

The Influence of Online Games on Unintentional English Vocabulary Mastery

Muhammad Nurul Anam

Universitas Tidar, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: E-mail mnurulanam17@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the current digital era, online games have become a popular trend among society. The primary function of online games is to be entertaining. Moreover, online games can be an indirect medium for increasing vocabulary because most online games in circulation use English in the initial game settings. When playing games, there are exciting and varied missions in each game, which can trigger and motivate players to play it. Those who initially do not know the language terms of online games will eventually understand because of the support of playing and completing missions from the game itself. In this research, the researchers tried to prove this case because many people on social media say they are good at speaking English because of the intensity with which they play games. This research used a qualitative descriptive method using 14 questionnaire instruments. The design of this questionnaire was shared online with participants. The object is a 6th-semester student majoring in English Education at Universitas Tidar, Magelang. The finding was that almost all participants thought playing online games helped improve their English vocabulary. Most participants agreed that online games are a suitable medium for improving their vocabulary, indicating that they help them learn new words in English. Thus, the impact of online games can help educators and policymakers develop more creative and successful teaching methods for language learning.

Keywords: game online, vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary mastery, unintentional

A. Introduction

People can do learning activities anywhere, anytime (Fatwa, 2020). As well as students who intends to play out of the class (Hendra, 2022). One of them is learning about vocabulary. Vocabulary is an essential element in learning English, and this learning activity can be done anywhere, not only through conventional learning, such as in class, but also through various media, such as social media, games, or online discussion forums. In studying English, four skills must be mastered: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Arochman et al., 2024). The four skills are interconnected with each other. The interrelation of these skills will be very easy to master if an individual has an extensive vocabulary (Ratnalestari, 2023). If someone has a lot of vocabulary, communicating in English will make it easier (Marnisa, 2018). One learning medium to improve vocabulary is through online games. Online games among teenagers are now widespread and have become a trend. Indirectly, online games influence increasing students' vocabulary. Online games are essential and valuable for vocabulary acquisition (Kamal, 2021). Meanwhile, online games are an entertainment medium that indirectly leads them to increase their vocabulary.

Online games have become popular among the public (Novrialdy, 2019). Online games can also be a means of acquiring second language vocabulary not only for entertainment but also for acquiring second language vocabulary. Ratnalestari (2023) stated that language learning is increasingly being developed by utilizing various media, including online games, the development of dynamic technology, and the character of students who like sophisticated things. Games online can be a fun alternative and attract students' interest in the unintentional vocabulary learning process because it is also supported by their desire to play and enjoy. Games can help students relax, become more comfortable, and want to study more. Nugrahani

(2017) states that good learning media can increase students' motivation to learn and play an active role in learning. Roslina (2021) also stated that appropriate learning strategies can improve students' competence, especially if they are treated based on students' intelligence machines. It can trigger students to learn and know more about English. Using online games as a medium to increase the vocabulary of a language is an innovative and exciting approach. Its main advantage lies in its interactive nature, attracting the learner's attention while providing a contextual environment rich in words. It differs from conventional learning English through the textbook; students need help to improve their English ability. Instead, using online games in language learning can introduce any element of fun, transforming the learning process and making it more attractive. Online games provide some challenges and scenarios; the players encounter daily situations and are exposed to vocabulary that may be less exposed in formal learning (Rama et al., 2012).

The phenomenon of the rise of online games is currently something common among all groups, especially teenagers. There are many impacts obtained from online games, both positive and negative. One of the impacts of online games is related to vocabulary, which will bring many positive things. Players of online games will gain new vocabulary from playing the game (Yip & Kwan, 2006). This research will prove whether online games greatly influence those who play. The author's research subject is a 6th-semester student majoring in English Education at Universitas Tidar, Magelang.

B. Literature Review

1. Previous Research

According to Calvo-Ferrer and Belda-Medina (2021), repetition was beneficial for L2 vocabulary learning; players who intentionally input new vocabulary into the game *Among Us* would retain more vocabulary than those who only encountered it, and vocabulary would be learned unintentionally if it was not used. Compared to other students, Wu and Huang (2017) found that those who utilized the suggested system games showed more significant levels of learning interest, attention, and effectiveness, as well as a sense of success and accomplishment.

