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Video game genres and English language learning motivation: Evidence from Indonesian EFL learners

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ABSTRACT
Video games have become increasingly common language-learning resources, yet many studies still treat games as a single category. This approach may obscure how genre-specific mechanics, such as narrative quests, strategic problem-solving, simulation-based interaction, and multiplayer communication, shape learners' motivation to engage with English. Addressing this gap, this study examined how video game genres are associated with English language learning motivation among Indonesian EFL learners. Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study involved a survey of 115 Indonesian undergraduate students recruited through convenience sampling from April to July 2025, followed by semi-structured interviews with four purposively selected participants. A 17-item motivation index and six interview questions were used to explore learners' motivational responses, genre preferences, and gameplay experiences. Descriptive findings showed that most respondents selected Agree or Strongly Agree across multiple motivation indicators, indicating positive perceived associations between gameplay and English-learning motivation. The genre-based findings suggest that strategy, puzzle, simulation, role-playing, and narrative-driven games have strong motivational potential because they embed English within meaningful tasks, story progression, and contextual interaction. Interview findings further indicated that narrative immersion, problem-solving, technical vocabulary, and social communication helped transform gameplay into sustained and intrinsically oriented language engagement. The study concludes that genre matters in digital game-based language learning because different genres provide different forms of linguistic exposure and motivational affordances. These findings highlight the need for pedagogical alignment between language-learning objectives and genre-specific mechanics when integrating digital games into English learning environments.

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Introduction

Digital games have increasingly attracted scholarly attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because they offer learners access to multimodal input, interactive communication, repeated language exposure, and relatively low-pressure opportunities to use English beyond conventional classroom settings. Recent studies indicate that game-based and gamified learning environments can support language-learning outcomes. Liu et al. (2025), for example, reported positive effects of mobile game-based language learning across studies, while Li et al. (2023) found that gamification produced an overall beneficial effect, although its impact varied according to specific design features. Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, (2021) also showed that repeated exposure, in-game production, and contextual interaction may facilitate both incidental and intentional vocabulary learning. Beyond formal instruction, extramural gaming has been associated with English proficiency among young learners, suggesting that voluntary gameplay can provide authentic input and meaningful opportunities for English use (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). These findings suggest that video games are not merely entertainment tools, but potential language-learning environments whose motivational value may differ according to game genre, interactional design, and learners' engagement with English during gameplay.

A key unresolved issue is whether game genre moderates learners' motivation and language-learning engagement. Treating video games as a single category may obscure how genre-specific affordances shape the language-learning process. RPG dialogue systems, simulation-based procedural vocabulary, strategy-game problem solving, and multiplayer communication each create different forms of linguistic exposure and learner participation. Previous studies and meta-analyses have noted that game design and game type may moderate language-learning outcomes, suggesting that genre should be understood as a pedagogically relevant variable rather than a merely recreational preference (Pitarch, 2018; Tsai & Tsai, 2018).

Despite the growth of Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) research, comparative evidence on how specific video game genres influence EFL learners' motivation remains limited. Many studies discuss games in general but give less attention to mechanics such as branching dialogue, quest-text load, resource-management dashboards, realistic simulation tasks, or collaborative multiplayer communication. These mechanics may create different psychological responses, including immersion, curiosity, confidence, and willingness to persist in English-mediated tasks. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes the motivational pathway as follows: genre-specific mechanics create particular gameplay experiences, which then shape learners' motivational responses toward English learning.

Previous classroom-based studies have frequently reported vocabulary and communication gains from digital game-based learning environments (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Gunel & Top, 2022; Wang & Han, 2021). However, these studies rarely compare how genres such as RPGs, simulations, adventure games, or strategy games differentially shape learners' motivation to engage with English beyond the classroom. This limitation reduces the practical usefulness of existing findings for teachers who need genre-

informed criteria for selecting games aligned with specific objectives, such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, pragmatic competence, technical vocabulary, or willingness to communicate. Therefore, the field requires more genre-sensitive evidence rather than broad claims that games are generally beneficial for L2 learning.

Therefore, this study extends previous research by shifting the focus from general discussions of video games in language learning to a more specific examination of how different video game genres are associated with Indonesian EFL learners' motivation to learn English. Rather than treating video games as a single homogeneous category, the study considers genre as an important factor that may shape learners' motivational experiences, patterns of engagement, and perceived opportunities for English language learning. To address this gap, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How is students' motivation to play English-mediated video games associated with their motivation to learn English?
2. Which video game genres are perceived by students as most motivating for English language learning, based on questionnaire patterns and interview explanations?

These questions are intended to examine the motivational relationship between gaming and English learning while foregrounding video game genres as a key analytical lens. By doing so, the study seeks to provide more specific evidence on how genre-based gaming experiences may contribute to EFL learners' motivation in the Indonesian context.

Literature Review

Video Games in Second Language Acquisition

This section highlights previous studies that provide evidence of video gaming as an effective method in the second language acquisition (SLA), particularly for promoting vocabulary expansion, increasing communication skills, and facilitating language immersion experiences in the context of naturalistic learning.

Video games can provide an immersive language learning environment through real-world language usage and offer effective exposure to the target language, in our case, English, by involving learners in an interactive and narrative-rich learning atmosphere. According to Wang and Han (2021) as important learning resources, video games may provide interactive, engaging, and motivating resources in the SLA process. For instance, The Sims provides real-world simulations that allow learners to gain language immersion experience. Furthermore, Vnucko and Klimova (2023) find that game components such as prompt feedback and rewards importantly increase learners' engagement. This has been proven in previous studies. For example, Sylven and Sundqvist (2012) found that young learners who play video games regularly show better English examination performance than their nongaming counterparts.

The immersive environment facilitated by these games is one of their major benefits. Hladonik and Varadi (2023) suggested that language immersion naturalistically assists students in learning new words and grammar patterns. In agreement with Hladonik and

Varadi, Sylven and Sundqvist found that regular gaming increases the level of English proficiency. In addition Hassan et al. (2024) and Lane et al. (2010) studies reported that the quality of stimulating games may enhance motivation and support student engagement. These studies indicate that regular immersion in English through gaming activities may result in academic benefits in language learning. Role-playing and multiplayer games mostly help increase learners' communication skills because these genres often facilitate real-world context where learners can do problem-solving that requires negotiation in collaborative group work. Soyoof et al. (2023) and Rama et al. (2012) suggested that these genres may improve learners' production and comprehension of spoken language. In addition, Reinders and Wattana (2015) reported that language learners who immerse themselves in game-based learning environments often show improvement in confidence and willingness to apply the language they have learned outside of the classroom context, i.e., real situations.

