EdLib
EDUCATION AND LIBRARY JOURNAL

The Impact Of English Gaming YouTuber On 9 Year Old Indonesian Kid To Understand And Use English

Chelse Olivia Ramadhani
[1] *English Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia*
[1] *Corresponding author email : oliviarchelse@gmail.com*

ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received
Revised
Accepted

Keywords :
English learning, Gaming YouTuber, Child language acquisition, Informal learning

ABSTRACT
This article explored the impact of English gaming YouTubers on a 9-year-old Indonesian child's ability to understand and use English. The subject of this study was the researcher's younger brother, who demonstrated good listening comprehension and the ability to form simple English sentences, yet showed relatively low achievement in formal English school assessments. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, informal interviews, parental opinions, and document analysis of school reports. The findings indicated that exposure to English gaming content significantly enhanced vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, pronunciation awareness, and contextual language use. Factors contributing to this improvement included repeated exposure, visual-audio support, intrinsic motivation, and interactive imitation of YouTuber language. However, the mismatch between informal language learning and formal school assessment methods partly explained the subject's lower academic performance. Scientific evidence from trusted journals supports that digital media and gaming-based input facilitate second language acquisition in children. This study concluded that English gaming YouTubers play a positive supplementary role in children's English development when supported by parental guidance.

A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital media has transformed how children are exposed to foreign languages, particularly English. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language in formal education; however, many children encounter English earlier and more intensively through digital platforms such as YouTube. Gaming YouTubers who use English as their primary language of communication have become especially influential among young audiences. Previous studies have demonstrated that children acquire vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension through sustained exposure to authentic and meaningful language input (Krashen, 1985; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) emphasizes that language learning can occur outside classrooms through media engagement, games, and online videos. This phenomenon is particularly relevant for young learners who are highly motivated by entertainment-based content.

This study focused on a 9-year-old Indonesian child, the researcher's younger brother, who watched English gaming YouTubers for approximately 1–2 hours per day, four to five times per week, primarily consuming gameplay commentary videos delivered entirely in English. Although he showed good English comprehension and could produce simple spoken sentences, his English grades at school did not reflect this competence. This discrepancy raised important questions regarding the effectiveness of informal digital exposure versus formal assessment systems. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the impact of English gaming YouTubers on

the child's English understanding and usage, identify contributing factors, and compare informal learning outcomes with formal school performance. The inclusion of scientific evidence, personal observations, and parental opinions provided a holistic understanding of this phenomenon.

B. METHODOLOGY

This observation employed a qualitative case study design to gain a detailed and realistic understanding of how exposure to English gaming YouTubers influenced a young learner's English language development. The subject of the study was a 9-year-old Indonesian child who had been consistently exposed to English-language gaming content on YouTube. A case study approach was considered appropriate, as it allows for detailed contextual analysis of a single participant within a real-life setting, which is widely recommended in applied linguistics research (Yin, 2018).

Data collection was conducted over a period of 15 consecutive days, during which the researcher closely observed the subject in his natural home environment. During this period, the researcher carried out systematic non-participant observations of the subject's daily activities, particularly focusing on language use during gameplay, video watching sessions, and spontaneous interactions at home. Observation notes documented the frequency of English expressions, types of vocabulary used, sentence structures, pronunciation attempts, and instances of code-switching between English and Indonesian. In addition to observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the subject's parents at the end of the observation period. The interviews aimed to gather parental perspectives on the child's English development, media consumption habits, academic performance, and behavioral changes related to English use. This parental input was crucial in triangulating observational data, as recommended by qualitative research methodology literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Supporting data were also obtained from the subject's English school report and learning materials to contextualize formal academic performance. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure, involving data familiarization, initial coding, theme categorization, and interpretation. Themes were analyzed in relation to established second language acquisition theories and findings from peer-reviewed journals to ensure analytical rigor and theoretical alignment.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results indicated that over the 15-day observation period, the child consistently demonstrated strong receptive English skills, particularly in listening comprehension. He was able to accurately interpret procedural instructions related to gameplay (e.g., task objectives and rules), affective expressions used by YouTubers to convey emotions, and high-frequency formulaic expressions such as commands, exclamations, and evaluative phrases. These findings align with input-based models of second language acquisition, which emphasize the role of repeated exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; Webb, 2010).

One of the most significant advantages of acquiring English through exposure to gaming YouTubers is the high level of learner engagement. The subject demonstrated sustained

attention and motivation when interacting with English content embedded in gaming activities. This aligns with findings in applied linguistics journals which argue that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in successful informal digital language learning (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016; Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2019). Unlike traditional classroom settings, gaming content provides immediate context, emotional involvement, and purpose-driven language use, which enhance comprehension and retention.

Another notable advantage is the development of listening comprehension and pragmatic awareness. Through repeated exposure to authentic spoken English, the subject became familiar with natural pronunciation, intonation, and commonly used expressions. This type of exposure supports the development of communicative competence, particularly receptive skills, as emphasized in the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and supported by empirical studies on audiovisual input (Webb, 2010). The effectiveness of this approach was evident in the subject's ability to understand instructions and react appropriately during gameplay. The gaming YouTuber context also facilitated incidental vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary was learned naturally through repetition and contextual cues rather than explicit instruction. Journals focusing on vocabulary learning have consistently shown that incidental learning in meaningful contexts can result in long-term retention, especially for high-frequency and topic-related lexical items (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Hulstijn, 2013). Additionally, imitation of YouTuber speech encouraged early spoken production, supporting social learning and sociocultural theories of language development (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

Despite these advantages, several drawbacks were identified, particularly when considering formal academic outcomes. The most prominent limitation was the mismatch between the type of English acquired through gaming YouTubers and the English assessed in school. The subject's school English score remained relatively low, indicating that informal exposure did not sufficiently support grammar-focused learning, written accuracy, and explicit language knowledge. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that informal learning environments primarily develop communicative skills rather than metalinguistic competence (Hulstijn, 2013). Another drawback concerns the limited range of vocabulary and language structures acquired. The subject's English usage was largely confined to gaming-related expressions and everyday spoken phrases. While effective for communication within that context, this restricted lexical range did not adequately prepare the learner for diverse academic topics encountered in the classroom. Journals on digital learning emphasize that without pedagogical guidance, learners may develop uneven language profiles, with strong oral skills but weak academic literacy (Warschauer, 2004; Kukulska-Hulme, 2012).

