Chapter 8
Use of Game–Based Teaching and Learning to Foster Intercultural Communication in English Language Education

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ABSTRACT

Games and mobile applications have become an important part of our lives. Games and mobile applications are very useful tools for both students and teachers in learning and teaching cultural values and intercultural communication. Well-designed games and applications can provide different perspectives, develop understanding and empathy of language learners towards differences, provide important contributions to learners in ensuring social justice. This chapter aims to evaluate two different digital games in terms of content, measurement, learning, and teaching. It also offers suggestions on how the analysed games can improve social justice, intercultural communication, and multilingual communication. The usability and effectiveness of the selected games are discussed over the existing literature. In addition, the chapter deals with the role and contributions of game-based applications in the development of intercultural communication.

INTRODUCTION

The innovations in technology may equip learners with a wide range of opportunities in education. As one of the fields that has gained importance, mobile assisted language learning (MALL) appeared as a support for improving language learning providing options for gradual learner levels and sections for

language skills and other language learning territories. As an important source of learning by playing, games provide a wide range of learning opportunities plus entertaining participants (Sayoof, 2018, Fithriani, 2021). The pedagogical value of the educational games cannot be underestimated. In foreign language classes, games furnish the lesson with various occasions for language activities. In its basic form, games are defined as a 'form of play governed by rules' (Rixon, 1991, p.3). Such rules can shape individuals' social behaviours. When games are implemented in the form of competitions, excitement arises as the winning and losing groups are unknown until the game is over. Games are also fun, and they create the desire to communicate and socialize. They also require sustained effort and maintain interest in language learning. Specifically designed to maximise language use, with its multifaceted features, games consolidate cultural understanding and intercultural communication. They provide an incentive and stimulus to use the target language and enhance students' motivation. Implicitly, games may enable unconscious learning as the player's attention is on the fun or competition, not on the language or related anxiety. Thus, games equip participants with natural language usage unconsciously. Through games, specific structures, grammatical patterns, vocabulary items, cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence can be fostered. Providing opportunity for reinforcement, games yield review and enrichment for the related topics. The games should be organized and implemented carefully. The rules of each step should be clear, and prompts need to be suitable for the levels of the learners.

Recently, mobile assisted gamification has gained momentum through language learning applications (Çakmak, 2019; Gürkan, 2018). A large body of research shows that mobile assisted games are preferred by a range of users for a variety of reasons. In language learning, the mass media presents a wide range of alternatives for players. As improvements in mobile technology are expanding the field of learning in non-formal education areas (Cheon et al., 2012) mobile learning is directed as a source for improving learning remotely (Fithriani, 2021). Mobile devices are also used particularly for language learning purposes even for improving language comprehension skills. In this sense, applications of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) provide users with feedback for each activity in gradual levels. Playing mobile assisted ESL games proved to be an alternative choice for improving language skills.

WHY DO INDIVIDUALS PLAY DIGITAL GAMES?

This study constitutes relatively a popular area which has emerged from a tendency towards mobile assisted applications in the new digital era (Klimmt, 2003). Digital games that are so common among users from all ages have attracted the attention of people across nations due to their availability with a variety of language options. Also termed as 'computer games', 'console', 'online games', and 'video games', digital games have proven as a major leisure time activity which is preferred by a large group of users (Nabi & Oliver, 2009). The tendency to digital games has evolved rapidly as leisure activity even during a worldwide recession (Chatfield, 2010). In its broadest sense, intercultural simulation can be described as formulating instructional activities that aim to improve intercultural encounters among participants of more than one cultural group that engage in challenging cultural experiences (Fowler & Push,2010). As explained by Fowler & Push (2010, p.94), "the cultures can be national, ethnic, occupational, gender, racial, or any other groups that can be construed as cultures because they are inherently different due to values, norms, behaviour patterns, and the like".

Nowadays, it is quite possible to reach a computer or a mobile device for anyone, even for the poorer parts of the world. Digital world is shaping and surrounding all of us and our children of course are not

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