

Transforming English Learning through Videogame Narratives: A Pedagogical Approach

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ABSTRACT

The integration of video games into English language and literature education represents a groundbreaking approach that leverages interactive media to enrich learning experiences. This study investigates the potential of narrative-driven games as tools for developing linguistic skills, enhancing literary analysis, and fostering immersive engagement. Video games provide students with opportunities to explore plot development, character analysis, and thematic depth through active participation, bridging traditional literary interpretation with contemporary digital contexts as an immersive learning module. Interactive games allow learners to deconstruct narrative techniques, analyze character motivations, and engage with multifaceted storylines, promoting critical thinking and creative expression. Narrative driven games like "Call of Duty" or "Age of Empires" help students enrich their grip on history, nationalism, identity, ethnicity and many other important aspects. By aligning gameplay with English curricula, students can deepen their understanding of language structures and literary elements in a dynamic, multimodal environment. Through empirical research involving qualitative data from a structured questionnaire (both open-ended and close-ended), this study synthesizes theoretical perspectives to guide educators in incorporating video games effectively, highlighting their capacity to address diverse learning styles and boost student motivation. Practical challenges such as accessibility, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment are critically assessed, offering strategies to mitigate these issues. This research positions video games as a transformative medium in English education, advocating for their integration to modernize teaching practices and enhance literary appreciation. It concludes with actionable recommendations to bridge traditional pedagogy and interactive storytelling, paving the way for innovative, student-centered learning frameworks.

1. Introduction

Education has entered a revolutionary era as new digital technologies profoundly redefine learning cultures. Generation Z learners today exhibit unprecedented levels of engagement with digital technology, and the use of smartphones and computers has become virtually ubiquitous in their lives. In this digital culture, narrative video games are a powerful yet underutilized pedagogical instrument for English language and literature instruction. The pervasive online engagement of Gen Z students holds a unique promise for transforming non-academic gaming into productive learning. Story games offer carefully constructed narratives, character development, and thematic explorations akin to traditional literary works, but with interactive features that appeal to technology-native students. Educators can use students' existing technology competence and game enthusiasm to develop instruction strategies that integrate learning into familiar digital environments. Unlike passive reading experiences, interactive game worlds require active involvement in narrative construction. Used strategically in pedagogy of English studies, these experience-based forms of engagement instill critical thinking development through direct interaction with narrative form and character driving forces. Games like "The Last of Us" provide emotionally sophisticated narrative, "Red Dead Redemption" provides sophisticated moral exploration, "Life is Strange" approaches issues of coming of age

with care, and history simulations like "Assassin's Creed" drop students into deep cultural contexts—all within digital settings already familiar to today's students. This research examines the way interactive games may be employed to enhance English language teaching through enhanced literary analytical methods and language acquisition. By analyzing player interaction with narratives in a game, this research connects interactive media to academic success while addressing critical educational issues, including diminishing interest in traditional text-based education. Through careful analysis of such learning experiences, the current research provides evidence-based advice for teachers who would like to revive their teaching with games of proven origins which complement traditional practices without displacing them but prepare students for a more content-diverse information world.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Historical Evolution of Technology in Language Education

Technology has evolved in a remarkable way in the field of language education over the past two decades. Early approaches relied on recordings and language laboratories, which focused on repetitive drills built on behaviorist principles. Around the 1980's computer-assisted language learning (CALL) approaches introduced more interactive options (although still the focus was on structured exercises) (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). The 21st century saw a shift away from rigid, instructor-led approaches to the Gen Z in favor of increasingly immersive, multimedia solutions (primarily video games), mirroring trends in educational practice and in particular in language learning: from rigid, instructor-led models to constructivist paradigms of contextualized, student-centered learning (Reinders & White, 2016).

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Three basic theories of learning language are explored in this article: The Input Hypothesis (Stefan Krashen, 1982). It states that individuals acquire language best through exposure to slightly challenging but comprehensible input (this kind of input is naturally part of the narrative structure of games, where each dialogue fragment is enacted within a context of meaning). The social constructivism of Lev Vygotsky (1978). A key belief in social constructivism is that "games create complex problems for players in such a way as to fit their growing abilities into situations where they live". The Zone of Proximal Development is where the most developed individual is at his best. James Paul Gee (2003): How games encourage embodied learning, through immediate feedback, problem-solving, and situated cognition.

2.3 Empirical Research

Recently studies have shown the tangible benefits of game-based learning. Chen and Yang (2013) reported that students were much more likely to retain vocabulary when they played interactive narratives, rather than memorizing and reciting texts. Black and Steinkuehler (2009) noted that multiplayer online games encouraged critical literacy skills in students by providing them with opportunities to analyze texts, make intertextual connections, and collaborate in meaning making. Historical games such as Assassin's Creed also proved effective in helping students understand cultural and historical contexts because they engender an immersive experience that textbooks alone cannot replicate (McCall, 2016).

