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## The Top Video Games of 2024 Among Young Teens: Exploring Their Educational Significance for English Language Acquisition

*Najpopularniejsze gry video wśród nastolatków w 2024 roku:  
Analiza ich znaczenia edukacyjnego dla opanowania języka  
angielskiego*

**Abstract:** Submitted paper evaluates the effect of video games on the process of learning English language in primary schools. The research presented in here offers insights into gaming preferences among students of primary schools, highlights possible linguistic benefits in regards to some video games and pure entertaining values of the others. Research methods comprise of the survey conducted among students concerning their gaming preferences, analysis of language test results, student observations, and interviews with the students and the teachers. The results of the research show that some video games can indeed be considered as effective tools to support the process of English language learning. Moreover, students exhibit greater engagement and motivation for learning, which in turn translates into better language learning outcomes. Furthermore, video games enable the development of communication skills and language creativity. Analysis of perspective for educational development suggests that incorporating certain video games into the learning process can be beneficial for both students and teachers. Employing modern teaching methods leads to more effective education. However, supplementary research and development of didactic practices utilizing video games are required to optimally utilize the potential of video games in language education in primary schools.

**Keywords:** video games, English language acquisition, primary schools, interactive education, educational development

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**Abstrakt:** Prezentowany artykuł ocenia wpływ gier wideo na proces nauki języka angielskiego w szkołach podstawowych. Przedstawione badania oferują wgląd w preferencje dotyczące gier wśród uczniów szkół podstawowych, podkreślają możliwe korzyści językowe w odniesieniu do niektórych gier wideo i wartości czysto rozrywkowe innych. Metody badawcze obejmują ankietę przeprowadzoną wśród uczniów dotyczącą ich preferencji w zakresie gier, analizę wyników testów językowych, obserwacje uczniów oraz wywiady z uczniami i nauczycielami. Wyniki badań pokazują, że niektóre gry wideo rzeczywiście można uznać za skuteczne narzędzia wspierające proces nauki języka angielskiego. Co więcej, uczniowie wykazują większe zaangażowanie i motywację do nauki, co z kolei przekłada się na lepsze wyniki w nauce języka. Gry wideo umożliwiają rozwój umiejętności komunikacyjnych i kreatywności językowej, dlatego też włączenie niektórych gier wideo do procesu uczenia się może być korzystne zarówno dla uczniów, jak i nauczycieli. Zastosowanie nowoczesnych metod nauczania prowadzi do bardziej efektywnej edukacji. Jednakże, aby optymalnie wykorzystać potencjał gier wideo w edukacji językowej w szkołach podstawowych, wymagane są dodatkowe badania i rozwój praktyk dydaktycznych wykorzystujących gry wideo.

**Słowa kluczowe:** gry komputerowe, akwizycja języka angielskiego, szkoły podstawowe, edukacja interaktywna, rozwój edukacyjny

## Introduction

In recent years video games have become more and more frequent in didactic settings, offering new prospects for engaging students and encouraging learning experiences. This paper considers the most influential video games in regards to the process of learning English vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, in primary schools as it stands for 2024. By examining the effects of playing certain video games on the educational development, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective didactic practices. The choice of primary school students for the paper is significant due to the formative nature of language acquisition during early education. Through an

in-depth analysis of selected schools, this study seeks to explore the efficacy of incorporating video games into English language instruction, and therefore provides constructive insights for educators. This study ventures to contribute to the advancement of educational practices that promote holistic language development in primary school settings.

## **Learning English in Primary School Settings – a brief overview**

The process of learning English language, in primary school settings, comprises different elements such as: the integration of the four language skills; the significance of an individualized approach, considerations regarding narcissistic behaviour among students (very much present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century setting); and the potential for reducing or eliminating traditional homework assignments altogether (in accordance to the new regulations from April 2024). These components are to encourage language proficiency and foster holistic development among learners. When discussing the integration of the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, educators try to create learning environments that helps to integrate all four skills through activities such as role-playing, storytelling, and interactive games. Moreover, recognizing the diverse needs and learning styles of students, primary school educators adopt an individualized approach to English language instruction. Such method involves adapting teaching strategies and materials to accommodate the unique strengths, interests, and challenges of each learner (Grant, Basye, 2014). By differentiating instruction and providing personalized support, educators aim to optimize student engagement and promote meaningful language acquisition experiences (Tomlinson, 2001).

