

# The Ambivalence of Electronic Games to Character and English Performance

Masda Surti Simatupang, Ramot Peter



**Abstract:-** *The popularity of electronic games, commonly called video games, has now emerged in all ages of the population, mostly children and the youth. Becoming well-liked electronic games among students, parents and educators fear that the time consumed for the games exceed that of learning. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable for students to play games in their leisure time. Furthermore, some researchers found negative and positive impacts of electronic games. The purpose of this study enlightens the ambivalence of the impact of playing electronic games to university students' character and their English performance. The participants were 148 university students filling in the self-evaluated questionnaires to appraise whether the electronic games contribute negatively or positively to their character and English performance. The first category from the negative impact indicates that electronic games manipulate their character with no socializing and bad-tempered, while the positive side deals with fast decision making, enjoying life, and socializing with others. The second category from the negative side involves the harsh and vulgar words, while from the positive side shows the improvement of the freshman's English performance through English electronic games, i.e. the vocabulary, listening, reading and speaking skills. It can be concluded that electronic games do not only impart negative effects but also provide the positive impacts. It concludes that freshman should manage their time between gaming and studying.*

**Index Terms:** *ambivalence, character, English performance, video games.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this recent decades, technology has made it possible to use sophisticated devices in the world of social interaction, entertainment, and education. The massive increase of the advanced technology has emerged enormous electronic games as well as virtual world which eventually enable people to actively involved in gaming activity either to fulfill their personal ambition, sharpen self-potential skills, or just spend their free time, see [1] and [2].

Electronic games, also known as video games or computer games, are devices that provide entertainment created from microprocessor which can be we achieved through some appliances such as network computer, tablets, smart phones and other game gadget (encyclopedia.com). No wonder that people can play the electronic games simply

everywhere since the technology provides easiness in almost all aspect of our lives. As it is even hard to find gadget with no video games inside, the intention to play the electronic games increases from time to time, from the very early age until the elder, from the modest to the most challenging gaming. It is obvious that playing video games becomes colloquial activities that people discuss, debate, or inform, especially the youth. Nevertheless, there are ambivalence of negative or positive effects that people do not realize. Some scholars confirmed the negative effects of electronic games which particularly regarding the increased moral sensitivity of the player [3], lack of physical movement [4], or aggression [5]. On the contrary, other scholars explored the positive power of gaming exploration, involving learning achievement and motivation [6], improving English proficiency [7], and teaching and learning English vocabulary [8].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The ambivalence of playing video games tends to be greater to the negative views among parents and educators, while it tends to the positive idea among teenagers or adolescences. Based on the research results, one reason of negative electronic gaming effect on teenagers is the violence. Reference [9] argued that video game exposure can cause desensitization to real life violence. It means that the gamers who extensively experience electronic gaming will get used to all the aggression or the cruelty in the virtual world which in the end become physiologically insensitive to the real life violence. Another report is the aggression among university students who experienced violent electronic games with snowballing effect of aggressive thoughts and behaviors over time [5]. Still about the aggression, reference [10] testified that violent video games play definitely related to the aggressive behavior and delinquency, with the more tendency towards men rather than women. Teenagers' unhealthy character relating to video games, specifically games associated to violence, absolutely arouse parents and educators' anxiety. The violent video games might influence gamers' character which effects increasingly on their aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect and physiological arousal, yet effects decreasingly on helping behavior [11].

The findings regarding serious impact to teenagers' character will indeed worry parents and educators which furthermore blamed the video game industries. The question is, is it possible to stop the video game production? Could it be feasible to prevent teenagers and adolescents from playing electronic games?

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\* Correspondence Author (s)

**Masda Surti Simatupang**, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia.

**Ramot Peter**, Character Building Development Center, Information Systems Department, School of Information Systems, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia.

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The answer is, it is totally impossible since the industry will get billions of revenue, as reported by [12] that the video game industry profit accomplished \$43 billion in 2018, an 18% rise from 2017. It surpasses the projected total global box office for the film industry, which hits \$41.7 billion. The economic value of video games has shifted from niche industry to a blockbuster business. For the future video games exceed other entertaining industries such as music, books, or movies [13]. It suggests that video game industries will get success either from the economic point of view or from the exciting entertainment they offer. Now and then, therefore, more people from children to adults get amused from different category of video games they play. From time to time, electronic game industries produce various fascinating sorts of games which attract gamers to try new challenges all over again.