2.4 Gaps and Rationale

Although these findings seem promising, gaps remain within the literature. While most studies focus on language acquisition or STEM applications, few researchers have provided a thorough examination of commercial narrative games' potential for applying them in undergraduate English classrooms. Few researches have provided guidance on how best to incorporate narrative-based videogames into formal education programs. For this study we sought to bridge the gap between the theoretical potential and the reality of university classrooms by harnessing empirical evidence with implementation-oriented frameworks.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach, obtaining data through a structured survey of 307 university students. The quantitative survey sought to collect numerical evaluations and descriptive written response about the perceived benefits of video games as aids in learning English language. The respondents focused on how video games might help them develop their knowledge and skills in English language learning as well as achieve improved general academic performance. By collecting qualitative data the purpose of this study was to provide valuable and nuanced information about how video games may influence English language learning in higher education.

3.1 Limitations

While the approach captured diverse perspectives, two key limitations emerged: Sampling bias (gamers overrepresented) and self-reporting biases were acknowledged. These constraints help interpret the findings while suggesting areas for future research to address these potential distortions in the dataset.

4. Findings

The study uncovered pertinent information using the participant's opinions in addition to the numerical data. By looking at the results from different perspectives, one is able to obtain how video games have the potential to change the teaching of English in educational institutions. All the participants, 307 in total, provided answers to the questions posed.

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

A comprehensive summary of the questionnaire and the responses is given below:

Q1. Where do you play video games?

The majority of respondents noted that they played video games on their phones. Of the responders, 80% chose mobile devices and a smaller percentage (20%) played on both phones and computers. Console users did not respond at all. This indicates that mobile devices seem to dominate the gaming for most participants.

Q2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Video games can effectively enhance English language learning and literary analysis skills."

The absolute majority of the vote (80%) also believed that video games could positively impact English language learning and literary analysis. About 20% remained neutral while not a single respondent disagreed which shows that there was a very positive sentiment towards games aiding education.

Q3. Which of these skills do you believe can be most improved through video game narratives?

Vocabulary acquisition and critical thinking were the most widely selected skills. 60% of the participants indicated vocabulary enhancement, and 40% indicated critical thinking and analysis. Others also noted understanding literary themes and improving creative writing skills.

Q4. Which types of games do you think have the most educational potential for English learning?

Narrative games like *God of War* and *The Last of Us* were the choice of the majority of the participants (60%). Battle royale multiplayer and MOBA games were mentioned but by a smaller number (20% each), which means that there is a strong tendency towards narrative worlds for language learning.

Q5. What do you see as the biggest challenge to incorporating video games into English education?

Access to technology and curriculum integration were viewed as primary barriers. Technology cost was reported by 40%, and curriculum integration issues by another 40%. Time limitations in programs were less often cited (20%), but nonetheless reported as a barrier.

Q6. How would you rate the current readiness of educational institutions to incorporate video games into English teaching?

There was a divergence of opinion, but most (60%) saw institutions as being "somewhat ready with significant barriers." 20% saw institutions as being "moderately ready with some barriers," and another 20% ranked them as "not at all ready," so there was a widespread disbelief that institutions were prepared.

Q7. What resources would be most helpful for implementing video games in English education?

The majority of participants strongly supported pre-tested lists of appropriate games with teacher manuals (60%), followed by calling for lesson plan templates and assessment materials (40%). A call was also made for access to facilitative technological infrastructure.

Q8. How do you think video games can best be integrated into English education?

Using games as supplemental materials outside class was the most highly desired proposition (60%). Comparative study to classic texts was also well preferred (40%), and a few proposed the use of games as integral parts of the curriculum, indicating a lean towards hybrid pedagogical paradigms.

Q9. Which aspects of identity and cultural understanding can be most effectively explored through video game narratives?

The most frequent (60%) reason mentioned was nationalism and cultural identity. Historical settings and gender portrayal were also reported (20% each), demonstrating that the respondents view video games as formative media to explore diverse social and historical settings.

Q10. In your opinion, how effective are narrative games like "Call of Duty" or "Age of Empires" in helping students understand historical contexts and cultural identity?

The majority (80%) of them evaluated such games as "moderately effective," whereas a minority (20%) of them evaluated them as "somewhat effective." None of the respondents evaluated them as "highly effective" or "ineffective," which is a hopeful but cautious estimate of their educational potential.

Q11. To what extent do you believe integrating video games into English education aligns with modern student-centered learning approaches?

Most participants (80%) described the alignment as "moderate," while 20% considered it "high." No one rated the integration as low or misaligned, suggesting broad recognition that video games resonate with contemporary, student-focused educational models.

