

Chapter 11

The Perceived Appropriateness of Digital Games From ELL Teachers

Khalifa Alshaya

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0164-1040>
University of North Dakota, USA

Pamela Beck

University of North Dakota, USA

ABSTRACT

The integration of digital games into learning aligns with society's needs in the 21st century. Although research shows that digital games have numerous benefits for students, such as psychological and language improvements, some teachers are skeptical of using digital games for classroom activities, due to their perceived negative impact. In this study, six ELL teachers in the upper Midwest of the United States were interviewed to examine their perceived appropriateness of digital games in teaching and learning. Findings indicate that the majority of the ELL teachers interviewed perceived serious games in a positive light, while they unanimously agreed that violent digital games could have a negative impact on a child's psychological, emotional, and social life. The teachers highlighted the rate at which children play those games, their violent nature, appropriateness, cyber bullying implication, and the need for an oversight from parents and teachers as reasons why.

INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of using technology as an educational tool is to support students' development and enhance their learning outcomes. A combination of both traditional and technology-based learning strategies can significantly improve students' education. Moreover, according to research by the The Pew Research Center (2018), 84% of children between the ages of 12 and 17 play digital games, thereby creating a gaming culture. In this regard, children are more content with an interactive learning approach

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4739-7.ch011

that allows them to solve problems. For decades, students have struggled to stay motivated in school (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Without a digital strategy to our approach to education, there is a disparity between learners' preferences and teachers' methods. In recent decades, an emerging approach known as Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL) has proposed a fresh look into language learning. When teachers lack the pedagogical knowledge of digital games they might not appreciate the potential of DGBLL. Consequently, some teachers are bound to be skeptical of using digital games for classroom activities, because of their perceived negative impact. The literature around DGBLL is scarce, despite the clear connection between digital games and language learning (Gee, 2007; Peterson, 2013; Reinders, 2012; Thorne, & Watters, 2013). Research shows that digital games have numerous benefits for students, such as psychological and language improvements (Hung, Yang, Hwang, Chu, & Wang, 2018); therefore, ELL teachers should thoughtfully consider implementing them in their own classrooms.

Digital games can help modern-day ELL students thrive in the classroom. According to Mozelius, Harnandez, Sallstrom, and Hellerstedt (2017), the use of digital games as an instructional tool in several subjects has improved students' learning outcomes. Furthermore, language teachers have reported that digital games have developed students' cognitive skills, motivated students to engage and participate in classwork, and indicated that using digital games as an instructional tool is shown to be an effective teaching strategy (Li, 2017). The relationship between digital games and language learning has been documented to also lower anxiety and improve motivation (Horowitz, 2019; Iaremenko, 2017; Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Vosburg, 2017) which makes ELL teachers' perception of them and the role they play in teaching and learning even more valuable. Twenty-first century children were born into a technologically advanced environment that enabled them to become digitally savvy, meaning that students in the contemporary world have different styles, approaches, and needs for learning compared to previous generations. Digital Natives, a term coined by Marc Prensky, (2001), describes those who grow up in the digital world that are "'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet." (p.1). Thus, ELL teachers face challenges when they try to adapt to these new learning attitudes. Using diverse teaching styles and approaches is paramount to their students becoming more engaged and motivated to learn. Therefore, ELL teachers perceived appropriateness of digital games can influence their use and implementation in teaching and learning. This work is part of a larger study that examines ELL teachers' perception of digital games.

Teachers who are wary about digital games more often cite the probability of games causing aggressive and violent behavior in children. The literature is split on the issue with some strongly believing in the connection between digital games and violent behavior (Anderson et al., 2010; Anderson & Bushman, 2001) while others report no significant changes were observed from playing violent digital games in youth (DeVane & Squire, 2008) and adults (Kuhn, Kugler, Schmalen, Weichenberger, Witt, & Gallinat, 2018). The common claim is that certain digital games contain harmful content that might trigger violent behaviors in children. As the number of mass school shootings and murders continues to increase in the United States, some teachers are attributing violent games to be the trigger. In the wake of two mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio in August, 2019 Donald Trump said "We must stop the glorification of violence in our society -- this includes the gruesome and grizzly video games that are now commonplace. It is too easy today for troubled youth to surround themselves with a culture that celebrates violence. We must stop or substantially reduce this and it has to begin immediately." 82% of Americans age 65 and older believe violence in digital games contributes a great deal or a fair amount to gun violence while 42% of those age 18 to 29 also shared that feeling (The Pew Research Center, 2017). The current public debate may skew the opinion of many teachers to the true impact of

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-perceived-appropriateness-of-digital-games-from-ell-teachers/265693

Related Content

Providing Near-Peer Mentorship to Increase Underrepresented Minority Youth Participation in Computing

Michael J. Lee (2021). *Handbook of Research on Equity in Computer Science in P-16 Education* (pp. 1-13).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/providing-near-peer-mentorship-to-increase-underrepresented-minority-youth-participation-in-computing/265683

Female Enrolment in High School Computer Science Courses

Steven Paul Floyd (2021). *Handbook of Research on Equity in Computer Science in P-16 Education* (pp. 31-43).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/female-enrolment-in-high-school-computer-science-courses/265685

Flipping the Mathematics Instruction: A Critical Overview of Recent Trends in Application

Lutfi Incikabi, Mehmet Koray Serin and Semahat Incikabi (2021). *Handbook of Research on Equity in Computer Science in P-16 Education* (pp. 219-247).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/flipping-the-mathematics-instruction/265695

Minority Students in Computer Science: Barriers to Access and Strategies to Promote Participation

Jung Won Hur (2021). *Handbook of Research on Equity in Computer Science in P-16 Education* (pp. 88-104).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/minority-students-in-computer-science/265688

Teacher-Designed Games: A New Era in Education?

Yang Liu (2021). *Handbook of Research on Equity in Computer Science in P-16 Education* (pp. 123-147).
www.irma-international.org/chapter/teacher-designed-games/265690