Aside from the negative sides of electronic games, it is discovered the positive aspects relating to digital learning. The shifting way of learning from traditional methods to digital modes cannot be separated from the learning disruption in this era. Those that maintain the old-fashion teaching will be left behind. Consequently, several electronic media are used to support the teaching and learning process to enhance the ability that now and future learners require in digital citizen, including video games. Educators and researchers are recently exploring the possibilities of using video games as the teaching media [14], [15], [16]. Reference [17] claimed that the participants in their research tend to learn better and their vocabulary building is improved than those who merely attends traditional learning without accessing the electronic vocabulary games. Reference [2] mentioned the great positive potential of playing video games if they were designed to solve specific problem or to educate certain aspects. Educators and game developers need to consider some characteristics of choosing the appropriate video games to be utilized in educational games: the educational objective, type of game, participant age and characteristics, and setting, to name some. It indicates that not all video games can be developed in educational setting, so educators need to inform the beneficial video games for their particular participants.

### III. METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS

#### A. Purpose of Study

The ambivalence of playing electronic games to the negative and positive aspects cannot be prevented. This study aims to investigate those aspects so that parents and educators can recommend the games applicable to educational situation and disapprove the games that probably caused character's violation.

#### B. Participants and Methods

The participants involved 148 university students, from the age of 18 to 23, consisting of 57.4% male, 42.6% female. Each of them is required to fill in questionnaires delivered from the google form concerning electronic games they play/ not play. The questionnaires are analyzed

descriptively to get the portrayal results of the negative and positive impacts of electronic games.

### IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The first question of the questionnaires is asking whether they play video games or not. From 150 responses, 81.1% of the university students play video games, only 18.9 % don't. It means that more than 80 percent of them are gamers.

The second question asks whether the students agree or not that video games give negative impact to them. Most students (93%) agreed that video games contribute negative impact, only 6.2% said the contrary. It shows that gamers understand that the electronic games imparted negative effects, which most of the gamers neglected.

The third question refers to their opinion of how video games give negative impacts to them. They are given some options provided, which can be chosen more than one answers. However, they are able to add more options if the students think they need to mention more options. The results show that: 1) 82.3% of them forget the time to do other things like studying or doing sports, 2) 78.2% of them are addicted to play the games every time. 3) 75.5% of the students are lazy to move, to go somewhere, or to do other activities, 4) 30% of the students do not want to socialize with other people, 5) 26.5% of them prefer to be alone rather than be with friends. These indications explain why gamers spend their time mostly on video games until they get bored with the games.

The fourth, an open question, is about other negative impact they feel after playing video games. The purpose is to facilitate the participant to feel free to express their thinking. The answers are various, so they are categorized into the following terms, starting from mostly mention: 1) violent (18 participants), 2) emotional (5 participants), 3) harsh words (4 participants), 4) adult content (3 participants). The other negative impacts of video game are: 5) aggressive, 6) delay the work or study, 7) lack of sleep, 8) spending money for game attributes.

The fifth question concerns the names of video games that give negative impacts. Each participant mentions one game that contributes to negative effects. This is an open question so that the students freely mention the game providing negative impacts to them. The answers are very numerous that cannot be mentioned all in this part. The video games containing negative effects include: 1) PUBG (mention by 26 participants), 2) Mobile Legend (25 participants), 3) Grand Theft Auto (15 participants), 4) Dota 2 (7 participants), 5) Counter Strike (5 participants), the other games are mention once to three times: 6) Fortnite, 7) Pokemon, 8) Bully, 9) Smack Down (WWE), 10) Hago, 11) Clash of Clans with total 39 different electronic game names. It is interesting that 19 participants state no games impact negatively to them; on the contrary, 8 participants admit all games have negative effect. From this questionnaire, it can be revealed that 131 participants or 87.3% confess the negative influence of video games by mentioning the names.

Subsequently, parents and educators should be aware if their children or students play those video games mention above.

