

Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Gamers In The “Simulation Video Game”

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Abstract

This study aims at investigating the phenomena of vocabulary strategies used by gamers of the Harvest Moon game. A survey study was conducted to see the most and the least frequent strategies used by the gamers while playing the game. To gain the data, the researcher distributed a questionnaire which is adapted from the Schmitt's taxonomy of VLS namely determination, social (discovery), social (consolidation), cognitive, memory, and metacognitive strategies. The result of the present study shows that the most frequent strategy used is cognitive strategy, the mean is 2.28 which indicates that most of the gamers use this strategy to improve their vocabulary learning. Meanwhile, the least strategy used is the social strategy since the mean score is 1.07 which suggests that the gamers do not really seek help from friends when they have problems with vocabulary. Taking the result of the study into the learning of vocabulary, it is suggested that teachers provide language learners with the cognitive strategy to accommodate their vocabulary learning, so that they can enhance their vocabulary.

Keywords: vocabulary mastery; VLS; gamers; simulation video game; Harvest Moon.

Introduction

English Language Learner (ELL) must have sufficient vocabulary in order to master all English skills. Those skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Schmitt (2008, p 1) the learners need around 8000-9000 word families, while for spoken discourse is about 5000-7000 word families. Hence, the learners must enrich their vocabulary periodically by getting the exposure of English.

Getting the maximum exposure of English can help ELL to enrich their vocabulary. Destyawan (2016, p. 13) states that the more exposure the learners get, the more vocabulary they acquire. In addition, learners can enrich their vocabulary through incidental reading activity. “The most obvious way is to simply maximize the exposure itself by establishing an extensive reading program” (Schmitt, 2008). Nevertheless, the incidental reading activity will work maximum to recall the vocabulary than to improve new vocabulary. More over ELL can get many exposures by using certain strategies in learning vocabulary, namely VLS.

Some experts have different idea in classifying VLS. Gu and Johnson (1996) divide VLS into four strategies, namely metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation strategies, while Nation (2011) classifies VLS into planning, source, and processes. Schmitt (1997) has different ways in classify VLS. First, he divides VLS into two groups. Then, he classifies the groups into strategies namely determination, social, memory, cognitive and metacognitive. Hence, this study focused on VLS based on Schmitt's taxonomy to conduct this study.

This study focuses on VLS based on Schmitt's taxonomy and relate it to gamers' activity in Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia (ID Harvest). Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia

(ID Harvest) is a facebook group in which the members are people who play video game namely Harvest Moon (HM). HM is an RPG-Simulation video game about farming which can be played in PC, android, play station or other game consoles. In HM, the player does a farmer's activities such as planting fruits, planting vegetables, and also breeding cattle along the year. The player should do those activities regularly to complete the game objectives and all the objectives are written in English through written conversation. This written conversation triggers the player to learn unconsciously, especially reading. Then, this study also discusses the gamers' activity which is related to VLS. Thus, the objective of the study is to investigate the most and the least frequently used of Vocabulary Learning Strategy VLS by gamers at Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia (ID Harvest).

Vocabulary is a prerequisite thing for ELL in acquiring and learning English. Vocabulary exists in all English skills i.e listening, reading, speaking, and writing. It relate with the definition of vocabulary by Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary Third Edition. It states that vocabulary is "all the words which exist in a particular language or subject". Hence, ELL should enrich their vocabulary continuously in order to acquire and learning English. Krashen (2013) states that "we acquire language when we understand messages that contain aspects of language (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation)". In learning the vocabulary, students need to apply some strategies which are in Vocabulary Learning Strategy (VLS).