Tebeweka (2021) claims that combining digital games with educational resources can lessen speaking anxiety in students, boost their interest, inspire them to learn a language and help them create language learning strategies. However, it is crucial to consider the risks associated with modern technology, such as addiction or behavioural changes, particularly with young users. Incorporating entertainment games into educational settings can effectively increase student learning.

2. Vocabulary Mastery

One of the requirements for mastering English as a foreign language is having a solid vocabulary. It indicates that the pupils can comprehend and apply the word's meaning. Students perform better in language the more vocabulary they can learn. Students with a small vocabulary will need help to become proficient in English. According to Thatsani (2018), vocabulary is crucial when writing. A good vocabulary is necessary for accuracy and clarity, so a good writer has a good vocabulary. Additionally, if students have an extensive vocabulary, they can comprehend what the speaker is saying when they listen. The acquisition of vocabulary is an essential component of language skills, as it is necessary to achieve the objective of learning English.

At the elementary, middle, and advanced levels of English as a foreign language proficiency, one of the requirements is mastery of vocabulary. A person's understanding and proficiency with words is known as vocabulary mastery. Gaining vocabulary mastery is crucial to learning English because it opens the possibility of learning new things (Schmitt, 2000: 5).

C. Methodology

1. Research Design:

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the influence of online games on the unintentional acquisition of English vocabulary. Through participant questionnaires as the primary data collection method, the research aimed to explore how regular sixth-semester students in the English Education Department at Universitas Tidar engaged with various genres of online games.

2. Participants/Respondents/Population and Sample:

The study utilized a purposive sampling technique to ensure representation across different genres of online games. A total of twenty-five participants, predominantly regular sixth-semester students from the English Education Department at Universitas Tidar, were selected for the study. This selection method aimed to capture diverse experiences and perspectives regarding the impact of online games on English vocabulary acquisition.

3. Technique of Data Collection:

The primary technique for data collection was participant questionnaires. These questionnaires were structured into four sections: demographic information (including name and gender), online gaming habits (types of games played and frequency), correlation between gaming and vocabulary improvement, and a vocabulary test to assess the acquisition of game-specific vocabulary. Inspired by Dörnyei's (2007) methodology and previous studies (Kirppu, 2014; Sundqvist, 2009; Uuskoski, 2011; Chen, 2015), the questionnaire aimed to gather qualitative insights into how online gaming may contribute to English vocabulary learning outside formal educational settings.

4. Instruments:

The main instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire. It consisted of four sections: demographic details, online gaming habits, questions exploring the relationship between gaming and English vocabulary acquisition, and a vocabulary test. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses that would provide insights into participants' experiences with learning English vocabulary through online gaming.

5. Technique of Data Analysis:

Data analysis involved thematic analysis of the questionnaire responses. Themes were identified based on participants' descriptions of their online gaming habits, perceptions of vocabulary acquisition through gaming, and performance on the vocabulary test. Qualitative data coding techniques were applied to uncover patterns and insights regarding how online games may contribute to the unintentional mastery of English vocabulary among the study participants.

D. Findings and Discussion

There were 4 findings in this study. Those were including of demographic information, playing game online habits, correlation between playing games online and vocabulary improvement, and small vocabulary tests. Each finding will be elaborate below.

1. Demographic Information

Based on the data from the first section of the questionnaire, it was found that there were only 32% male and 68% female among a total of 25 participants. These results were beyond the researchers' expectations, where most online game participants were female. As we know, online games themselves are usually more relevant to men. According to Leonhardt and Overå (2021), boys play video games up to five times more than girls, while girls use social media more frequently. The data can be seen in the following figure:

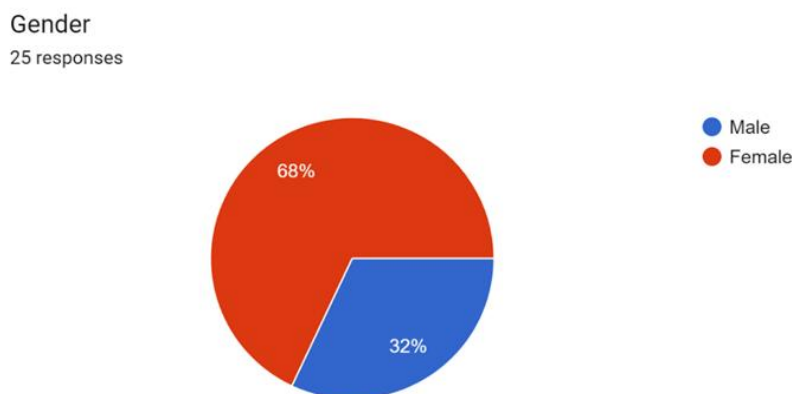


Figure 1. Gender

2. Playing Game Online Habit

In the second section of the questionnaire, which discusses participants' online gaming habits, the data showed that they often played various kinds of online games, most of them such as Mobile Legends, PUBG Mobile, Minecraft, Honkai Star Rail, DOTA, World of Wonders, and many more. There are many online games on different platforms, not only mobile phones. This can result in various vocabulary gains from each online game they play.

Based on the data analysis on the frequency of participants playing games online, it was found that most of them played games online daily, which is 40% of the total 25 participants. 8% of them played two to three times a week, 28% rarely played online games, and 24% of the participants played games in uncertain time frames. The data from the second section of the questionnaire also shows that the average time spent by the participants playing online games in a single session was mostly less than 30 minutes, which is 48% of the total 25 participants. Of some participants, 32% spent 30 minutes to 1 hour, and 16% spent one to two hours per session playing online games. At the same time, the rest of the participants (4%) spent more than 3 hours in a single session. The brief data can be seen in the following figure:

On average, how much time do you spend playing games online in a single session?

25 responses

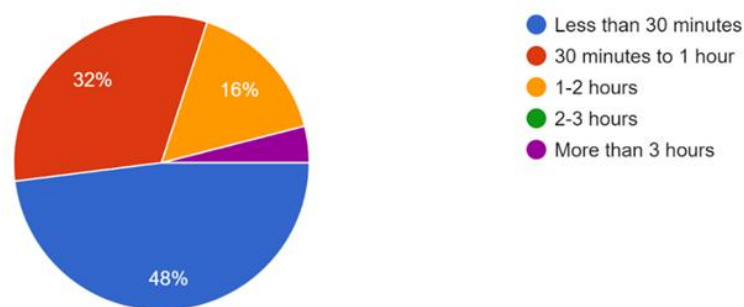


Figure 2. Time Spending

In the last question of the second session, participants were asked about their opinion on the difficulty level of the vocabulary they encountered in the online games they played, and the results can be seen in the following figure:

How would you rate the difficulty of the vocabulary in the online games you play?

25 responses

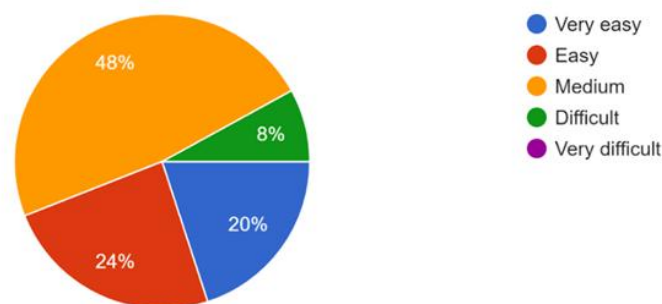


Figure 3. Vocabulary Difficulty

From the data above, it can be inferred that the participants' perception of the vocabulary difficulty level in their online games have most of various. Most participants presented 48%, consider the vocabulary difficulty level of the online games they played medium. And 20% of participants felt that the vocabulary difficulty level of the game they played was very easy. Then 24% of them assume that the vocabulary difficulty level is easy in the game they have played.

The lower percentage is 8% of participants, consider that the vocabulary difficulty level in online games that they play is difficult. Because the data shows that most participants consider that they can understand the vocabulary in the games they play without difficulty, it can be inferred that participants who play online games have unconsciously or indirectly learned the game's vocabulary. It can be said that most of them know the important vocabulary contained in the game.

3. Correlation Between Playing Game Online and Vocabulary Improvement

Do you tend to use the vocabulary you learn from online games in your daily activities, especially in academic contexts?