In the context of lexical acquisition, Calvo-Ferrer and Belda-Medina (2021) suggest that the interactive aspects in contextualized content may refine vocabulary learning. Other previous studies (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Rama et al., 2012; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012) reported that contextual interaction in video games assists learners in vocabulary acquisition and communication. For example, *World of Warcraft* allows learners to communicate with inquiries and dialogues in English which lead them to acquire new words spontaneously. Gunel and Top (2022) found that new words are more efficiently acquired by learners through gaming interaction than through traditional teaching methods. Video games that integrate interaction in storytelling, such as *Minecraft*, *Final Fantasy XIV*, and *Second Life,* are claimed to provide students with a better learning environment and motivation to acquire new lexical items (Gunel & Top, 2022; Soyoof et al., 2023). Task-based dialogues provide opportunities for learners to experience actual communication can be achieved in games, such as *Minecraft: Education Edition.* Story-driven games, such as *Final Fantasy XIV,* comes up with quests and guilds that are very supportive for new vocabulary reading through collaborative learning. Other studies, such as Asari (2023) reported that the acquisition of new lexical items and its application can be effectively achieved in games that feature narrative and teamwork elements.

In addition, personalized learning experiences in language learning gaming apps, such as *Duolingo*, that can adjust their gaming materials to meet the specific needs of each student are very useful to support the adaptive learning environment. This adaptive learning strategy in gaming is helpful in guaranteeing the right stages of learning each student should receive.

All evidence provided by these previous studies suggested that a supportive and motivating English learning environment can be offered through video games that provide new methods beyond what the regular classroom may typically offer. Moreover, video games provide effective and fun strategies for second language learning, such as expanding learners' vocabulary, boosting their willingness to immerse themselves in a fun atmosphere, improving communication skills, and customizing learners' specific needs. The

improvement of learners' language competence can be obtained through the integration of video game activities into the second language learning programs.

Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation is central to second-language development, especially in digital and game-supported contexts. Krashen's Input Hypothesis argues that learners progress when they encounter comprehensible input that is meaningful and slightly beyond their current level, often referred to as i+1 (Krashen, 2009). Many games can create this condition through calibrated challenges, decipherable texts, contextual clues, and feedback loops that encourage players to continue. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System further explains persistence as movement toward an ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009). In game spaces, learners may rehearse imagined identities, such as quest leader, strategist, city planner, or team communicator, while seeing their competence accumulate across repeated sessions (Taguchi et al., 2009).

Taken together, these studies suggest that digital games can support language exposure, engagement, and motivation, but they also reveal an important limitation: genre-specific motivational mechanisms remain underexplored, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts. Existing studies have often emphasized the overall benefits of game-based learning without sufficiently comparing how different genres create different forms of linguistic demand and motivational engagement. The present study addresses this gap by examining learners' motivation across game genres and by using interview data to explain how specific gameplay mechanics shape English-learning motivation.

These motivational theories become more meaningful when connected to specific game genres. RPGs and adventure games commonly provide dialogue-rich quests, branching narratives, and contextual vocabulary that support Krashen's (2009) concept of comprehensible input (*i*+1). At the same time, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System helps explain how learners develop stronger motivation through role immersion and identity formation in narrative-driven games, where players imagine themselves as capable English users within virtual worlds. Similarly, simulation and multiplayer games encourage learners to engage with technical vocabulary, collaborative communication, and task-oriented interaction, strengthening both communicative confidence and learners' ideal L2 selves.

To this extent, DGBL keeps language learners working at the edge of their language competence through immediate feedback, goal-directed tasks, and adaptive review. The review features repeatedly link to more time-on-task and persistence, though effects are not uniform across game designs. A meta-analysis of 26 studies on L2 vocabulary found that game design matters: adventure-style games showed a significant effect over non-adventure designs, underscoring the role of mechanics rather than "gamification" alone (Tsai & Tsai, 2018). Duolingo's trainable spaced-repetition model illustrates the adaptive side using real learner data (Settles & Meeder, 2016). It optimizes item scheduling to improve recall and personalize practice. In addition to pacing, elements like role-playing

and branching dialogue can increase engagement and community involvement. Using rich stories in specific contexts can also reduce anxiety and make language use feel important (Ammanabrolu & Riedl, 2021; Blomgen, 2024).

As SLA tools, games blend authentic language use with guided practice. A classroom study using a mobile DGBL application reported improvements in learners' in complexity, accuracy, and fluency in English oral production (Wang & Han, 2021). World of Warcraft helps players learn new words through quest text and dialogue (Rama et al., 2012). The Sims stimulates everyday scenarios that reinforce pragmatic choices and lexical retention (Pitarch, 2018; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). Newer studies also explicitly test adventure/RPG titles. A 2025 study examined the commercial game Return to Monkey Island with Taiwanese EFL learners and investigated how factors like exposure frequency and word salience shape vocabulary learning (Lai & Chen, 2025). The evidence suggests that not only whether students play, but what they play and how often words appear, matters. Research shows that adventure games with vocabulary support are more effective than those without it. This highlights the importance of in-game tools that help players learn. Design controls common in learning apps and games include adaptive review, multimedia glosses, and timely feedback. It helps stabilize gains across contexts. Meta-analytic evidence shows medium effects for multimedia glosses and spaced-practice/adaptive systems mirror what high-engagement games already do: keep tasks just challenging enough, with help at the right moment (Mahdi et al., 2024).

Evidence from other Southeast Asian country contexts indicates that RPGs, including massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), support vocabulary growth and communicative practice when play is dialogic and goal driven. In Malaysia, a case study with ESL gamers who logged 12 hours of MMORPG play reported post-test gains, with analyses attributing improvement to collaborative discussion during quests and incidental encounters with new lexis (e.g., system prompts, NPC dialogue) (Luan et al., 2025). Complementing this, Malaysian players of *Guild Wars 2* described, and researchers coded specific vocabulary-learning strategies (e.g., noticing, inferencing, note booking in/around play), linking sustained RPG participation to intentional strategy use and lexical uptake (Luan & Raghbir, 2021). A separate Malaysian study on *Genshin Impact* (an action RPG with heavy quest text and co-op chat) associated regular play with vocabulary gains and more confident English communication, suggesting that narrative density plus in-game decision making can keep input at an "i+1" level while motivating sustained practice (Abdullah et al., 2025).