While employing an individual approach the educator must also take into consideration narcissistic behaviour so frequently displayed among students nowadays. Primary school teachers must learn to navigate the pervasiveness of technology and its possible impact on students' behaviour and learning outcomes. Often these narcissistic inclinations, characterized by excessive self-focus and an extreme craving for attention and validation, may reveal in students' interactions with digital media, including social networking sites and language learning platforms (Twenge, Campbell, 2010). Therefore, teachers can play a vital role in promoting healthy digital citizenship as well as fostering self-awareness and empathy among students to alleviate the negative effects of narcissistic behaviour on their learning and social development.

The importance of promoting a balanced approach to learning that prioritizes student well-being and family engagement is increasingly recognized by primary school educators (Pope, Parker, 2014). In light of this, some educators explore the possibility of minimizing or eliminating traditional homework assignments in English language learning (moreover, as from April 2024 traditional homework assignments are not to be given to younger learners). Instead, teachers try to leverage in-class instructional time more efficiently, providing abundant opportunities for collaborative learning, guided practice, and meaningful language use. Educators work toward creating a supportive learning environment that promotes active participation and nurtures a positive attitude towards English language learning.

To conclude, learning English language in primary school environment requires a multidimensional approach that integrates the four language skills, addresses considerations regarding narcissistic behaviour, emphasizes individualized instruction from the teacher, and explores innovative approaches for homework substitution. By adopting student-centred practices, teachers endeavour to create effective and engaging learning experiences that inspire young learners to develop English language proficiency while fostering their overall growth and development.

## **Gamefication in Teaching and Learning**

“People certainly learn things from books, movies and television. But learning is, for nearly all good games, a core game mechanic” (Gee, 2012). The engagement necessary for effective gameplay captivates the player, encouraging them to understand the interface, excel in making suitable moves within the environment, learn from setbacks, and explore avenues for assistance. Each of these actions constitutes a vital aspect of successful learning, essential even in the simplest of gaming environments.

Games offer the opportunity to improve knowledge transfer beyond what traditional education can offer (Donovan, 2012). Numerous institutions, such as Microsoft Corporation acknowledge the necessity for fresh perspectives on education. However, over recent decades, the education system has oscillated between progressive and traditional educational approaches. Well-crafted games offer a solution to this predicament. Integrating game-based literacy into any program focused on traditional learning methods can both complement existing practices and push the system to evolve further (Tekinbas,

2008)<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, technology holds promise in making both games and education accessible to students with diverse needs<sup>2</sup>.

As outlined by K. Schrier, the subsequent game design principles merit consideration when contemplating the audience: considering the learners' ability; player diversity; allowing for immersion, achievement, interaction and socialization; providing feedback to players; accommodating learning in contexts (Schrier 2014). As collaborated by another author in this field, games designed for learning and development hold the potential to enhance the opportunities for acquiring and applying knowledge far beyond the limitations of traditional formal education, which often relies heavily on memorizing answers to predetermined problems and standardized tests (Gee, 2006). In this setting concentrating on the process not the outcome leads to successful language acquisition. The concept proposed by Kurt Squire (2006), which views games as designed experiences, highlights the disparity between games and conventional learning settings. In traditional classrooms, curricula are crafted to achieve predetermined objectives. Evaluating these outcomes becomes crucial in determining the success of the intended learning process. Consequently, the actual experience of learning is often disregarded as irrelevant or treated as challenging and obscure.

In gaming, the main point lies in the experience of play, serving as the main attraction that draws players back into the game world. This form of agency, where players actively choose to remain engaged, stands as a key characteristic of the designed experience, for without player retention, a game would be deemed a failure. Within games, outcomes hold significance as markers of success or failure, reflecting players' endeavours to master the proper strategies. Moreover, several modern games engross players within vibrant social settings as a condition for participation. Some games necessitate multiplayer interaction, while others encourage players to engage in external spaces (such as discussion forums and gaming communities) for support and guidance. The participatory cultures that evolve around gaming, as described by Jenkins et al. (2006), show interest-driven communities that naturally support learning experiences for both novices and experts the same. As Young et al points out, "Much of the 'learning' of video game play may come from affinity groups that emerge from game play, consisting of metagame sources such as blogs, wikis, and discussion pages that support hints, cheats, and modding" (Young et al., 2012). Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Schools of the Future: Defining New Models of Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, World Economic Forum, Switzerland 2020, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Schools\\_of\\_the\\_Future\\_Report\\_2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Schools_of_the_Future_Report_2019.pdf), (24.03.2024), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, Ed Tech Developer's Guide: A Primer for Software Developers, Startups, and Entrepreneurs, Washington D.C. 2015, p. 15.

