

Gamers' Experience in Using Defense of the Ancient 2 to Learn Language

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Abstract:

As information and communication technology (ICT) plays more important role in recent years, the use of ICT tools and media is more common in learning language. One of ICT media that is promising for language learning is online games because they facilitate incidental language learning as they inherently form part of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. This case study aims to investigate the opinion of gamers about the use of online game *Defense of the Ancient 2 (DoTA 2)* to learn language. Data were collected through field observation, semi-structured interview, and documentation. Two participants were interviewed. The findings of this research is that *DoTA 2* supports incidental English language learning because it is easy to use and understand the language in the game platform; the content encourages gamers to use English so that gamers learn new vocabularies and practice their English reading skill while playing; the social interaction through chat room and voice chat in planning strategies encourage gamers to communicate in English; the enjoyment from the motivation to win the game makes gamers practice English in team strategy discussion. However, *DoTA 2* only focuses on the action of strategies to win the game rather than intended interaction to learn language.

Keywords: gamers' experience, game-based incidental language learning, *DoTA 2*

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Introduction

As information and communication technology (ICT) plays more important role in this era, the use of ICT tools and media is more common in learning language. Online game facilitated by ICT tools are used as the media to learn because it is more appealing to Generation Z (people who were born from 1990s onwards). Prensky (2001) states that Generation Z is true digital natives who have never known life without technology. Some researchers found that this generation is more likely to use ICT tools for their learning (Turgut & Irgin, 2009; Prensky, 2001).

Game is an activity that is followed by some rules, played by one or more person usually for entertainment. Tan, Lin, & Ting (2007) mention that games have been integrated into education in an innovative educational paradigm which are known as game-based learning. One of the examples of online game is *Defense of The Ancient (DoTA) 2*. *DoTA 2* is a multiplayers online game battle arena (MOBA) played by two teams- each team consists of five members ; and both have to compete to destroy each other's base (Agarwala & Pearce, 2014). As *DoTA 2* is the open community of online game, it can give the chance to the game players to communicate each other with their allies through chat room and voice chat.

Using games for language learning can engage the game players to learn the target language. In informal language learning context situation, the gamers learn language incidentally. Kerka (2000) defined incidental learning as unintentional or unplanned learning which involves no deliberate intention to learn or to analyze language, an explanation which might include implicit learning in the psychological sense. Garzotto (2007) divided four major independent factors that contribute to the educational effectiveness of a multiplayer e-gaming experience. The factors are usability (ease of use, interface), content (target or goal appropriateness, integration, scaffolding, extensibility, media matching), enjoyment (clear goals, concentration, challenge, feedback, and immersion), and social interaction (connection, cooperation, and competition).

This case study aims to investigate gamers' incidental language learning experience on the use of online game *Defense of the Ancient 2 (DoTA 2)*.

Theoretical Framework

Language learning is mostly done in formal setting in classrooms which can be boring for Generation Z. Meanwhile, many people perceive online game as a waste of time with no learning experience or educational values. However, online game, such as *DoTA 2*, actually opens the opportunity of incidental language learning. In this research, the researcher will discuss about *DoTA 2* gamers' experience on incidental language learning.

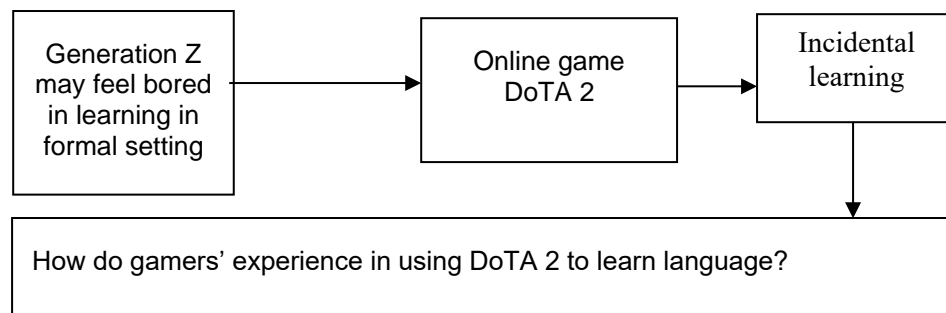


Fig.1: Theoretical Framework

Methods

Two participants were chosen by using purposive sampling technique. Palys (as cited in Given, 2008) explains that purposive sampling is a technique in which the chosen participants, the place, and how the data were gathered must be tied to the objectives of the study. The game players were chosen because they belong to Generation Z and active *DoTA 2* gamers for 3 years. The data were collected through observation, interview, and documentation. The observation was done by recording of the activity of the gamers in the game world of the players. By using a video recording, the researchers can see at what time the players start to play; when the players start to have a conversation in English, and any other

aspects that the researchers want to find in the field as the data. The instrument for the interview was constructed by using Garzotto's (2007) factors that contribute to the educational effectiveness of a multiplayer e-gaming experience. The documentation were all of the data whether it is video of observation, audio of the interview, photos or screenshots, and field note observation. The data were coded and analyzed by ensuring trustworthiness of the findings by data triangulation.

Findings and Discussion

Gamers' experience on incidental language learning while playing *Defense of the Ancient 2 (DoTA 2)* are elaborated as followed:

1. The language instruction in *DoTA 2* is not really difficult to understand to support incidental language learning and whenever gamers find difficulties, they use Google Translate to help them understanding the meaning.

Table 1.