The sixth question concerns who will mostly get the negative impact. Result shows that negative impact will influence: 1) children (62.67%), 2) teenagers (35.33%), 3) young adults (16%), 4) all people 10%, 5) none (2.67%). It means that children will acquire more of the negative impacts if they play the games which involve fighting, killing, stealing, or pornography. It is very important that parents should know the appropriate games to children according to their age. Teenagers, specifically university students, also get the negative impact of electronic games. Mostly they become lazy to do their homework or other learning activities, which eventually might affect bad scores, unless they study harder and gradually decrease their gaming habit.

The seventh question asks the time allotted to play the game. Result shows that 1) 25% of the students spend more than 10 hours to play video games. This indicates they spend almost all of their valuable time to play the game. No wonder they become addicted and dedicate their time to solely play the games. Parents and educators need to help this type of gamers, especially those whose status as university students. The more they play, they prefer to play than to go to campus. Those students will eventually drop out from campus if not handled carefully. 2) 24.14% of the participants spend 7-9 hours playing video games. This type of gamers can also be categorized as addicted that need help, so that they are able to use their time to study or other valuable activities. 3) 18.62% spend 3-4 hours every day to play video games; 4) 18.62% spend 1-2 hours every day to play video games. Spending time 1-2 hours or 3-4 hours a day might be the best spending time to play the games.

The eighth question asked if students agree that video games can give positive impact. The result shows 91% of the participants approved the positive side of video games. Only 8.1% stated the contrary. This is the ambivalence of video games: in one side they impart negative effect, on the other side they provide the positive.

The ninth question refers to their opinion of how the games give positive impact. The answers vary since the participants are able to choose the provided options and add more: 1) 83.1% of the participants improve their English skills, 2) 81.8% said that they have fun, 3) 62.8% students have good strategy, 4) 53.4% of the participants feel relax, 5) 48% of the students have fast decision making, 6) 14.9% of the participants have a lot of money from video games. The highest percentage of the participants' response is that English video game improve their English. Since English is not our native language, it is recommended to benefit video games to get better English.

The tenth questions ask students to mention one best game that can improve their English. The participants mention a number of video game with total 74 different names. The names frequently cited are: 1) the Sims (16 participants), 2) PUBG (9 participants), 3) Counter Strike Global Offensive (8 participants), 4) Grand Theft Auto (4 participants), 5) Mobile Legend (4 participants), 6) Assassin's Creed (4 participants).

The result from question four and ten about video game names that influence negative and positive impact, some participants wrote the same names of the highest percentage: PUBG, Mobile Legends, Grand Theft Auto, Counter Strike Global Offensive. The participants also mention the same game for negative and positive impact which indicate that whatever the games, they can provide good and bad to the gamers. It depends on the gamers whether or take the good or the bad side of the electronic game.

The eleventh question refers to the English skill that students gain from playing video games. The result shows: 1) 32.1% of the participants improve their vocabulary, 2) 24.1% of the participants improve their listening skill, 3) 22.6% of the participants improve their reading skill, 4) 12.4% of the participants improve their speaking skill, 5) 4.4% of the participants improve their writing skill, 6) 4.4% of the participants improve their grammar.

The twelfth questions concern whether electronic games contribute more to the good or bad effect. The result presents 66.2% of the respondents obtain good impact, and only 33.8% of the respondents obtain bad impact.

The questions provided in the google forms are as follows:

**Table I. Questionnaire Questions**

Item	Questions	Type
1.	Do you play video games?	Yes/No question
2.	Do you agree that video games give negative impacts for you?	Yes/No question
3.	How do you think video games give negative impacts for you?	Multiple Choice
4.	What other negative impact that you have if you play the above games (no. 2)?	Open Question
5.	Mention one video game that gives negative impact for you.	Open Question
6.	To whom do you think the video above (no. 5) will give negative impact?	Open Question
7.	How many hours do think gamers spend their time to play video games?	Open Question
8.	Do you agree that video games give positive impacts for you?	Yes/No question
9.	How do you think video games give positive impacts for you?	Multiple Choice
10.	Mention one video game that best improves your English	Open Question
11.	What English skill will be improved after playing the video games (no. 11)?	Multiple Choice
12.	For you yourself, do video games give more good impact or bad impact?	Yes/No question

### *A. The ambivalence of playing video games to students' character*

This part analytically focuses on the character of the participants who get involved in this questionnaires. Character is the aggregate of features and traits that form the individual nature of some person or thing ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)). The ambivalence of playing video games to students' character means to describe the good and bad side of playing games that intervene their character. The discussion will emphasize what negative and positive character that the participants gain from playing video games. Discussion of negative character will be explained from the questionnaires number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and the positive character will be explained from the questionnaires number 8, 9, 12.