VLS can be defined as certain steps that ELL do to acquire words (Asgari and Mustapha, 2011). In this study VLS refers to certain strategy which is applied by gamers to comprehend vocabulary meaning. VLS based on Schmitt's taxonomy consists of two groups, discovery and consolidation. The first is discovery group which is employed to discover new words is divided into determination strategy and social strategy. The second group is consolidation which employed to reinforce when they meet the words again in the written conversation. This group is divided into four, social strategy, memory strategy, cognitive strategy and metacognitive strategy. Those strategies of VLS can be used in the teaching and learning of English especially when it employs the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

The definition of CALL is "any process in which a learner uses a computer and as a result, improves his or her language". (Beatty, 2003). There are some types of CALL namely all software such as dictionaries, chat clients and computer games. (Eskelinen, 2012). CALL can help ELL in acquiring and learning language. Eskelinen (2012) states that CALL is a mobile learning software, so learner can learn not only at school but also outside the school. The video games are one of the means of learning of English to help the learners enhance their ability, especially vocabulary, independently.

Video games have some educational benefits. According to Griffiths (2002) video games have some educational benefits. First, video games attract participation across many demographic boundaries (age, gender, ethnicity, educational status). The research subjects or respondents of this study are gamers who have different background. Second, video games can stimulate learning. Some skills of the gamers will develop when they play video games, especially skills to comprehend word meaning or messages in the game. Griffiths (2002) claims that there are four basic skills that will be developed when playing video game i.e language skills and components, basic math skills, basic reading skills, and social skills. In this study, the researchers only focus on

language components and basic reading skills as the limitation of the study. In language skills, when gamers play a game they will learn how to follow directions, give directions, or answer questions, whereas in basic reading skills gamers will find dialogs or conversations between characters in the game which come up on the screen such as word "play, quit, go, stop, load, etc. (Griffiths, 2002).

Method

Cross sectional survey was the research design of this study. Creswell, (2012, p.376) states that "survey research design are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population. "While cross sectional survey design is applied to find out the current attitudes, beliefs, opinions or practices of the respondents. In this study, researcher investigated the practices of respondents. Practices mean the respondents' real behavior (Cresswell, 2012, p. 377). The data source of this study was 83 members of Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia (ID Harvest) as research subjects of this study. The data was collected through questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was adapted from a previous study by Riankamol (2008). The questionnaire distributed to the 83 participants via Survey Monkey. While for interview, the researcher interviewed 10 percent from the total sample that is 8 participants via Line Messenger.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information

Based on the questionnaire result, the range of the participants' age in this study starts from 14 till 28 years old. The most participants in this study are at the age of 20 that which are 59 gamers or 71% from the total samples. the rest of the gamers are under 17 years old, 9.7% (8 gamers).

Based on the results of the study, it is revealed that video games have educational benefits. According to Griffiths (2002) video games attract participation across many demographic boundaries (age) and, at the same time, video games can stimulate learning.

The first educational benefit of video game was attracts participation across demographic boundaries. There was no limitation of age for people or gamers to play Harvest Moon video game. There were 59 or 71% at the age of more than 20 years old. It showed that Forum Harvest Moon (*ID Harvest*) was dominated by Indonesian young adults that were interested in Harvest Moon video game.

The second educational benefit was video game could stimulate learning. The gamers as participants in this study applied VLS while playing Harvest Moon video game. Cognitive strategy, memory strategy, and metacognitive strategy were VLS that had high frequency of usage. Those strategies had mean score more than 2.00. While the frequency of usage from determination strategy, social (discovery) strategy, and social (consolidation) were more than 1.00 and they were categorized as moderate.

The Usage of Vocabulary Learning Strategy

The results of the study are the most and the least frequently used of VLS by the gamers as the respondents of this study. The study revealed that among the six

categories of Schmitt's taxonomy, cognitive strategy is the most frequently used of VLS by gamers at (ID Harvest). The cognitive strategy has the highest mean score among the other strategies that is 2.86. While the social strategy which is belongs to discovery group has the lowest mean score that is 1.07. It means, the social strategy is the least frequently used of VLS by the gamers.