Findings from the Philippines similarly point to affective and interactional benefits. An exploratory study with Filipino college students found that regular online gaming increased confidence in speaking English, with multiplayer interaction offering frequent, time-pressured opportunities for quick lexical retrieval and turn-taking; these are the conditions common in RPG party play and guild communication (Esteban & Sung, 2025). Work on narrative RPG experiences among Filipino youth also links story-driven role-playing to communication-skills development, while Philippine MMORPG research

documents an English-influenced gamer lexicon that reflects active meaning-making and community-specific terminology learners encounter and use in play (Correa et al., 2021; Quitalig et al., 2022). These Southeast Asian contexts are particularly relevant to Indonesia because learners in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia often experience similar challenges in English acquisition, including limited authentic exposure to English outside formal education and strong influence from learners' first languages. In this context, digital games may function as accessible informal environments for meaningful English interaction and sustained language exposure.

Beyond Southeast Asia, game-based English learning is expanding in other Outer Circle settings. Studies in India and Nigeria report positive effects of digital game-based approaches on ESL outcomes and engagement, though RPG-specific trials remain scarce; it is an opening for targeted genre research that builds on the Malaysian and Philippine RPG evidence base (Das & Shukla, 2025; Folahan & Omotunde, 2024; Obisesan, 2025). Genres differ in the kinds of language work they invite, making genre selection pedagogically consequential (Kaya & Sagnak, 2022; Pitarch, 2018). RPGs are typically dialogue-rich and narrative-driven; they require reading quest logs, negotiating choices, and interpreting character interactions, conditions that support vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Martins, 2023; Sinar et al., 2024).

Research on MMORPGs and gamified mobile applications shows clear advantages (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Martins, 2023), however, systematic comparisons across different video game genres remain limited, making it difficult to develop genre-informed pedagogical recommendations. Clarifying the genre-specific effects on ELL motivation and language practice could strengthen instructional design, guide curricular selection, and support the more effective integration of games into language education. Therefore, this study investigates how different video game genres influence motivation and language learning practices among Indonesian EFL learners.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed Creswell and Creswell's (2022) explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The design was appropriate because the quantitative phase first identified general patterns of English-learning motivation and genre preferences, while the qualitative phase then explained why and how those patterns emerged from learners' gameplay experiences. The study followed three sequential steps: survey data collection and descriptive analysis, purposive selection of interview participants based on survey responses and gaming profiles, and qualitative interviews to elaborate the quantitative findings. Integration was conducted during interpretation by connecting survey patterns with interview themes.

The research problem required both quantitative and qualitative forms of data. The questionnaire was used to identify overall motivational patterns and genre preferences among learners, while follow-up interviews were conducted to explain how specific gaming

experiences and genre mechanics influenced learners' motivation to learn English. Combining both methods enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between video game genres and English learning motivation.

Participants

The participants were 115 Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners aged between 18 and 29 years. They consisted of 35 male and 80 female students who were enrolled in undergraduate programs at Indonesian higher education institutions where English was studied as a foreign language. A convenience sampling strategy was employed because the study targeted accessible students who were willing to participate and had prior experience playing video games. The inclusion criteria required participants to be undergraduate EFL learners, have experience playing video games, and voluntarily complete the online questionnaire.

The purposive selection of interview participants was intended to obtain diverse perspectives on how different video game genres shaped English learning motivation. Participants representing different gaming backgrounds, including role-playing games, simulation games, and multiplayer games, were included to capture variation in genre-based gaming experiences. As shown in Table 1, the interview participants represented different levels of English proficiency and gaming experience. This variation provided richer qualitative insights into how learners perceived the motivational role of video game genres in English language learning. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities and maintain confidentiality.

Table 1. Profiles of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Preferred Game Genre	Average Playtime
Fanny	Female	RPG	1–3 hours/day
Hendra	Male	Multiplayer	1–3 hours/ day
Amira	Female	Simulation	1–3 hours/ day
Cynthia	Female	RPG	1–3 hours/ day

Data Collection

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods procedure consisting of two consecutive phases: quantitative data collection followed by qualitative data collection. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected using a 17-item motivation questionnaire adapted from Soyoof et al. (2023). The questionnaire was designed to examine learners' beliefs, gaming experiences, and motivational viewpoints regarding English learning through video games. The items focused on students' motivation to learn English through gameplay, their engagement with English-mediated game content, and their perceptions of how video games supported their English learning.

The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale consisting of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The four-point scale was selected to reduce central tendency bias and encourage participants to express clearer motivational orientations. For

analysis, responses were scored from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived motivation toward English learning through video games. The questionnaire items were grouped into three analytical categories: Learner Beliefs, Gaming Experiences, and Motivational Viewpoints. A summary of these categories, item distribution, and representative items is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Motivation Questionnaire Categories

Category	Item Numbers	Representative Item
Learner Beliefs	1, 2, 12, 13, 14, 17	Video games promote the level of my motivation to learn English.
Gaming Experiences	3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 16	I feel motivated to learn English so I can understand video game content better.
Motivational Viewpoints	6, 11, 15	I actively try to understand new English words and phrases while playing video games.

The Learner Beliefs category included items related to students' perceptions of whether video games could support English learning motivation. The Gaming Experiences category covered students' experiences of using English during gameplay, including exposure to vocabulary, communication, and game-related challenges. The Motivational Viewpoints category represented students' evaluative responses toward using English learned from video games in broader learning or real-life situations.

Because the questionnaire was adapted from a previous study, several adaptation procedures were conducted to ensure its relevance to the present research context. The items were adjusted linguistically and contextually to fit Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners and the focus of video game genres. The adapted questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in EFL learning and educational technology to examine item clarity, content relevance, and alignment with the research questions. A pilot test was also conducted with four students who shared similar characteristics with the target participants. However, internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha was not calculated in this study; therefore, the questionnaire findings were interpreted descriptively as patterns of learners' perceived motivation rather than as psychometrically validated scale scores.

After the questionnaire data had been collected and reviewed, four participants were purposively selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews. The selection was based on participants' questionnaire responses, motivation levels, gaming experiences, preferred video game genres, self-reported English proficiency, and willingness to participate in the qualitative phase. This selection was intended to obtain diverse perspectives on how different game genres, such as role-playing games, simulation games, and multiplayer games, influenced learners' motivation to learn English.

The qualitative phase used six semi-structured interview questions developed in relation to the research questions. The interview protocol explored three main areas: learners' motivation to learn English through video games, the role of video game genres and genre-specific features in shaping motivation, and participants' perceived changes in

English learning attitudes and abilities. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allowed the researcher to use predetermined guiding questions while also giving participants opportunities to elaborate on their gameplay experiences, genre preferences, and English learning motivation. The interviews were conducted online through communication platforms, lasted approximately 15–30 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' permission.