games constitute both technologies and communities and as such their potential for learning should be understood in terms of both (Steinkuehler, 2006). As a technology, games offer players “designed experiences” (Squire, 2006) making it irresistible to young learner. In terms of community, games function as new “third places” (Oldenburg, 1999) for informal sociability (Steinkuehler, Williams, 2006). This ‘community factor’ plays a significant role in respect to specific vocabulary acquisition, namely idiomatic phrases and slang expressions.

Traditional approaches to literacy instruction prioritize textual decoding, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar proficiency as fundamental components of literacy development. In contrast, a new literacy perspective underscores the importance of learners engaging with language within authentic social contexts, contending that foundational skills emerge through immersion in genuine discourse communities. From Gee’s viewpoint, games immerse players in discourse communities, offering diverse opportunities for the development of literacy skills (Lankshear, Knobel, 2006). As mentioned by Steinkuehler (2006), the criteria defining successful learning are swiftly changing, shifting away from conventional assessments of content proficiency towards standards based on performance. Which in turn demands from the learners to demonstrate their understanding through active engagement and application in authentic contexts.

Even though it is undeniable that video games have flourished in the realm of entertainment, their integration into didactic environment has yet to reach its full potential. There are significant hurdles that must be overcome including the necessity to cover mandated curriculum content, scepticism regarding technological solutions for instructional issues, and the challenge of equipping teachers with the necessary gaming proficiency (Klopfer, Osterweil, Salen, 2009). Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge that games might never find their way into school curricula precisely because of these factors. While they may eventually supplant traditional homework assignments, fostering more student-centred learning approaches, their integration into teacher-led classroom settings remains uncertain.

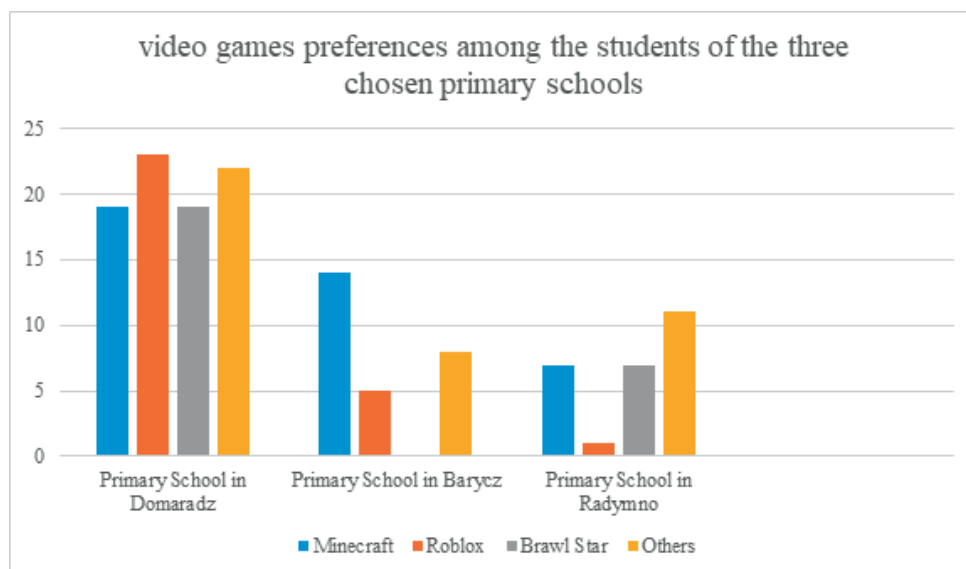
## **A Research into Computer Game Usage and English Language proficiency**

The research involved the participation of three randomly selected primary schools from the rural areas, given that children dwelling in the city are more likely to have additional private lessons which in turn would jeopardise the results of the study. Chosen schools were from different villages altogether.

Students ranging from grades 4 to 8 were surveyed about their gaming preferences. A total of 243 students and 5 teachers took part in the study. Students indicated their favourite video games on paper (if they had any and in a case where more than one game was stated students were asked to underline the dominant game), after which teachers cross-referenced their responses with the writing compositions submitted in the last three consecutive unit tests. They examined for words and phrases that, according to the school curriculum, should be unfamiliar to the students at their point of education.