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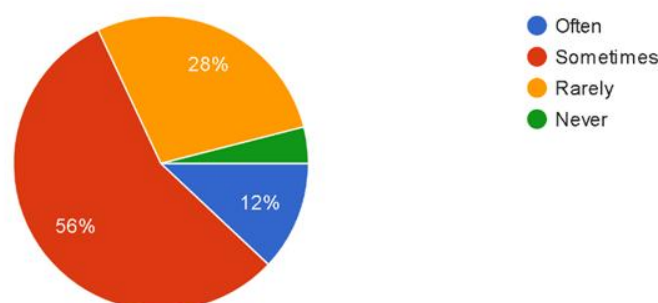


Figure 4. Vocabulary from Online Game Use in Daily

In the third section, there are 5 Multiple-Choice Questionnaires; question 1 is designed to be more general to get students' perspectives regarding how much influence online games have in increasing students' vocabulary. The data collected was 25 respondents with varying answers. The first question in section 3 is, "Do you tend to use the vocabulary you learned from online games in your daily activities, especially in academic contexts?" There were 50% (14 students) chose "Sometimes"; 28% (7 students) chose "Rarely"; 12% (3 students) chose "Often"; and 4% (1 student) chose "Never". From the data collected, they often use English acquired from playing games in the context of daily life, even though not for a long time. This is supported by (Zheng et al., 2017); linguistic skills action can be implemented from games to real-life context situations.

How would you rate the contribution of online games in improving your English vocabulary?

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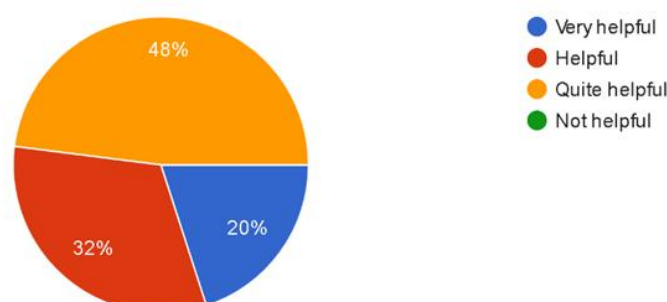


Figure 5. Game Online Contribution to Vocabulary Improvement

The second question in session 2 is, "How would you rate the contribution of online games in improving your English vocabulary?" Twenty-five respondents were collected from this

question. Most answered "Quite helpful" as much as 48% (12 students). Meanwhile, the "Helpful" option collected 32% (8 students), and 20% (5 students) chose "very helpful". The data obtained shows that the contribution of this online game is quite significant in increasing students' vocabulary. This is supported by the findings of (Ashraf et al., 2014), which show that online games can help with vocabulary acquisition because they create an interactive and motivating environment in which participants can easily and subconsciously share their information because of the demands and responsibilities they face while playing.

How do you think online games can be an effective tool for learning new English words?

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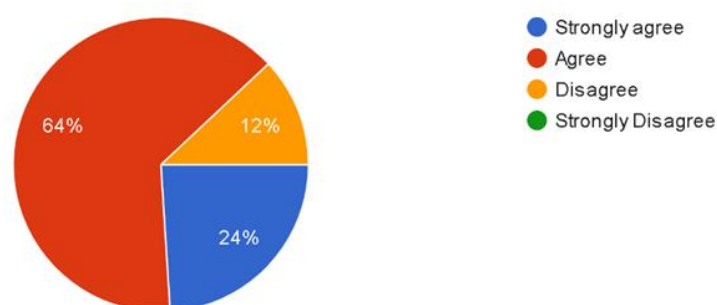


Figure 6. Online Game as a Medium to Learn Vocabulary

In the 3rd question in section 3, which is in the form of Multiple-Choice, this take question how do participants think online games can be an effective tool for learning new English words? With answer options Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The data shows that the "Agree" option was the most chosen in the percentage of 64% (12 students), in second place was "Strongly Agree" in the percentage of 24% (6 students), and in third place was "Disagree" 12% (3 students) while 0 % to select the Strongly Disagree option. From these data questions, online games can be a medium or intermediary for participants to improve their vocabulary. This statement is supported by Lubis (2020). It is suitable media because the students can play and improve themselves wherever they are connected to the internet. The effectiveness of online games as a tool for improving vocabulary is no different because it has now become widespread and a trend among young people. (Fadhilah et al., 2023) stated that online games are a current trending medium that helps students improve their vocabulary.