Data Analysis

The study employed a mixed-methods methodology in which questionnaire data were collected and analyzed first, followed by interview data to clarify and elaborate on the survey findings. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly percentages, with the assistance of Microsoft Excel. The analysis was intended to identify general patterns in learners' motivation, preferred video game genres, and gaming-related English learning experiences.

To make the interpretation more systematic, questionnaire items were organized into three analytical categories: Learner Beliefs, Gaming Experiences, and Motivational Viewpoints. These categories were theoretically informed by second language motivation research, self-determination theory, and game-based learning perspectives, which emphasize that motivation is shaped by learners' beliefs, perceived competence, autonomy, engagement, and meaningful learning experiences (Dörnyei, 2005). The Learner Beliefs category captured students' perceptions of whether video games could support English language learning motivation. This category was used to address the research question concerning learners' beliefs about the motivational role of video games in EFL learning. The Gaming Experiences category focused on students' actual gaming practices, preferred genres, exposure to English during gameplay, and learning opportunities encountered through video games. This category helped explain how students' gaming experiences shaped their motivation to learn English. The Motivational Viewpoints category represented students' evaluative responses toward the role of different game genres in supporting vocabulary development, interaction, engagement, and sustained interest in English learning.

Thus, the categories were not treated as arbitrary labels, but as operational categories that linked the questionnaire items to the research questions. The questionnaire responses were grouped according to these categories and presented in figures and tables to support interpretation. Interview data were then used to further explain the patterns identified in the questionnaire, particularly how students' beliefs, gaming experiences, and motivational viewpoints shaped their English learning motivation through video games.

Qualitative data obtained from the follow-up interviews were analyzed thematically. The interview recordings were transcribed and read repeatedly to identify recurring ideas related to learners' motivation, genre preferences, narrative engagement, communication, and gameplay experiences. Initial codes were then grouped into broader themes that helped explain the questionnaire findings. To improve qualitative rigor, the final manuscript

should specify the number of coders, whether peer debriefing or intercoder checking was conducted, and how coding disagreements were resolved.

Data integration was conducted during the interpretation stage of the study. The qualitative interview findings were used to explain, clarify, and expand the quantitative questionnaire results, particularly regarding how genre-specific gameplay mechanics influenced learners' motivation to engage with English. This integration enabled the researcher to compare patterns across both datasets and develop a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between video game genres and English language learning motivation.

Results

This section presents the findings in two parts. The first examines how video games motivate students and shape their engagement in English language learning, while the second explores which video game genres are perceived to enhance English learning motivation. In each part, survey and interview data are presented and interpreted in relation to second language acquisition, motivation theories, and previous studies on digital game-based language learning.

Students' Gaming Motivation on English Language Learning Engagement

The questionnaire results indicate that students generally perceived video games as supportive of their motivation to learn English. Across the five motivation-related statements, both female and male respondents tended to select positive response options, particularly Agree and Strongly Agree. This pattern suggests that English-mediated video games may contribute to learners' interest, willingness to improve their English skills, and motivation to engage with English content during gameplay. To provide a clearer overview of these response patterns, Figure 1 presents the distribution of students' responses by gender across the five motivation indicators.

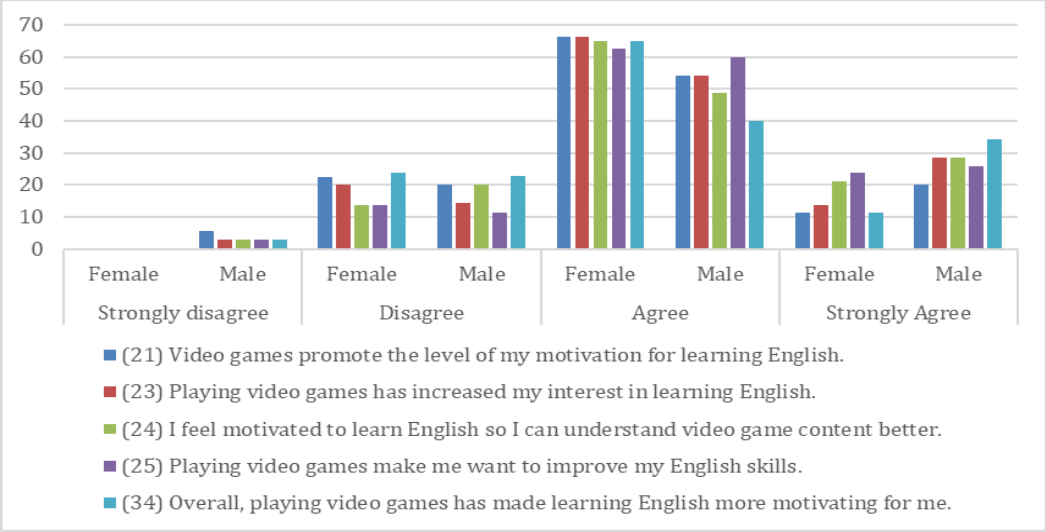


Figure 1. Gender-Based Responses to Motivation Indicators for English Learning Through Video Games.

Figure 1 presents gender-based patterns of students' responses to five motivation indicators related to English learning through video games. Overall, both female and male participants showed predominantly positive responses across all indicators, as reflected in the relatively high proportions of Agree and Strongly Agree responses. Among female participants, the Agree category was consistently dominant across the five statements, ranging from approximately 62.5% to 66.25%. This indicates that most female respondents perceived video games as contributing positively to their motivation, interest, and willingness to improve their English skills. The highest positive response among female participants appeared in the statement "Playing video games makes me want to improve my English skills," where 62.5% selected Agree and 23.75% selected Strongly Agree. This suggests that video games were perceived not only as entertainment media but also as a source of motivation for English skill improvement.

A similar positive pattern was observed among male participants, although their responses showed greater variation across indicators. The Agree category remained prominent, particularly for the statement "Playing video games makes me want to improve my English skills," with 60% of male participants selecting Agree. However, male participants also showed relatively higher Strongly Agree responses than female participants in several indicators. For example, 28.6% of male participants strongly agreed that playing video games had increased their interest in learning English, and 34.3% strongly agreed that playing video games had made learning English more motivating overall. This pattern suggests that although female participants tended to show stronger agreement in the Agree category, male participants displayed more intense positive responses in the Strongly Agree category for some indicators.