Excerpt of field note observation (FO/1/U/D1/3)

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Note</u>
1	2	2	Before attacking the enemies, participant use chat room a lot and communicate with his one team mates. <u>The participant ever said "I don't understand" when his friend is talking in long sentence.</u>

"..... ya I ever meet the familiar word but I forget what it means..... Ever like that, sometimes think **what is it mean and searching it on Google Translate...**" (12/1/U/68)

This result is in line with participant 2 in observation session when the participant 2 found the words that he did not know, he searched the word in Google Translate as shown in field note observation (11/2/U/d1/3) below.

"Use Google Translate." (11/2/U/91)

"For example, when I confuse what is it mean? Then, **I translated it not one by one word, but I translate it in sentence**, what is the meaning of this (sentence)." (11/2/U/97)

Table 2.

Excerpt of field note observation (FO/2/U/D1/3)

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Note</u>
2	1	3	<u>Participant 2 did not understand the instruction of the game and search the meaning in Google Translate.</u>

Cornillie et al (2011) mentioned that language learning through online games can be in the form of activating mental schemata when the game players meet unfamiliar words. Better entrenchment in memory of the new vocabularies, in this case, was supported by Google Translate.

2. The content language of the game gives opportunity for gamers to use English in their interaction, enrich their English vocabulary, train reading skills in English.

“Because in DoTA 2 mostly is foreigners, so when we want, this game is about team work, so ya when we ask them to go somewhere we use English, the example like that.” (11/2/C/77)

“Tailoring DoTA and English language learning ya.. it... in setting we use English language so we have to understand and can interact with non-Indonesian people or foreigners like that, we have to chat with English.....” (12/1/C/50)

“..... ya I ever meet the familiar word but I forget what it means..... Ever like that, sometimes think what is it mean and searching it on Google Translate...” (12/1/C/68)

“Reading...., like the scanning is more easier when there is English journal or what.. any other English text, and yaaa... it will effect a bit by DoTA.” (12/1/C/98)

The findings of (12/1/C/98) is similar to the findings from Erkkila (2017) that found that the most of language skills that helped after playing the game is in reading skill.

3. Social interaction during the game encourages incidental language learning

DoTA 2 allows the game players to interact with distant peers through chatroom and voice chat. Participant 1 interacted with distant peers in *DoTA 2* by both voicechat and chatroom.

“Yaa as I told before. If in the game, we... discuss (with one team friends). Not discuss but... what I mean is that... ‘where are you’ in the position of the map where are you, like that... it has to. So, for not.. gather in one place and the other place can be attacked by the enemies and the point is for.. what is it name... yaa for not having a misscom.. chatting there. For not being lose too, set strategy, like that.” (11/1/SI/84)

“Of course via chat.. Via chat [if communicated with distant peers].” (11/1/SI/80)

“Because when playing dota, the players was dominated by the forigner, nah so if you want ..., this game about cooperation yes, so to tell the “suruh kesini” is using English, it was the example. (11/2/SI/77)

DoTA 2 is one of the example of open community which the game players will meet people from different countries and communicate in English. It opens opportunities for collaborative learning, either in physical or online space as the game players may discuss with peers about the game through online chatting in chat room (reading and typing) or video chat (listening and speaking) that support integrative development for the four language skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.



Fig. 2: Discussion in English in DoTA 2 (VR/1/SI/D1/22.10)

However, *DoTA 2* does not focus on language and the game players learn language through the immersive contexts in which language must be put in use, mostly in the context of attacking or defending in a battle.



Fig. 3: The battle in *DoTA 2* (VR/1/S/D1/36.48)

4. Incidental language learning in the game can happen when gamers enjoy planning strategy together to win the game

The enjoyment in online game *DoTA 2* is in the battle. However, the way of how to win the battle is not only in just beating but also in discussing with one team mate and create a strategy with them. It means that interaction in online game *DoTA 2* is also important in winning the game.

“Ooo yes it is for what ya... for make the players really consent in playing the game, **how can we balance with one team mates in one game** so that what ya..... Can defeat the enemies. And the enemies are also human so yaaa we have to be.. compact. **Build a good interaction to build the strategy and win the game.**” (I2/1/E/132)

“Ya... this... from not... what is it name... complex.. complex of the game. So... we have to control... there are a lot of choice of what is it... hero.. yaa characters. And each characters have what is it name... skills.. individual skill, **so we can.. have to think how to play.** Who is the enemy, we have to use what hero so that.. we think how to win the game.” (I1/1/E/72)

This finding is similar with the theory by Garzotto (2007) that the enjoyment of playing represents a key motivation for engaging in game and involves the game players emotionally and creates an intrinsically learning experience. *DoTA 2* can make the players engaged in it, however if it is played for three to four times continuously, it will also make the players feel bored.

“Yaa with learning, **playing with learning English, can be called like that.**” (I1/2/C/75)

“**Just fun.**” (I1/1/E/76)

“Ya.. **boring if I already play a lot.** Already 3 or 4 times, it will be boring.” (I1/1/E/78)
 “He'em. Because **one game can take time for 40 to 45 minutes so it will take much time for it.**” (I1/1/E/82)

Conclusion

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that *DoTA 2* in some extent, supports incidental English language learning. *DoTA 2* supports incidental English language learning because from the gamers' experience it is easy to use and understand the language in the game platform; the content encourages gamers to use English so that gamers learn new vocabularies and practice their English reading skill while playing; the social interaction through chat room and voice chat in planning strategies encourage gamers to communicate in English; the enjoyment from the motivation to win the game makes gamers practice English in team strategy discussion. However, *DoTA 2* only focuses on the action of strategies to win the game rather than intended interaction to learn language.

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