Among the surveyed students, 137 reported frequent computer game usage, indicating that they play for over an hour a day (these were the subjects significant for the study). Remaining 106 students stated that they do not play video games, rather watch YouTube shorts, Netflix or use Facebook. The group playing video games declared their favourites as follows: *Minecraft* (40 students), *Roblox* (31 students), *Brawl Stars* (25 students). Other games, such as *Fortnite*, *God of War*, *Age of History*, *EA FC 24*, *Among Us*, *The League of Legends*, *Battlefields 3*, *NBA2K24*, and *Volorant* were also mentioned by the students, albeit less frequently.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the role of video games in English language learning among primary school students. The prevalence of gaming among students underscores the importance of harnessing the potential of gaming as a tool for language education. By identifying the most popular games among primary school students and their potential educational value, educators can better integrate gaming into language instruction to enhance students' language learning experiences. The prevalence of computer game usage among primary school students highlights the potential of gaming as a platform for English language learning. Some games offer immersive and interactive experiences that can complement traditional language learning methods. Hence, it is imperative for educators to have a certain level of gaming proficiency to effectively engage students in games that offer linguistic value and educational benefits. Future research should explore the effectiveness of integrating specific games into English language instruction and the strategies for maximizing their educational benefits.



**Tab. 1.** Video games preferences among the students of three selected primary schools

Overall, the most popular among the students taking part in the study proves to be *Minecraft*, offering an action-adventure experience that fosters creativity and English vocabulary acquisition (when played in the English version). While the pace of the game may not match that of others, its educational potential is present. *Minecraft*, provides various opportunities for English language learning due to its open-ended nature and extensive player interaction. Here are some ways *Minecraft* can facilitate English learning:

- *Minecraft* contains text-based elements such as items names, menus, and instructional guides. Players come across English vocabulary as they circumnavigate through the game, interact with different objects, and created items.
- *Minecraft* offers multiplayer modes, which enable players to communicate with each other through voice chat or text chat. Engaging conversations with other players offers unique opportunities to practice English language skills first hand.
- *Minecraft* allows players to express their creativity by designing worlds, creating stories, building structures all within the game. This means writing signs or descriptions for their creations, allowing players to practice their English writing skills in this creative and interactive environment.

- Some *Minecraft* servers are purposely designed for didactic purposes, presenting activities and tasks that incite English language learning. These servers may include language-themed quizzes, puzzles, or storytelling events, offering a fun and immersive way to improve language skills.
- *Minecraft* has a considerable and very active community of players creating tutorials, guides, and educational resources all related to the game. English learners can easily access these resources in order to improve their understanding of game mechanics, strategies and vocabulary while practicing their English reading skills. In general, *Minecraft* can be a valuable tool for English language learners, offering a dynamic and engaging environment where players can interact, collaborate, and learn through gameplay.

In the second place ranked *Roblox*. It is an online place where players can create their own games and at the same time play a wide variety of games created by other users. *Roblox* presents a vast array of experiences ranging from simulations, and role-playing games to obstacle courses and virtual hangouts. Recently *Roblox* has acquired considerable popularity among children and teenagers for its creativity, accessibility, and the opportunities for social interaction. However, the game can offer opportunities for English language learners only in a limited way. Within the game, players may encounter English language text, such as signs, instructions, dialogue, and game elements. Moreover, players can engage in communication with other players via text chat. Nevertheless, since not all players are native English speakers, the language they employ may be rather rudimentary, riddled with errors, slang expressions, and abbreviations. Therefore, it's essential to note that the educational value of *Roblox* as a language learning tool may vary depending on the individual's usage and the specific interactions within the game.

*Brawl Stars* rated in the third place. By description it is an online 'battle arena' game, where players compete in various game modes. Depending on the game mode played, the objective varies. However, typically involves completing objectives, defeating opponents, or collecting resources while avoiding being terminated. The game's exciting graphics, fast-paced gameplay, and wide range of game modes have added to its attractiveness among young players. The game promotes teamwork as players team up or compete against opponents in real-time multiplayer matches. Whilst *Brawl Stars* is mostly an online fast action battle game, it can still offer some opportunities to learn English vocabulary. In the game, players may encounter various English language text, such as instructions, character names, abilities, and game mode descriptions. However, it's important to note that the educational value of learning English

vocabulary from *Brawl Stars* may vary depending on the individual's usage and the specific game mode they choose to play.