The figure also shows that negative responses were relatively limited across both gender groups. Strongly Disagree responses were almost absent among female participants and remained low among male participants. Disagree responses appeared in both groups, particularly in relation to general motivation and overall motivation indicators, but they were consistently lower than the combined Agree and Strongly Agree responses. Taken together, these findings indicate that video games were generally perceived as motivationally supportive for English learning by both female and male participants. Nevertheless, the differences between gender groups should be interpreted descriptively, as the study did not employ inferential statistical tests to determine whether these response patterns were statistically significant.

While Figure 1 illustrates gender-based patterns in students' motivational responses, the analysis was further extended by considering learners' self-reported English proficiency levels. This additional comparison was important because students with different proficiency levels may experience English-mediated video games in different ways. For learners with basic proficiency, game-based English input may function as a source of curiosity and initial exposure, whereas learners with intermediate or advanced proficiency may engage more actively with game narratives, instructions, dialogue, and communication features. Therefore, Figure 2 presents the distribution of students' responses across basic,

intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels to examine how perceived English proficiency relates to gaming motivation and English language learning engagement.

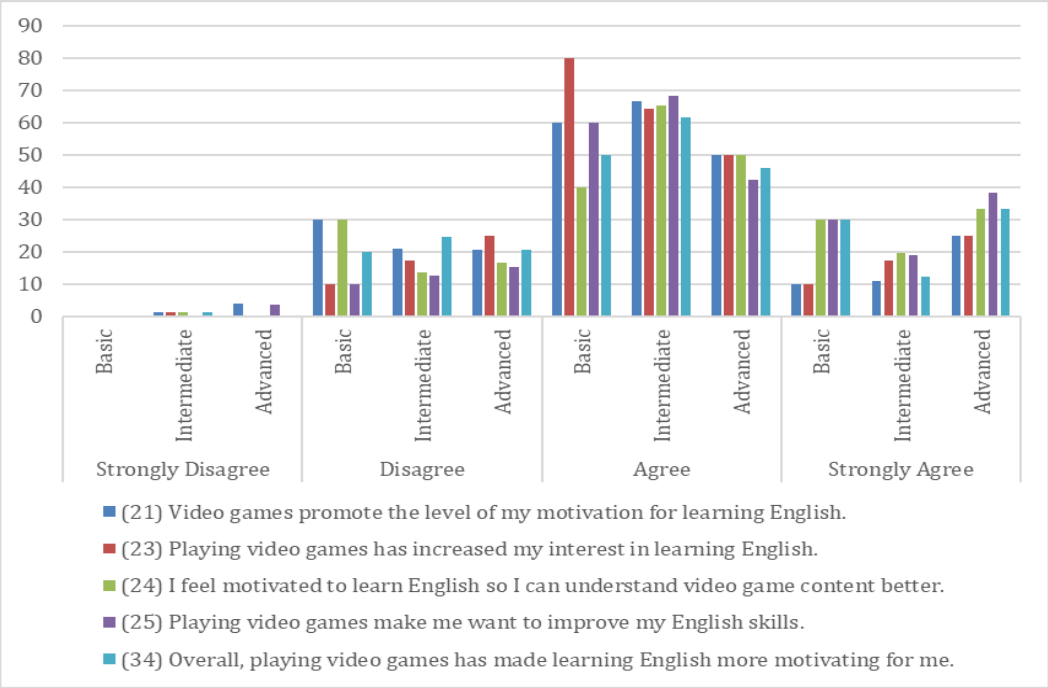


Figure 2. Motivation percentage based on English proficiency level

Figure 2 shows that advanced learners recorded higher percentages in the Strongly Agree category than basic and intermediate learners, particularly for the statement "Overall, playing video games has made learning English more motivating for me." This pattern suggests that learners with higher English proficiency may perceive video games not only as sources of motivation but also as meaningful contexts for engaging with English. Their stronger responses may be related to greater confidence in understanding game content, following narratives, interacting with other players, and using English during gameplay. However, these findings should be interpreted descriptively, as the study did not test whether differences across proficiency levels were statistically significant.

To further examine students' gaming motivation, the analysis also considered the duration of daily video game play. Figure 3 presents the distribution of motivational responses based on three playtime categories: less than one hour, one to three hours, and more than three hours per day. Overall, the figure shows that students who played video games for less than one hour or one to three hours per day most frequently selected Agree across the motivation indicators. In contrast, students who played for more than three hours per day showed more prominent Strongly Agree responses, suggesting that longer daily gameplay may be associated with stronger perceived motivation for English language learning.

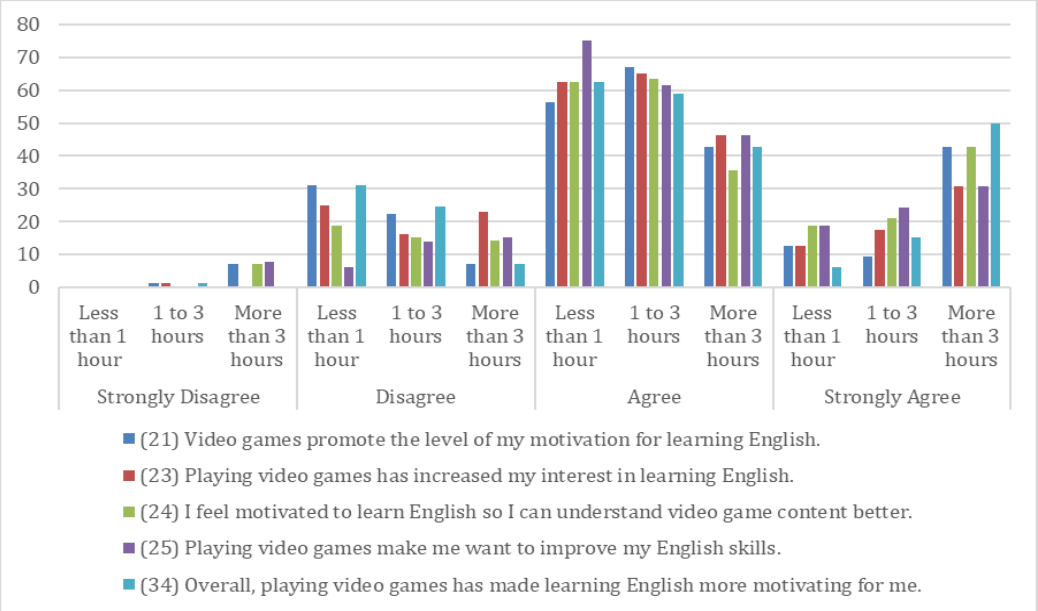


Figure 3. Motivation percentage based on playtime duration

Figure 3 shows that students' motivational responses varied according to their daily video game playtime. Across the five motivation indicators, the Agree category was dominant among students who played for less than one hour and one to three hours per day. This pattern suggests that even moderate engagement with video games may be perceived as supportive of English learning motivation. Students in these two groups generally viewed video games as helping them develop interest in English, understand game content, and strengthen their willingness to improve their English skills.