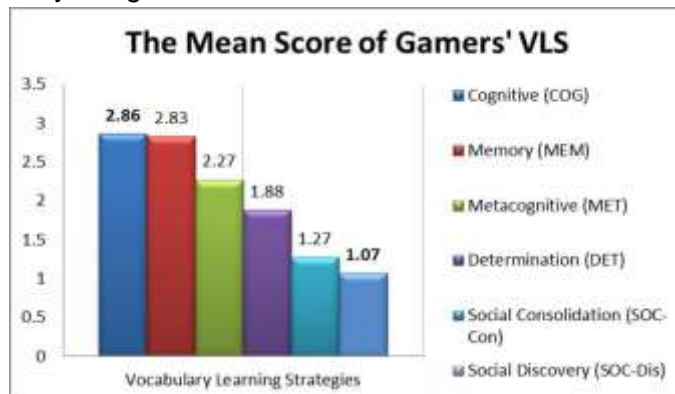


Figure 1. The Mean Score of Gamers' Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Figure 1. displays the overall mean score of gamers' VLS and its frequency of the usage. Three strategies had high frequency of the usage, i.e cognitive, memory and metacognitive. Moreover, the other three strategies (determination, social consolidation, and social discovery) had moderate frequency of usage. The frequency of the usage was categorized based on the mean of each strategy. According to Musonnafa (2017, p. 99) there were three categories about the frequency of usage which depends on the mean, namely low (mean <1.00), moderate (1.00<mean<2.00), and high (2.00<mean<3.00).

Cognitive Strategy

Cognitive strategy had the highest mean score among the six strategies that is 2.86. It means, the most strategy which is applied by the gamers was cognitive strategy.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Strategy Applying

ITEM	Degree of Frequency										X
	Always use it		Ussually use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
6. I confirmed the meaning of words after the words are repeated	21	25.30	34	40.96	24	28.92	3	3.61	1	120	2.86
Mean (X)											2.86

Table 1. shows that there are 34 gamers who usually apply the cognitive strategy. Cognitive strategy is represented by item number 12 that is "I confirm the meaning of words after the words are repeated". In addition, in interview session, the 7th gamers who already played HM video game for four years admitted that she would analyze the

pattern of the vocabulary appearance in the video game. She would notice the pattern to guess the meaning of the vocabulary.

Cognitive strategy was the most VLS that was applied by the gamers with the mean score was 2.88. There were 34 or 40,96% of gamers who usually apply cognitive strategy by confirmed the meaning of words after the words are repeated. This study results against research result from Riankamol (2008) and Zarrin and Khan (2014). Moreover, this result in line with Bytheway's (2011) research results.

This present study found that cognitive strategy was in the 1st rank among the other VLS and categorized as high. It was different from Riankamol (2008) who found that cognitive strategy was in the 5th rank. While Zarin and Khan (2014) found that cognitive strategy was in rank 3 and the frequency categorized as medium.

The differences between those research results were influenced by the participants. Riankamol's and Zarin and Khan's participants were students, it means that their research focus on classroom setting. It was about how the students learn in the classroom. Whereas the participants of this present study were gamers. Thus, this study was not about classroom setting, the instrument does not represent teachers' role as like as in Riankamol's and Zarin and Khan's instruments. It was only focuses on how gamers apply VLS while playing video games.

The research result of this study supports Bytheway's study result. This study revealed that gamers could infer the meaning of words after they found the similar words repeatedly in HM. Bytheway(2011) also found that her participants who are MMORPG gamers notice the frequency or repetition of words while playing World of Warcraft (WoW) video game. (Bytheway, 2011). WoW and HM has the same gameplay, i.e the game instruction or quests game are written on the game screen

Social (Discovery) Strategy

Social (Discovery) strategy had the lowest mean score among the six strategies that is 1.07. It means, the least strategy which is applied by the gamers was Social (Discovery) strategy.