How do you think online games can be an effective tool for learning new English words?

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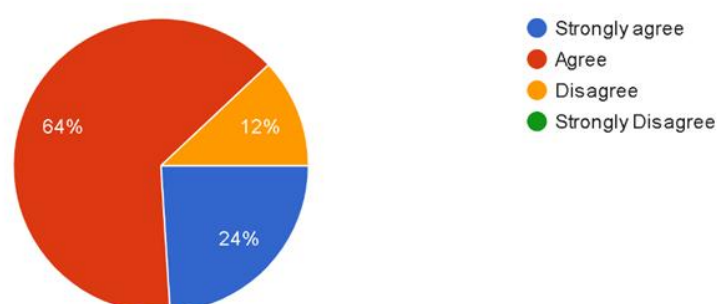


Figure 7. Participants' Initiative When Found Unfamiliar Words

From the data above in question 4 of section 3, we can see how participants work when faced with unknown words while playing the game. How do participants do when there are words that they do not understand and comprehend in running online games? As many as 56% (14 students) tried to "Look Up the Meaning in The Dictionary"; 28% (7 students) chose to "Keep

Playing and Continue the Game"; and 16% (4 students) tried to "Ask Their Teammates" to get the meaning of a word they did not know. Meanwhile, 0% of students chose the "Change the Language Setting" option. From this data, participants' interest in learning is large enough to increase their vocabulary when playing games. This motivation is supported by the desire to complete missions and game challenges. Games often have exciting challenges and missions that make players more curious to play them.

Are there any changes you have noticed in your English language skills after actively playing online games on a regular basis?

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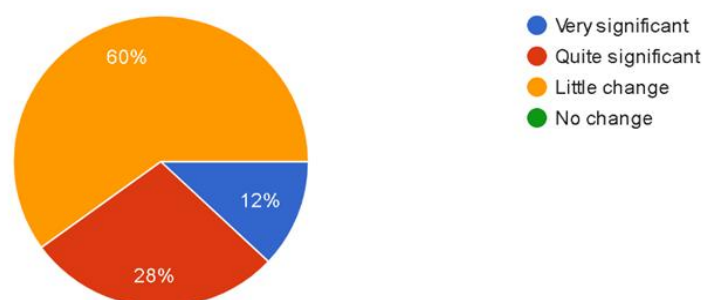


Figure 8. Changes in Language Skills After Playing Games

Question 5 in section 3: Have participants noticed any changes in their English language skills after playing online games regularly? These questions can be a tool to get data about the changes participants feel after they play games regularly. Here, the researcher obtained data as much as 60% (15 students) chose "Little Change"; 28 (7 students) chose "Quite Significant", "Very Significant", 12% (3 students); and 0% of students chose "No Change". This data shows that there are changes experienced by students, although they are not very significant. Those who play games for an extended period will, of course, acquire a more expansive vocabulary and better master the language in the game, directly proportional to adding new vocabulary. This finding is supported by Ratna Lestari (2023); the intensity of time used by game users affects the results obtained by vocabulary acquisition.

4. Small Vocabulary Test

Do you know the meaning of the popular word "Nerf" in the online gaming world?

24 jawaban

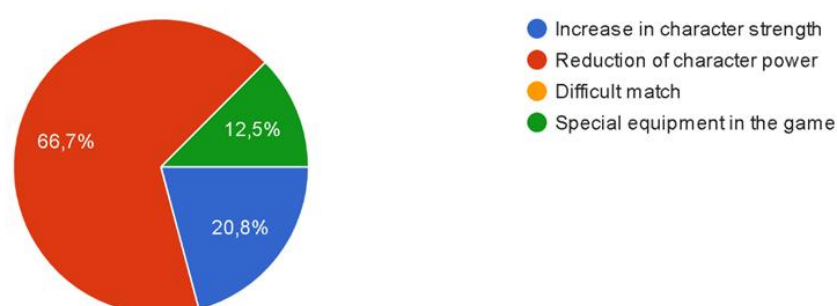


Figure 9. Knowledge of Popular Vocabulary in Online Games

Question 1, section 4 is intended to test participants regarding the vocabulary in games generally popular in online gaming. The word asked is "Nerf", and the questions use the Multiple-Choice model. It was found that 66.7% (16 students) answered correctly, namely "Reduction of Character Power". Meanwhile, the remaining nine children answered incorrectly,

including "Increase in Strength" voters 20.8% (5 students) and "Special equipment in the game" voters 12.5% (3 students). Meanwhile, for the "difficult match" option, it is 0%. From the data collected, most of them already understand one of the popular vocabularies in online games because the dominant results are shown by those who answered correctly. It is inline with Novrina (2022).

