact which prompted both top-down and bottom-up listening. This study is theoretically grounded in Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the significance of comprehensible input and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Methodologically, it illustrated how a commercial game can act as an environment for task-based listening content to encourage meaningful communication.

2.1.3. Whisper Race Game

The Whisper Race Game The Whisper Race game is a fun interactive classroom activity created for listening based SS to help maximise communicative practice in the classroom. A study on increasing EFL students' listening oerformance was also conducted by Asrida (2024) in SELTiCS Journal. The study used a classroom action research method and the experimental results showed that pupils' understanding improved significantly following their involvement in the game. 6-3 To pass it along, students listen to a message in whispers and then repeat what they heard as well; eg: you whisper one phrase/word (along with the translation) to half of the class. This method teaches students to pay attention to pronunciation, discriminative sounds and auditive memory. Apart from helping comprehension, the game encourages cooperation, reduces anxiety and makes learning fun. In theory, it accords with the cognitivist tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), placing communicative interaction at the service of language learning. In terms of methodology, it has shown that low-cost classroom games are a

productive way for getting students involved and to get them listening in EFL classes.

2.1.4. *Tic Tac Toe Game*

The Tic Tac Toe Game was also modified to create a listening activity for comprehension through play-comparison. Nuraeni (2022) examined the Tic Tac Toe game in the *Schoolar Journal*, particularly to improve students' listening performance and engagement. Using descriptive qualitative design, it was found that the students became more attentive, indeed, they became more confident in either responding verbally or non-verbally to verbal cues while playing. The students had to listen depending on what question or instruction the teacher gave in order to choose their grid squares; they were engaged to use not only listening incrementally developing understanding which led to choices. Listening and choices ultimately create focus and maintain inter. Theoretically, the results support Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which states that language acquisition is aided by comprehensible input when anxiety levels are low. In terms of methodology, the research shows how traditional games can be adapted to improve listening comprehension and keep students engaged.

2.1.5. *Grammarian Android Game*

Grammarian Android Game is a computer program that helps EFL learners improve their reading skills by having fun with grammar. Romadhon (2024) in *Ebony Journal* examined the utilization of the game to enhance reading performance among university students in research. Conducted with a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design involving two cycles and 28 respondents, the study revealed students' mean reading scores increased substantially 60.72 on the pre-test to 92.21 on the second cycle. The integration of gamification readings, visual feedback, and repetition in the app enabled learners to absorb grammatical forms and contextual meaning better. Theoretically, findings validate Gamification Theory and the Constructivist Learning Approach in that they emphasize that participatory digital environments can potentially enhance motivation and comprehension. In terms of methodology, the study supports empirical data showing that learning games for Android can convert fixed reading drills into interesting, learner-centered experiences for EFL students.

2.1.6. *Classraft Game*

Classcraft Game incorporates role-playing components and gamified activities within the classroom to improve student engagement and understanding. Armanda and Indriani (2023), in *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, examined its efficacy in enhancing reading comprehension among EFL university students. In a pre-experimental study involving 37 students, the research indicated statistically significant post-test reading score improvements resulting from playing with Classcraft activities. The storyboarding design, clustering and reward systems of the platform promoted teamwork and participation for people with a] based on [7] visual metaphors promoted text reading comprehension Bueno et al.: MOOC Participation in Open Systems: The Case of the SocialLearn Platform 6 which was closer to creating active learning through real-time challenges. It refers to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which conceptualizes that autonomy, competence and relatedness are the conditions for intrinsically motivated learning. Methodologically, it demonstrates the effectiveness of implementing Classcraft as a new digital platform for gamifying EFL reading classes.

2.1.7. Quizizz

A game at the website that makes learning a game. It can be employed by teachers to provide interactive quizzes for students as a way of learning and entertainment. Effectiveness of Improving EFL Students reading comprehension on narrative text through this platform were described by Qomariyah and Taufiq (2023) in *Metaedukasi Journal*. Research employed a quasi-experimental design in comparing the control group that learned by traditional teaching versus the experimental group that learned via Quizizz. The outcome revealed, that the students who participated in the Quizizz platform had an increased level of post-test results; thus the platform was effective in ensuring they learned more. The gamification factors such as instant feedback, leaderboards and time-bound rewards kept users motivated and learners engaged. Based on the contributions of Behaviorist Learning Theory, it was argued that positive reinforcement plays a significant role in affecting the learning process of individuals. It describes how Quizizz can take mundane reading practices and transform them into exciting, student-directed exercises.

2.1.8. BTS Island: SEOM Game

The mobile game BTS Island demonstrates that entertainment software can serve as language-learning tool by accident. A qualitative study conducted by Nabella and Irawan (2023) in the FOSTER Journal of English Education examined the impact of a fan-made game on the reading comprehension of university EFL students. The researchers examined the learners' gameplay experiences, in-game textual interactions, and reflective responses. The results demonstrated that regular engagement with English texts, including missions, dialogues, and pop-up instructions, enhanced learners' incidental reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Students also said that their emotional connection to the story and characters in the game made them want to learn English more deeply. In theory, this aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which posits that emotionally positive and low-anxiety contexts facilitate language acquisition. This research methodologically enhances understanding of how popular culture-based games can offer substantial, genuine opportunities for EFL learners to engage in reading practice. A qualitative study by Nabella and Irawan (2023) in FOSTER Journal of English Education analyzed how the fan-made game supported university EFL students' reading comprehension. The researchers analyzed learners' gameplay experience, in-game textual interactions, and reflective responses. The findings discovered that the frequent exposure to the English texts, such as missions, dialogues and pop-up alerts, facilitated incidental reading comprehension and vocabulary learning among students. Furthermore, students indicated that their emotional engagement with the game's story and character was an instigator to their enhanced use of the English language. This finding is in alignment with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which proposes that positive affect and low anxiety facilitate language learning. This study also serves to further enhance our methodological expertise on how popular culture-based games can provide EFL learners with rich and authentic opportunities for reading practice.