#### *1. The negative impact of electronic games to students' character*

That video games give negative impact was approved by 93% of the participants. Nevertheless, teenagers and young adults never stop playing games just because they like or they cannot stop it. The negative impacts relating to character mentioned by the participants are first, no socializing with other people and second, bad tempered. The term socializing refers to having contact with others and exchanging every day conversation either directly face to face or through network link (Enli and Thumim, 2012). No socializing means the opposite meaning, do not want to have contact with other people, specifically communicating face to face with others. However, a person who do not want to socialize in reality probably like to socialize through internet or social media using their gadget or other electronic devise. From the questionnaire number four, 30% of the participants stated that they do not socialize with others. There is a unique term "mager" from *malas gerak* (lazy to move) that are pointed to teenagers who prefer to play their gadget (not move) rather than play outside of home physically (move). For them, it is preferable to have friends and communicate with them through their smart phone than to have fun together hang out with friends. The worse is that it is difficult for them to have more friends and it is not easy to have new friends. If this happen for longer time, it will be a problem for the person since no body will take care of him or her.

The second negative effect of playing video games relating to character is bad-tempered, which can be associated with getting angry easily and emotionally. Bad-tempered in this case might be triggered by playing violent games. The gamers who lose the game might get angry easily since he categorized himself as a loser. He could have no confident and always want to play the games repeatedly without having tired or hungry because he wants his mind to be fulfilled with the desire to win every episode or level.

#### *2. The positive impact of electronic games to students' character*

Beside the negative impact, playing games have positive impact as well. The positive effect associating to character stated by the participants are first, fast decision making, second, having fun or enjoying life, and third, socializing with others. Fast decision making refers to the ability to

decide and take action immediately so that the gamers will escape from danger or difficulty. When playing the game dealing with adventure, RPG, or third person shooter, the gamers require to think and make a decision as fast as possible unless they will be the loser. This will impact the character of the gamers to be able to decide immediately even though they work under pressure. This type of person is required to fulfill certain dangerous job.

The second positive effect is having fun. Gamers like to play the video games due to the enjoyment offered while playing the electronic games. The feeling of having no burden will develop the gamers to be stable. It is beneficial for gamers to play video games after having been tired doing their work, study or other activities.

The third positive effect is socializing with others. In this context it means socializing with other gamers who have the same interest: playing the specific games. When playing the online video games, teenagers like to play the games together with friends and have fun together. It means that the video games make them friends and they prefer to play the games together rather than the solo player.

### *B. The ambivalence of playing video games to English performance*

The discussion of the ambivalence of playing video games to English performance will be elaborated between the positive and negative sides. The explanation of the negative aspect is based on the questionnaires number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and the positive aspect is based on the questionnaires number 8, 9, 10, 11.

#### *1. The negative impact of electronic games relating to English performance*

For students whose native language is not English, playing video games using English as the language of interaction will be beneficial since English is manipulating in the game that enhance students gradually to use English automatically. Nonetheless, not all words produced in the electronic games can be used in proper conversation. Some words, which can be categorized as harsh words, are words that are improper to be used in daily dialogues. The negative impact relating to English performance is the harsh words and vulgar words continuously heard, which gradually will be retained in their mind. Gamers who like to play the games with improper terms or containing porn words will produce bad words because of the exposure to the shocking words for a long time. The bad words will not improve his or her English since those words will not be spoken in colloquial language. Therefore, gamers should be extremely careful not to play the games having harsh or vulgar words inside.

#### *2. The positive impact of electronic games relating to English performance*

From the ninth questionnaire, 83.1% of the participants improve their English skills through electronic games. From the eleventh questionnaire, the skills required by the participants include vocabulary 32.1%, listening 24.1%,

reading 22.6%, and speaking 12.4%. It is obvious that English as a means of communication in electronic games will facilitate the gamers to use English in the real world. Once they do not understand the words, they are forced to open the dictionary so that they understand the words to be able to move to the next level or to fulfill one mission. This will improve gamers' vocabulary in fun and easy way that eventually they are able to understand English better than before. This will increase their vocabulary not only understand a lot of words, but also capable to use them in sentences when writing or use them in their utterance when speaking.