A different pattern appears among students who played video games for more than three hours per day. Although the Agree category remained visible, this group showed higher proportions of Strongly Agree responses, especially for the statement "Overall, playing video games has made learning English more motivating for me." This indicates that students with longer daily gameplay tended to express stronger motivational responses toward English learning through video games. Their more intensive engagement may provide greater exposure to English-mediated game content, including instructions, narratives, vocabulary, character dialogues, and online interaction.

At the same time, the presence of some Disagree responses across playtime groups suggests that longer or more frequent gameplay does not automatically lead to stronger English learning motivation for all learners. The motivational value of video games may depend not only on playtime duration but also on the type of game, the amount of English input, gameplay mechanics, and learners' willingness to engage with English during play. Therefore, Figure 3 indicates a descriptive pattern in which longer gameplay is associated with stronger perceived motivation, but this relationship should not be interpreted as causal without further statistical testing.

The interview results support our survey findings. Learners who play video games for longer hours seemed to express high motivation for learning English. A 22-year-old

female learner with an intermediate English skill background who plays video games for one to three hours per day reported the following:

> *"Playing video games encourages me to learn more about English. As an example, I feel motivated to learn English so that I can better understand the game's content. When I play, I often need to read and listen to the game instructions in English, and I can do it. My experience playing video games has also contributed to the increased level of my confidence when it comes to comprehending someone speaking in English and expressing my thoughts in conversations. Playing video games significantly increases my motivation to learn English."* (Fanny)

She stated that gaming "*encourages me to learn more about English*" because it helps her understand game content and communicate more confidently. Rather than functioning as isolated vocabulary practice, gameplay appeared to create a meaningful communicative environment where English became necessary for progress and participation.

The results show that the learners' engagement obtained from playing video games and the need for communication boost their motivation to learn English. This offers learners a contextual and rewarding learning environment. A strong supporting statement for the research question "*To what extent is motivation for playing video games related with learners' motivation in learning English?*" can be found in the interview with a 23-year-old male learner with intermediate English skills, who had three hours of playtime per day. He described how his initial curiosity about new English vocabulary encountered in games evolved into a broader motivation to learn the language. He stated:

> *"If you say feel motivated, then yes, it's true. Actually, I've been playing PC games like God of War and Watchdogs. And now I only play Mobile Legends. And in the games that I play, there are English words that I can say are quite formal. Formal, which I have to find out the meaning of. Even in of the games that I play, they use diction or metaphors. So honestly, I'm motivated to learn English because of video games."* (Hendra)

This interview reported that when learners face challenging English words or phrases in games that they want to win, their motivation to comprehend them also increases. This presents the parallelism between the motivation to play games and learning English. In addition, he mentioned that new English expressions in games, such as standard forms, diction, and metaphors, triggered his motivation to further learn English. His experience suggests that narrative-rich and dialogue-heavy games may expose learners to vocabulary beyond everyday classroom language.

These examples in the interview highlight the importance of video gaming influence on English learning motivation. The result from this interview is particularly revealing as it demonstrates that commercial games expose learners to complex linguistic features—such as metaphors and formal diction—that move beyond basic communicative competence.

Identifying Game Genres that Enhance English Language Learning Motivation

Various genres in video game may increase English learners' motivation in different ways. For example, action and adventure games consist of storylines that are engaging. In addition, this type of genre often consists of intensive dialogues between characters. To comprehend the complexity of the game content and, of course, excel at the game, learners' language immersion in intricate storylines and intensive dialogues are needed. In the competitive and shooter genres, highly competitive contests that require rapid communication and a clear understanding of game strategy are commonly found. This motivates players to improve their English skills; otherwise, they may not be able to achieve higher scores in the game. In strategies, puzzles, and simulation genres, players must observe detailed information and comprehend instructions and mechanics. These genres, which require the patience of learners, may support the lasting motivation for language learning.

Meanwhile, casual, social, and fun games make the English learning experience feel more natural and engaging. They generally impact the motivation of learners through social interaction because these types of games consistently facilitate the use of English in conversations and collaborations with others. The results of the questionnaire examine the relationship between the types of genres and students' motivation are presented in Figure 4.

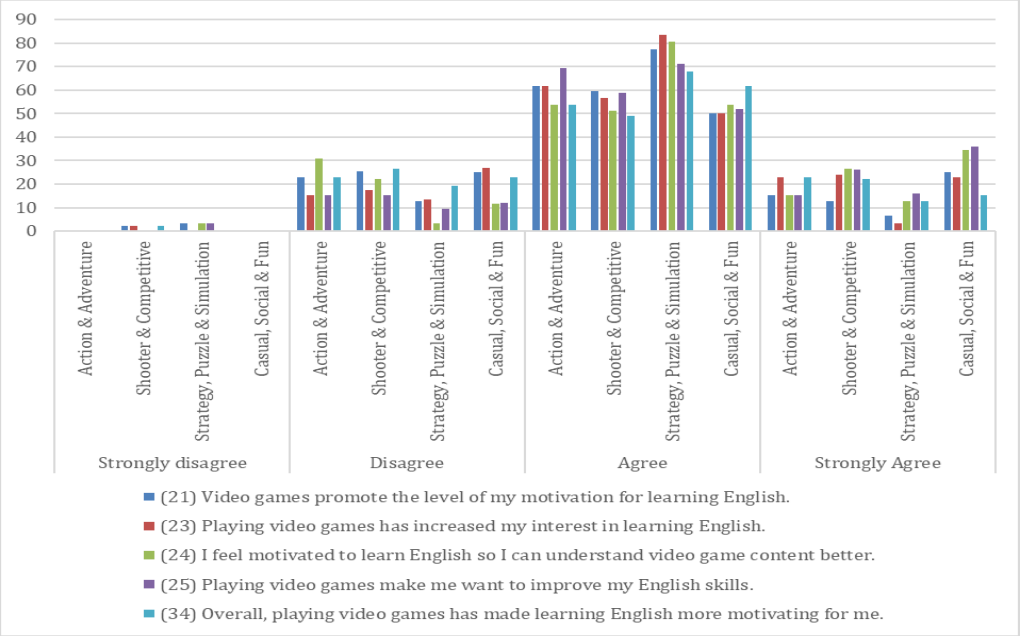


Figure 4. Motivation percentage based on video game genre

The questionnaire findings suggest that certain video game genres may have stronger motivational potential than others. In the questionnaire results, strategy, puzzle, and simulation games appeared as the most motivating genre group, followed by action and adventure games. This result should be reported consistently across the manuscript. If the abstract emphasizes RPGs as the most motivating genre, the authors should clarify whether RPGs emerged more strongly from interview data while

strategy/puzzle/simulation games ranked highest in the questionnaire. The high percentages displayed in Figure 4 suggest that students who play these genres may experience enjoyment and interest through storyline, instructions, problem-solving tasks, and character or system interactions, which can make English use more meaningful during gameplay.