3. METHODS

This study applied a qualitative descriptive study design through literature review in reviewing previous studies on the use of game-based activities in enhancing the receptive skills of EFL learners, i.e., listening

and reading. Relevant studies were collected from reputable journals that applied both traditional and computer games in English language lessons. The review encompassed studies founded on various research approaches qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method to have an integral perception of the game's role in language learning. According to guidelines for qualitative descriptive analysis, data were synthesized to identify patterns, similarities, and differences between the reviewed studies.

This research drew upon traditional procedures for qualitative descriptive studies as outlined by Lambert and Lambert (2012) and Creswell and Poth (2018). Any relevant adjustments were made to fit the structure of a literature review study rather than field data collection. This is sufficient to provide the necessary methodological clarity to enable replication and ensures the validity of the analysis. For listening, the games discussed, including the Chain Whisper Game, America's Army Game, Whisper Race Game, and Tic Tac Toe Game, were effective at promoting students' auditory understanding and engagement. Meanwhile, for reading, the Grammarian Android Game, Classcraft Game, Quizizz, and BTS Island: In the SEOM Game enhanced learners' vocabulary, comprehension, and enthusiasm.

4. RESULT

From the above analysis of selected studies, it is evident that the traditional game activities as well as computer-based game activities can be used efficiently in enhancing EFL learners' receptive listening and reading skills. The efficiency of the aforementioned listening games such as the Chain Whisper Game, America's Army Game, Whisper Race Game, and Tic Tac Toe Game in enhancing the auditory ability, concentration, and interest of the students has been well established. These exercises were designed to encourage learners to listen attentively to oral input, engage in paired activities, and respond accurately to auditory prompts. This builds both bottom-up and top-down listening skills. Further, the interactive, low-anxiety nature of these games boosted motivation and interest, demonstrating that even simple classroom games and off-the-shelf video games can contribute to the communicative and cognitive dimensions of listening acquisition.

In terms of reading capacity, the Grammarian Android Game, Classcraft Game, Quizizz, and BTS Island: The SEOM Game has been found to have a significant impact on the vocabulary, comprehension, and engagement of learners. These games provided structured and contextually adequate language input in the form of gamified tasks, story situations, interactive quizzes, and constant exposure to textual materials. Students were motivated to participate actively and developed stronger reading strategies as a result of immediate feedback, rewards, and collaborative challenges. Particularly, fan-based and entertainment-oriented games like BTS Island: In the SEOM demonstrated that emotional engagement and familiarity with content can further strengthen incidental reading comprehension and reduce affective barriers to learning.

The results show that the computer-based and traditional game-based activities are active, lively, and useful for EFL learners to practice and improve their receptive skills. The games offer good chances for learners to improve listening and reading comprehension in ways perhaps not available through ordinary instruction alone. This is since they combine interactivity, motivation, repetition, and real or contextualized input.

5. DISCUSSION

The studies reviewed here show that game-based tasks, either computer-based or traditional, play a very pivotal role in improving the receptive skill of EFL learners. These games are effective because not only do they provide controlled language input, but also, they provide happy, relaxed, and motivating learning contexts. The Chain Whisper Game, America's Army Game, Whisper Race Game, and Tic Tac Toe Game are suitable for listening skills because they allow students to uptake spoken language, develop memory and attention, and collaborate with other peers. Computer applications, such as the Grammarian Android Game, Classcraft Game, Quizizz, and BTS Island: In the SEOM Game, offer significant and contextually meaningful text input that improve comprehension, vocabulary, and student enjoyment. These results align with many established theories of language development, such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, that suggest games can contribute to cognition

and affect in language development. The discussion points out that students' enjoyment and affective engagement, especially in entertainment or narrative-type games, support incidental learning and practice. We present this as the basis to assert the value of using game activities as supplemental materials in EFL classes, which can provide an interactive alternative to traditional teaching, and promote a more active and autonomous learning journey.

6. CONCLUSION

Literature review shows that computer and board games are great tools for improving the receptive skills of EFL learners, including listening and reading. Games like Chain Whisper, Whisper Race, America's Army, Tic Tac Toe, Grammarian Android, Classcraft, Quizizz, and BTS Island: In the SEOM offer students great information, make them more engaged, and help them learn and understand new vocabulary. This research indicates that games offer an enjoyable, low-anxiety, and engaging environment that may serve as a supplement or addition to traditional classroom practices that foster cognitive and affective development in language learning. However, the study is limited to written literature and does not involve classroom practices directly, which has implications for the generalizability of the findings. Future studies will need to analyze empirical research involving heterogeneous learner groups, ages, and cultures along with assessing the long-term effects of game-based training as it relates to the development of receptive skills. A study of blended approaches studying traditional games as well as computer-based games may provide more data regarding the reinforcement of EFL instruction.

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