The students' listening will improve while the games provide instruction uttering directly which oblige the gamers understand the instruction. If they do not get the meaning, they can recognize the instruction by repeating the games so that they will comprehend the instruction and their listening skills will have fast progress. The exposure to English virtual world in adventure genre, furthermore, will facilitate the gamers to unconsciously grasp English which progressively enable them to understand English listening. Likewise, at the same time they are capable to communicate using English in the virtual world when they need to give feedback.

Reading skill undoubtedly will be gained since most English games always have to explain a lot of things, starting from the introduction, instruction in every part or level, explanation of the characters who are involved in every stage, the weapons, the treasures, the areas, the battle, the attributes, and the awards. All of those things are written in English. Gamers should understand the reading text in the game to start the games, to win the battle, to respond to the instruction, and to know how to win the game. For beginners, they need to open the dictionary to understand the words, phrase, clauses, and sentences in every part, so they can move to the next level. By playing the games repeatedly, gamers will be skilled either to understand the instruction, or to use certain strategy to win the games. Mostly, the adventure games are always challenging that cause gamers willing to play many times.

Gamers' speaking ability can also be improved if they play the game together with other persons whose native language is English. It is possible that gamers play together with friends from virtual world via internet, just know each other because of playing the same game and coincidentally in one team together fight to win the battle. If they are from different country, the language used as lingua franca is English since English is widely used all over the world. However, there will always be the ambivalence, the positive effect to be adopted and the negative influence that should be avoided.

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## AUTHORS PROFILE



**Masda Surti Simatupang** is a professional lecturer in the field of English applied linguistics, English education, and English teaching with technology. She was graduated and obtained her Bachelor degree in *English Education* from Sriwijaya University Palembang in 1991. During her bachelor study, she gained scholarship from the Higher Education Ministry of Indonesia for three years. She obtained her master degree in *English Applied Linguistics* from Atmajaya University in Jakarta in 2000. She was awarded full scholarship from Christian University of Indonesia throughout

the master study for three years. Her Doctoral degree in *Language Education* from Jakarta State University was in 2016. She was also awarded scholarship from the Higher Education Ministry of Indonesia for four years during her doctoral study. Furthermore, she was granted Overseas Sandwich-like scholarship from the Higher Education Ministry of Indonesia to go to Illinois University of the United States for four months from September to December 2011 to do research, to do school visiting, to broaden her insight, and to have abroad educational experience. Her publications, among others, include *Assessing speaking by f2f or using a developed application: Area there any differences?* (2018); *Video Games and the Improvement of English Learning: University Students Perspective* (2017); *Instructional Model of English Speed Reading (Research and Development at Christian University of Indonesia)* (2016). Those publications are based on research works which more or less similar titles. She is a member of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Asia and Indonesia Linguistics Community.



**Ramot Peter** was graduated his bachelor degree in year 1991 from English Teaching Faculty of Sriwijaya University in Palembang of Indonesia and his master degree in year 2009 from Bethel Theology Seminary in Jakarta of Indonesia. Currently he is pursuing his doctoral degree at Ekumene Theology Seminary in Jakarta of Indonesia. He has been teaching the Character Education (*Religiosity, Citizenship, Pancasila as*

*Indonesian Ideology*) at Bina Nusantara University in Jakarta of Indonesia since year 2011. During his teaching career, he actively did the yearly research in relation with Character Education by getting grants award from Bina Nusantara University in Jakarta of Indonesia. His international publications, among others, include: *The Effectiveness of Full Day School System for Students' Character Building* (IOP Conference Series, 2018); *Multicultural Education as A Must in Indonesia (A Hermeneutic Analysis to Bina Nusantara University Student's Perceptions Toward ASEAN Community)* (Advanced Science Letters, 2017). Those publications are based on research works granted by Bina Nusantara University in Jakarta of Indonesia. In every semester, he dedicates himself for experiencing the community services as social and spiritual speaker to orphanage boards and schools in relation with Character Education. Since year 2011 he has joined as member of Universal Peace Federation (UPF) of NGO-UN in Jakarta of Indonesia with major concerning to Interfaith Harmony by executing the seminar in all cities of Indonesia.