Table. 2. Descriptive Statistics of Social (Discovery) Strategy Applying

ITEM	Degree of Frequency												X
	Always use it		Usually use it		Sometimes use it		Seldom use it		Never use it				
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
6. I ask gamer to translate the words into Bahasa	2	2.41	6	7.23	16	19.28	19	22.89	40	48.19		0.93	
7. I found the meaning of words in Forum Harvest Moon (ID Harvest)	2	2.41	11	13.25	23	27.71	13	15.66	34	40.96		1.20	
Mean (X)												1.07	

Based on the table.2., there are two items which represent the social (discovery) strategy. The table showed that 48.19% of gamers never apply item number 6 and 40.96% of gamers never apply item number 7 too. It shows that majority of the gamers does not ask gamer to translate the word into Bahasa and also does not found the meaning of words in Forum Harvest Moon (ID Harvest) to discover the meaning of words when playing HM video game.

Social (discovery) strategy is the least VLS which is applied by the participants. The strategy had the lowest mean score among the other VLS i.e 1.07. The social strategy represented by item number 6 (ask gamers to translate the words into bahasa) and item number 7 (found the meaning of words in forum Harvest Moon ID harvest). In both items, most of the participants stated that they never apply those sub strategies (see table. 4.1.2.2) to discover new words. There were 48.19% or 40 gamers stated that they never apply the item number 6 and there are 40.96% or 34 gamers who stated that they never apply the item number 7 too. This result was in line with Riankamol's study result that the least VLS was Social (discovery) strategy. Riankamol found that social (discovery) strategy as the least used strategies with the mean score was 1.82. (Riankamol, 2008 p. 24).

The result of this present study and Riankamol's results showed that the Social (Discovery) strategy is not popular for students and HM gamers. It is less common for them to ask people, teacher or gamer in order to discover the meaning of words. But, another result revealed by Bytheway (2011) suggests that asking to other people or other gamers was a common thing for WoW gamers in order to learn words. (Bytheway, 2011 p. 45).

There was a possible reason that causes the differences between the research result from Bytheway and the present study. The reason was the feature of the game itself. The WoW video game was equipped with chat feature, in the left side of the game screen there was a space for room chat, so the gamers may chat while playing WoW. (Bytheway, 2011). But, in HM video game series there was no room chat feature. Thus, asking people or other gamers about unfamiliar word is common for WoW gamers, but not for HM gamers.

Interview Result

The interview was conducted in order to confirm the application of VLS by gamers. The interview results also provided some additional information about gamers' experiences in playing HM video game. Based on the interview of 8 university-students interviewees, the researcher found that most of them have played HM video game since they were elementary school students or it is about 4 till 10 years ago. In addition, most of them played the HM video game in order to entertain themselves and they did it in their leisure time. Besides, some of them admitted that they love to play HM video game because they believe that HM can help them to enrich their vocabulary. The result of the interview also suggests that the Cognitive Strategy is mostly used by the gamers once they are playing the game to understand words. The interview also revealed that the least frequently used strategy is the social Strategy.

Conclusion

The results of this study revealed that the most frequently used of VLS by gamers at Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia (ID Harvest) was cognitive strategy and the least frequently used of VLS was social discovery strategy.

Based on the result, researcher concludes that gamers at Forum Harvest Moon Indonesia (ID Harvest) learn English vocabulary by seeing the pattern of the words appearance. The more often they meet the words, the more they can infer the meaning of the words. They can infer the meaning because the repetition has made the gamers familiar with the words. In addition, Indonesian gamers play HM video game rarely ask people or other gamers about unfamiliar words, but they prefer to skip the unfamiliar words, they would ignore the words.

This study showed different results from the previous studies. First, Bytheway found that cognitive strategy which was represented by noticing frequency or the repetition of words was in the 3rd rank. Her participants used the strategies 35 times while playing MMORPG video game. Second, Riankamol found that cognitive strategy was in the 5th rank. Third, Zarin and Khan found that cognitive strategy was in the 3rd rank. The gamers mostly apply strategies which belonged to consolidation group (cognitive, memory and metacognitive strategy) than the strategies which belonged to discovery group (determination and social discovery strategy).

Daftar Pustaka

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