The absence of corrective feedback posed an additional limitation. Unlike classroom instruction, gaming YouTuber content does not provide explicit correction of grammatical errors or structured progression of language difficulty. As a result, inaccuracies in sentence structure and grammar persisted in the subject's spoken and written English. This supports sociocultural perspectives which argue that guided interaction and scaffolding are essential for advancing learners beyond their current level of competence (Vygotsky, 1978).

Acquiring English through gaming YouTubers proved to be effective as a supplementary learning pathway, particularly in enhancing motivation, listening comprehension, and basic spoken fluency. However, its effectiveness was limited in supporting formal academic

achievement, as reflected in the subject's low English school score. Therefore, journals in applied linguistics consistently recommend integrating informal digital exposure with structured instruction and explicit teaching to balance communicative competence and academic language development.

The results indicated that over the 15-day observation period, the child consistently demonstrated strong receptive English skills, particularly in listening comprehension. He was able to accurately interpret procedural instructions related to gameplay (e.g., task objectives and rules), affective expressions used by YouTubers to convey emotions, and high-frequency formulaic expressions such as commands, exclamations, and evaluative phrases. These findings align with input-based models of second language acquisition, which emphasize the role of repeated exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985; Webb, 2010). In addition to receptive skills, the subject also exhibited emerging productive language abilities that were observable in daily interactions. He frequently imitated short English utterances during gameplay, including simple imperatives, descriptive phrases, and reaction-based expressions. Although grammatical accuracy was limited, the communicative intent was generally clear, suggesting the development of functional spoken competence. This pattern supports sociocultural perspectives on language learning, which posit that children acquire language through mediated social interaction and imitation of more proficient language users (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1977).

Vocabulary development was another prominent finding. The child demonstrated an expanding repertoire of game-related vocabulary and everyday English expressions, acquired incidentally through repeated exposure. This form of incidental vocabulary learning has been widely documented in studies examining informal digital learning of English (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). The multimodal nature of gaming videos, combining visual cues, spoken language, and contextual action, appeared to facilitate retention and comprehension. Despite these clear improvements in listening and speaking abilities, the subject's formal English achievement at school remained relatively low.

Analysis of school tasks revealed a strong emphasis on grammatical accuracy, written exercises, and decontextualized vocabulary recall. Parents confirmed that while the child showed increased confidence and willingness to use English orally at home, he often struggled with grammar-based tests and written assignments. This discrepancy reinforces findings from previous research indicating that informal exposure primarily enhances communicative competence rather than explicit metalinguistic knowledge (Hulstijn, 2013; Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2019).

From the parents' perspective, English gaming YouTubers were viewed as a highly motivating and beneficial supplementary learning resource. However, they were also perceived as insufficient on their own for meeting the demands of formal school-based English learning. Journals in applied linguistics similarly emphasize the need for pedagogical mediation to bridge informal learning experiences and school-based language requirements (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012; Warschauer, 2004). Therefore, the findings suggest that while English gaming YouTubers contribute positively to language exposure and motivation, structured instructional support remains essential to optimize learning outcomes. Therefore, parental guidance and teacher awareness are crucial to bridge informal and formal learning.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that English gaming YouTubers have a positive impact on a 9-year-old Indonesian child's ability to understand and use English, particularly in listening and speaking skills. Informal digital exposure fostered motivation, vocabulary growth, and contextual language use. However, the gap between informal learning and formal school assessment limited academic performance. It is recommended that parents monitor content and encourage reflection, while teachers integrate digital media awareness into instruction to maximize learning outcomes.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Benson, P. (2011). Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning. London: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2007). What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graddol, D. (2006). English next: Why global English may mean the end of English as a foreign language. London: British Council.

Hulstijn, J. H. (2013). Incidental learning in second language acquisition. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), The encyclopedia of applied linguistics (pp. 2632–2638). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). The input hypothesis: Issues and implications. London: Longman.

Kukulska-Hulme, A. (2012). Language learning defined by time and place: A framework for next generation designs. ReCALL, 24(3), 297–315.

Laufer, B., & Hulstijn, J. (2001). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language: The construct of task-induced involvement. Applied Linguistics, 22(1), 1–26.

Piaget, J. (1964). Cognitive development in children. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 2(3), 176–186.

Sundqvist, P., & Sylvén, L. K. (2016). Extramural English in teaching and learning: From theory and research to practice. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warschauer, M. (2004). Technology and social inclusion: Rethinking the digital divide. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Webb, S. (2010). A corpus-driven study of the potential for vocabulary learning through watching movies. Language Learning, 60(3), 497–532.

Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2008). Youth engaging in online media: Associations with social and academic outcomes. Journal of Adolescent Health, 42(2), 127–134.

Zhang, D., & Pérez-Paredes, P. (2019). Learner engagement in the informal digital learning of English. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 32(7), 1–24.