Out of the three games discussed above *Roblox* may offer the most opportunities in terms of acquiring English vocabulary (on condition that the player chooses an English version of the game, same goes for all the other games mentioned in this paper). This is mainly due to the fact that *Roblox* possesses: extensive user-generated content, text-based communication, and diverse gameplay experiences. *Roblox* allows players to engage in text chat, interact with other users, and participate in a wide range of activities, including role-playing games, simulations, and creative building. This variety of experiences can provide ample opportunities for English language practice and learning in a dynamic and interactive environment.

However, when contemplating idiom acquisition, games that offer richer and more diverse language interactions and contexts would prove more advantageous. In this scenario, *Minecraft* and *Roblox* may afford greater opportunities for encountering idiomatic expressions compared to *Brawl Stars*. But, they may not provide as many as MMO games that present a narrative, such as *Star Wars* or *The Witcher*, or linear story-based games like *The Legend of Zelda* or *Uncharted*.

Both *Minecraft* and *Roblox* feature extensive user-generated content and communication channels, such as chat functions, where players can interact with others and encounter a wide range of language expressions, including idioms. Players may use idiomatic expressions naturally during conversations or in written communication within these games, providing learners with opportunities to observe, understand, and incorporate idioms into their own language use. However, it's important to note that the effectiveness of idiom acquisition through games ultimately depends on the individual's engagement, exposure, and active effort to understand and incorporate idiomatic expressions encountered during gameplay.

Among the other game titles specified by the students of the three researched schools were: *NBA2K24*), *EA FC 24 Battlefields 3 Age of History II*, *The League of Legends*, *Fortnite*, and *Among Us*. All of these games present some value in regards to English vocabulary acquisition, it very much depends on the way they played, amount of time spend while playing, and child's individual engagement with the game content. While some of these titles may offer more explicit language learning opportunities, such as dialogue interactions or in-game text, others may indirectly contribute to vocabulary acquisition through exposure to English-language environments or interactions with other players. Ultimately, the educational value of these games for English vocabulary

acquisition varies based on factors such as gameplay mechanics, player interaction, and the student's active participation and engagement.

## Conclusion

There are many video games that offer engaging and educational experiences while catering to their interests and cognitive development of a young teen. Over the years games like: *Minecraft* continues to be popular among this age group, as it promotes creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork, offering an environment where players can build, explore, and collaborate with others, which in turn aids their language skills development. *Roblox* similarly offers something for every interest and allows teens to express their creativity and socialize with peers with its diverse range of experiences, including role-playing games, simulations, and obstacle courses.

These games, apart from entertainment aspect, offer valuable opportunities for socialization and skill development. However it has to be noted that capitalizing on their educational potential, particularly when it comes to vocabulary acquisition, requires strategic utilization. Here, the guidance and support of an educator proves instrumental. Teachers can play a key role in enabling the integration of gaming experiences into the learning process. Exploiting the interactive nature of these games, teachers can create activities and assignments that would incite young teens to engage with English language content present within the game. For example, in *Roblox* teachers can design tasks that motivate students to investigate and research in-game text such as instructions and dialogue, encouraging students to distinguish new vocabulary not only words or phrases, but idiomatic expressions as well. Additionally, teachers can promote combined learning experiences by the means of organizing: group discussions, debates, game-talks conferences, all centred on gameplay experiences. Persuading students to reveal their gaming experiences, tactics and strategies, with their peers not only furthers language practice but also fosters communication skills, critical thinking, and teamwork. What is more, teachers can offer assistance on how to leverage gaming platforms' educational features (language settings, tutorials) and educational resources. By aiding students how to utilize these features efficiently, educators inspire them to take ownership of their learning and make informed choices about their gaming experiences.

In general, while games like *Minecraft*, *Roblox*, *Brawl Stars* offer plentiful opportunities for entertainment and skill development, their likelihood for enhancing English vocabulary acquisition can be only fully realized with the

guidance, assistance and support of knowledgeable in a field of video games – educators. Through strategic integration into the learning curriculum, teachers can harness the immersive and interactive nature of gaming to create engaging and effective language learning experiences for their students.

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