The results from the interviews reported that genres based on narratives, such as visual novels, RPGs, and open-world games, have a major influence on learners' engagement with the English storylines. These genres frequently include intricate, interesting dialogues and engaging environments that cause players to comprehend and apply English in order to completely experience the game. For example, a 20-year-old female learner who usually played video games for 1 to 3 hours per day reported that video gaming made learning English more enjoyable when the games featured engaging narratives and interactive characters. She said:

> *"Among many video game genres, I mostly like visual novels, a type of video game that has a narrative."* (Amira)

Similarly, a 22-year-old female learner who spent three hours per day playing, mentioned she liked games that include technical terminology and realistic interactions that supported her in improving her understanding of English text and utterances. Simulation and RPG genres are those that provide these activities. She reported:

> *"For me, simulation games are more enjoyable than other types of games because they often contain technical words and realistic conversations. This helps me motivated in understanding the story and instructions in the game. In addition, it forces me to get used to finding the meaning of English texts in games."* (Cynthia)

In this interview, the learner reported that the effective way to increase her motivation in using English is by playing games with storylines that have dialogues and interactions. Reshaping language learning from formal assignments into a fun and contextual experience can be achieved by facilitating learners' need to understand stories, follow instructions, and complete challenges in video games.

This learner's interview response also suggests a possible pedagogical implication for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), although the present study did not directly measure ESP vocabulary acquisition. Her references to "technical words" and "realistic conversations" indicate exposure to domain-specific vocabulary embedded in contextual gameplay. Simulation games frequently present procedural instructions, operational terminology, and communicative situations that resemble real-world professional environments. Therefore, future studies could examine whether simulation-oriented gameplay contributes to technical vocabulary development more directly.

Overall, the findings reinforce the argument that genre matters in digital game-based language learning. Different genres create different forms of linguistic engagement through

their mechanics, including narrative interpretation, strategic problem-solving, collaboration, and realistic interaction. Therefore, the motivational value of video games does not emerge merely from "playing games," but from the pedagogical alignment between genre mechanics and the types of language practices learners experience during gameplay.

Gender and Video Games Genres

The study also identified different patterns of genre preference among female and male respondents, although these findings should be interpreted cautiously because the sample distribution was uneven (80 female and 35 male students). As displayed in Figure 5, female learners showed a strong preference for action and adventure, strategy/puzzle/simulation, and casual/social/fun genres, with approximately 70% agreeing.

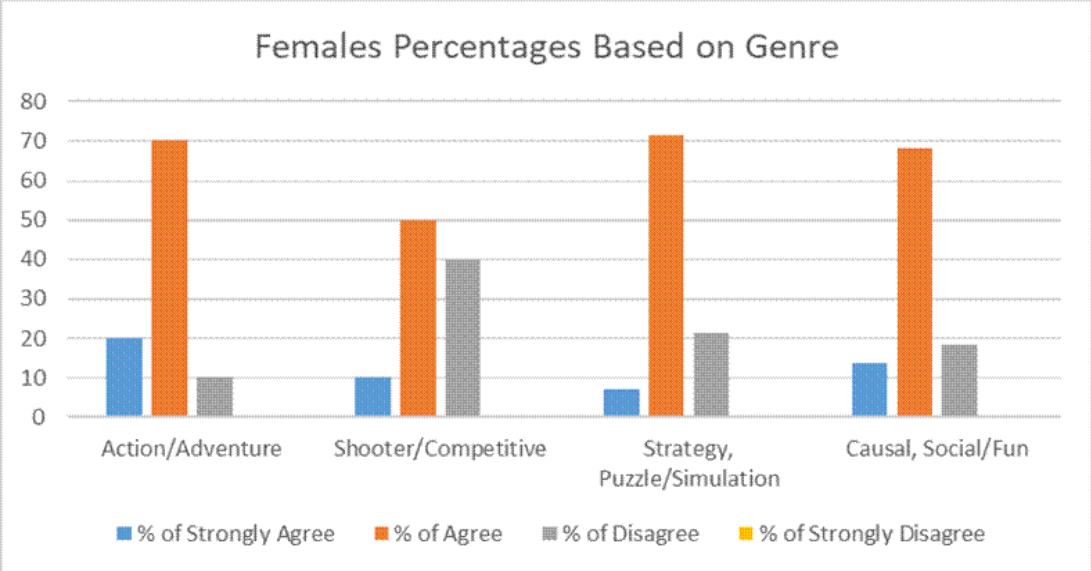


Figure 5. Female learners' preferences percentages based on genres

In this sample, female respondents reported stronger preferences for strategy, social, and lower-intensity genres than for shooter/competitive genres. The lowest preference was reported for shooter and competitive genres, with around 40% indicating disagreement. This pattern should be interpreted as a sample-specific tendency rather than a general claim about female learners' gaming preferences.

Male respondents showed a different preference pattern, with Agree and Strongly Agree responses concentrated in action/adventure, shooter/competitive, and strategy/puzzle/simulation genres, as shown in Figure 6.