4.2 Key Takeaways

In examining both data types together, several notable patterns appear. Enthusiasm for game-based learning is tempered by practical concerns about implementation. The results uncovered a dramatic disconnect between student enthusiasm (80% approval) and institutional readiness (only 10% believed schools were ready for adoption). The disparity suggests that while students recognize the promise of game-based learning, much remains to be done to develop such things as infrastructure for widespread access, training programs for teachers, standard assessment frameworks etc.

5. Discussion

The outcomes of the research provide compelling evidence that narrative computer games are capable of significantly enhancing student motivation and increasing learning achievement in English education. The computer programs engage experiences that might be hard to mimic for conventional instructional methods, particularly for today's digitally-native learners. The interactivity of games enables students to interact actively with stories, develop critical thinking, and acquire complex literary ideas through contextualized environments. However, to realize this potential, there are several important challenges to be met:

5.1 Curriculum-Game Alignment

One major area is curriculum-game alignment. Teachers must select games that buttress current literary objectives, have established learning objectives that relate to gameplay, and plan on assessment materials that monitor language development and literary analysis. Plotting game stories onto canonical texts—such as connecting *What Remains of Edith Finch* to Gothic fiction—may aid students in understanding narrative techniques across mediums.

5.2 Teacher Readiness

This is a crucial factor. Teachers do not feel adequately confident or well-equipped to plan game-based instruction effectively. Professional development activities need to offer

concrete advice on the use of games in the classroom, e.g., on assessing their learning value and on leading effective discussion. Support needs to go beyond technical skill to allow teachers to connect game play to literacy skill.

5.3 Access Initiatives

Last but not least, access is a first priority. Closing the digital divide requires schools to have equal access to technology as lending programs, game labs, or corporate affiliations with computer companies. Alternative adoption strategies—like mobile-based games or community programs—can offer support to all students in or out of socioeconomic boundaries.

The study also reveals important considerations for future implementation:

a) Assessment Strategies

Official evaluations do not always reflect the scope of game-based learning. Journals, presentations, or open-ended tasks enable students to demonstrate what they know in novel ways.

b) Classroom Management

There have to be game-based learning classroom practices. Teachers have to orchestrate multiplayer, lead discussions about game selection, and shift fluidly between virtual and real action.

c) Involvement and Participation of Parents and Administration

Winning the unwavering backing of all stakeholders is central to the success of our efforts. Schools must be in a situation where they are categorically able to convey persuasively both the numerous educational benefits that can be delivered through games, the debunking of the widespread concerns regarding screen time, and offer clear, persuasive evidence to demonstrate evident academic success arising from the same.

d) Long-term Integration

Game-based learning, as an innovative pedagogy, must be accompanied by a practical and reflective curriculum planning process. The planning must be carried out in conjunction with English departments, technology staff, as well as administrators, to allow for a deep and long-term integration of these methods into the teaching process.

Not only is video gaming a valid inclusion among more conventional texts, but it can also potentially engage students in a love of both story and language. Through the inclusion of video games in the classroom, instructors can make the teaching of English much more interactive, engaging, and relevant, especially in the modern high-speed digital era, by thoughtfully planning, providing, and overseeing their use in classroom settings.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Curriculum Development

Teachers need to supplement literary study with coupling narrative games alongside classic texts so that there is comparative study of themes and narrations. Strategic game choice and creative measures—such as portfolios or oral testing—better gauge student learning while prioritizing interpretation and choice over conventional testing.

6.2 Teacher Training

Effective professional development must combine technical and pedagogical education through summer institutes, PLCs, and micro-credentials. Mentorship by experienced teachers and recent hires, as well as student "digital mentors," can establish long-term support networks and ease technical adoption of game-based learning.

6.3 Infrastructure and Access

It requires tech audits, creative funding, cloud-based games for fewer gadgets, and after-school labs to close access disparities and ensure every student has the chance to learn from games.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

Narrative games enhance English learning through deeper literary analysis, vocabulary, and engagement. Interactive storytelling is good for students, but challenges remain—unequal access, teacher preparedness, and curriculum integration. Overcoming these challenges is essential to the full potential of game-based learning's educational benefit.

7.2 Contributions of this Study

The research presents evidence-based models for game integration, shows models for interactive media evaluation, and provides successful classroom case studies. More importantly, it legitimates video games as educational tools, closing the gap between conventional academic processes and learning conduct of digitally born students.

7.3 Future Research Directions

Five topics need more research: the long-term impact of learning, cross-cultural models, effects by genre, special education applications, and cost-effectiveness. These studies will inform best practice as game-based pedagogy develops further, demonstrating that with proper support, story games can enhance English teaching by expanding our definition of texts, not displacing standard literature but complementing it in meaningful ways.

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