Mention some vocabularies that you often hear or get after you play online games!

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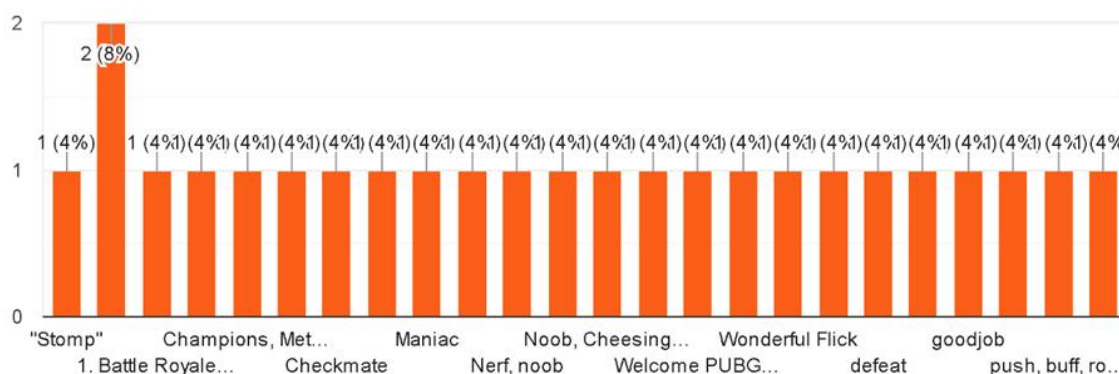


Figure 10. Vocabulary Acquired from Game

In question 2, section 4, participants asked what vocabulary they had acquired while playing the game. Very varied answers were obtained from the participants' responses. This variety shows that they play varied games as well. The diversity of vocabulary proves that online games can be an effective learning medium. On average, they answered more than three words. Data that often appear include push, rank, flank, AFK, and noob. The vocabulary participants acquire when playing games is also influenced by the type of game they play. If we look at the data obtained, the terms or words mentioned by respondents are trendy and are often found in types of games of MOBA and battle royale. The study's results contradict gender stereotypes by illuminating the surprising demographic distribution of online game players. Surprisingly, most participants were female, which deviates from the usual patterns seen in previous research. The various online games and platforms the participants looked at indicated a varied gaming environment that might support vocabulary acquisition across various contexts.

A majority opinion of manageable difficulties was found in the perceived difficulty level of vocabulary encountered in games, suggesting an unintentional acquisition of game-specific vocabulary. The study section that addressed the participants' viewpoints provided valuable information about how online games affect vocabulary acquisition and usage. However, most people admitted to occasionally using vocabulary from games to daily activities, highlighting the practical application of language abilities acquired through online gaming.

Almost all participants thought playing online games helped improve their English vocabulary, and they had a favourable opinion. It is also consistent with the dynamic and engaging environment that games bring in, which encourages vocabulary acquisition and the exchange of implicit information. Most participants agreed that online games are a suitable medium for improving their vocabulary, indicating that they help them learn new words in English. Participants showed initiative and a sincere desire to improve their vocabulary when challenged with unfamiliar words while playing the game. Most participants reported changes in language skills attributed to regular gaming, reinforcing the claim that consistent game participation is connected with an increased vocabulary and improved language proficiency. It is also a consequence of lecturer professionalism as much as Roslina et al. l (2023).

E. Conclusion

In brief, this study highlights the potential of online games as valuable resources for vocabulary acquisition and provides insights into the changing demographics of people who play games online. The surprising results disprove stereotypes and promote a more accepting understanding of the varied participants using online gaming platforms to learn languages. The

impact of online games can help educators and policymakers develop more creative and successful teaching methods for language learning.

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