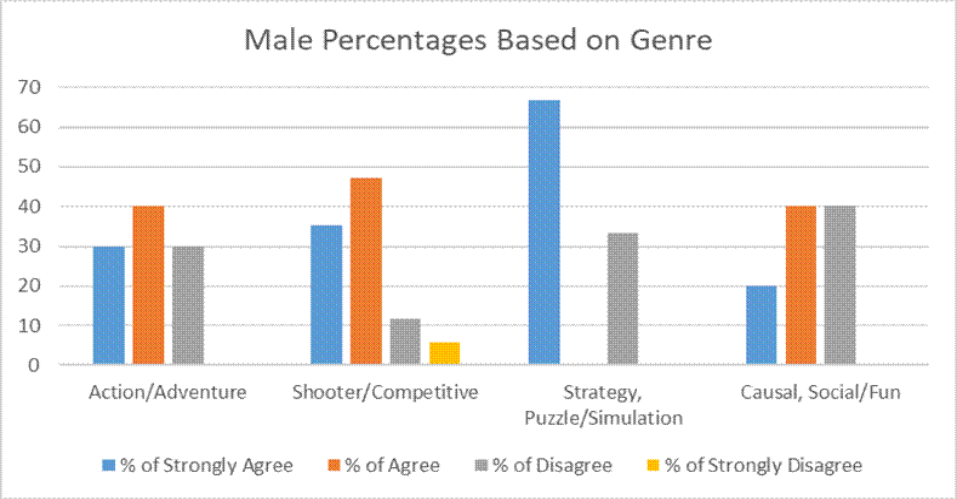


Figure 6. Male learners' preferences percentages based on genres

Compared with female respondents, male learners in this sample reported less interest in casual/social/fun genres. Interestingly, the results show that both groups share similar interests in Action/Adventure games; however, the results show differences in their attraction to competitive versus social gaming genres. Story-driven gameplay, quest systems, and dialogue interactions appear to provide meaningful exposure to contextualized English, regardless of gender differences.

Discussion

Based on the results above, both male and female learners generally perceived video games as increasing their interest, confidence, and engagement in learning English. The strongest agreement appeared in statements related to understanding game content, suggesting that learners were motivated to improve their English proficiency in order to participate more effectively in gameplay activities.

The high motivational responses among basic-level learners may indicate that video games create a form of low-stakes engagement. Unlike formal classroom materials that may intimidate lower-proficiency learners, games provide low-anxiety environments where learners can interact with English through exploration, repetition, and contextual cues without fear of formal evaluation. This finding aligns with Krashen's (2009) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that language acquisition occurs more effectively when anxiety is reduced and learners feel psychologically comfortable.

The findings may also indicate that learners with stronger English proficiency not only understand game-related language more easily but also engage more deeply with narrative interpretation, strategic communication, and in-game interaction. The finding also aligns with Dörnyei's (2009) concept of the "Ideal L2 Self," as advanced learners may increasingly view English as part of their gaming identity and communicative competence within digital environments.

The results from the daily playtime survey suggest that even short gaming periods may be perceived as motivational for English learning, likely because of the engaging

characteristics of video games, which is justified by the results from the interview. The findings from both survey and interview supports previous research suggesting that contextual interaction and immersive gameplay, which can be indicated through the daily playtime duration, can strengthen learner engagement and confidence in second-language use (Alexandre et al., 2023; Rama et al., 2012; Reinders & Wattana, 2015).

The interview with Hendra shows that the need to interpret unfamiliar expressions in order to progress through gameplay appears to transform curiosity into sustained learning motivation. This finding also supports previous studies showing that narrative and role-playing games encourage vocabulary acquisition through contextualized and goal-oriented interaction (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Martins, 2023).

In relation to video game genres, the findings from survey and interview indicate casual and social genres motivate learners through interaction and collaboration. These genres frequently encourage communication with other players, making English a practical medium for cooperation, negotiation, and social participation. This supports previous studies suggesting that multiplayer interaction and collaborative gameplay can strengthen communicative confidence and engagement in second-language use (Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Soyoof et al., 2023).

The pattern from female learners suggests that, within this sample shown in Figure 5, social and interaction-oriented game genres were perceived as supportive of communication and interpersonal engagement. Social game environments often require players to engage in informal conversation, collaboration, and relationship-building, which may contribute to Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English. Through repeated low-pressure interaction in digital spaces, learners may become more confident initiating communication and participating in authentic English exchanges (Reinders & Wattana, 2015). This supports Krashen's (2009) concept of comprehensible input, as learners repeatedly encounter understandable language embedded within engaging and goal-directed activities.

The findings in Figures 5 and 6 also reinforce Dörnyei's (2009) argument that motivation is closely connected to learners' imagined identities and future selves. Different genres may allow learners to imagine different forms of participation in English-speaking environments, such as collaborative social interaction, strategic teamwork, or narrative exploration. Consequently, genre preference may shape not only enjoyment, but also the type of communicative engagement learners develop through gameplay.

Overall, the findings suggest that gender differences in genre preference are pedagogically important for digital game-based language learning. Rather than treating "video games" as a single motivational category, educators should consider how different genres encourage different forms of language interaction, collaboration, competition, and narrative engagement. This supports the importance of pedagogical alignment, where genre selection should correspond to learners' motivational orientations and communicative learning needs.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceived relationship between video game play, game genres, and English language learning motivation among Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners. The findings show that students generally perceived video games as supportive of their motivation to learn and use English. Across gender, proficiency, and playtime categories, most respondents reported positive motivational responses, indicating that English-mediated gameplay may provide engaging opportunities for learners to encounter and use English in meaningful contexts. However, because the study relied on descriptive and self-reported survey and interview data, the findings should be interpreted as learners' perceptions rather than causal evidence of language improvement.

The study also highlights the importance of genre in digital game-based language learning. Different genres appear to offer different motivational and linguistic affordances. RPGs and narrative-driven games may support vocabulary development, narrative comprehension, and contextualized reading; simulation games may expose learners to procedural and technical vocabulary; strategy and puzzle games may encourage problem-solving language; and multiplayer games may support interaction, negotiation, and willingness to communicate. These findings suggest that motivation in game-based English learning is shaped not only by gameplay in general, but also by the specific mechanics through which learners encounter and use English.

Pedagogically, English educators may consider video games as supplementary resources when they are aligned with clear language-learning objectives. Classroom activities can include analyzing game dialogues, identifying vocabulary from gameplay, discussing storylines, writing game reviews, reflecting on gaming experiences, or comparing communication patterns across game genres. Such activities may help transform students' informal gaming experiences into structured English learning opportunities.

This study has several limitations. The participants were limited to Indonesian undergraduate EFL learners, and the gender distribution was uneven. The study also relied on self-reported data and did not measure actual language proficiency gains or conduct classroom intervention. Future studies should examine genre-specific game mechanics more deeply and investigate their effects on particular language skills through longitudinal, classroom-based, or experimental research.

In conclusion, this study provides descriptive evidence that interactive, social, simulation-based, and narrative-driven video game genres may support EFL learners' motivation to engage with English when gameplay experiences are connected to meaningful language-learning goals.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

Ferdy Satrio Andhara: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - original draft.

Ferdinan Okki Kurniawan: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing - review and editing.

Engliana: Writing - review and editing**.**

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