

A Systematic Literature Review on Visual Novel as an Engaging Medium for Learning English Skills

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ABSTRACT

Visual novels represent an innovative approach to language learning, particularly in enhancing reading comprehension and expanding vocabulary in English. This qualitative research investigates the impact of visual novels on various language competencies, including reading comprehension, vocabulary expansion, and motivation for language learning. The research approach used in this study is qualitative and systematic literature review (SLR) method to identify and evaluate relevant studies on visual novels as an engaging media for learning English skills. The five previous studies that discuss similar topics were collected as a data collection tool. The data collected from previous studies used are in the range of 2015-2023. The study's findings indicate that visual novels serve as a promising and helpful tool for individuals seeking to improve their language skills. The findings highlight the numerous advantages of visual novels, such as increased motivation, better reading comprehension, and improved vocabulary acquisition. The study highlights the potential of visual novels as valuable tools in language education, emphasizing their ability to make language learning enjoyable, engaging, and applicable to real-life contexts. Through their narrative-driven gameplay and immersive multimedia elements, visual novels offer learners an interactive and captivating learning experience. The integration of cultural aspects within visual novels further enriches the language-learning process, fostering deeper engagement and meaningful connections with the language. Additionally, the structure of visual novels accommodates diverse learning styles and proficiency levels, promoting motivation among learners. Furthermore, the interactive aspect of visual novels offers learners an exciting environment for language acquisition that is both engaging and enjoyable.

Key words: English Skills; Reading; Visual Novels

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English is crucial in today's globalized world, and there is a growing need for innovative and engaging methods to improve language skills. Language learning has traditionally relied on textbooks, classroom instruction, and audio resources. These resources are often static and lack interactive elements that can engage learners effectively. Without visual aids or multimedia components, it may struggle to hold learners' attention and fail to make the learning process enjoyable. In the dynamic landscape of language education, the integration of technology has led to new and innovative mediums such as gamification to enhance the learning experience. Gamification in learning involves applying gaming strategies to improve engagement and motivation in educational contexts. Gamification in education is a way to increase participation by introducing game aspects into an educational environment (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Gamification is the use of game elements and mechanisms in learning which aims to increase student motivation, participation and achievement (Smiderle et al., 2020). This game has high visualization capabilities, so it can demonstrate complex concepts (Pratama et al., 2018). The advantage of using games in education is the ability to increase learner engagement, which is a key aspect of effective learning. The narrative in video games is an important feature that enriches the player experience by enabling the player to develop an emotional bond with the game (Hemenover & Bowman, 2018). A video game genre that has significant potential is the use of visual novels as a compelling tool for improving reading comprehension skills. The capacity to tell a story in video games either directly from the text or through perception is what keeps players interested. Increased motivation from video games is beneficial for learning languages.

A visual novel is a unique form of interactive storytelling that combines text with images and audio, the multimodal nature makes them an engaging medium for learning English skills (Chan, 2021), particularly reading comprehension. Visual novels are a genre of narrative-rich video games characterized by limited interactivity and an emphasis on conveying a character-focused narrative through the extensive use of text (Bruno, 2017). Visual novels are known for their narrative-focused gameplay, where players click the screen to move through the game, and occasionally make choices that determine the story's outcome. Players can choose their own characters to play. They often have multiple storylines and endings. Many visual novels are centered on drama; particularly themes involving romance or family, but visual novels centered on science fiction, fantasy fiction, and horror fiction are not uncommon.

The researcher's enthusiasm as a player of visual novels has become a significant factor to consider when examining the potential of visual novels. Visual novels present language within a rich narrative context, making it easier for learners to comprehend and remember vocabulary, grammar structures, and idiomatic expressions. This type of game has been compared to book an adventure in which the reader makes choices to move the page of the book. Traditional language

learning resources often lack interactive elements, making it challenging to capture learners' attention and sustain their interest. The narrative-focused gameplay of visual novels, characterized by choices that influence the story's outcome, is consistent with theories emphasizing the importance of narrative engagement in video games (Hemenover & Bowman, 2018).

Research on visual novels as engaging media for enhancing language proficiency can also contribute to the study of visual literacy. As stated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (Matzke, n.d.) definition: "Visual literacy is a set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media. Visual literacy skills equip a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials. A visually literate individual is both a critical consumer of visual media and a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture." By examining how individuals interpret visual elements in visual novels, the research could provide insights into the cognitive processes involved in visual comprehension, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on visual literacy.

The introduction provides an overview of how visual novels can enhance language learning focusing on improving reading comprehension skills in English. However, several research gaps were identified, including a lack of empirical evidence, limited comparative studies with other language learning methods, insufficient investigation of long-term effects and sustainability, little discussion of learner preferences and proficiency levels, and the need for cultural and contextual adaptation. Addressing these gaps in future research can help advance the understanding of visual novels' potential in language learning and contribute to the development of more effective strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Related Study

Visual novel is a fiction-based interactive novel game that contains novel stories in the form of static images and is equipped with a conversation display to convey the narrative and speech of each character in the novel. As time progresses, games have also become a means of learning. Visual novel serve educational purposes, including language learning, by engaging students in interactive storytelling. Visual novel game development conducted by (Ramadyanta et al., 2021) show the results of visual novels immerse players in captivating narratives accompanied by music and audio, making English pronunciation practice enjoyable. Using the Finite State Machine method, visual novels feature multiple story endings, encouraging players to explore diverse narratives and enhancing their interest in reading. Visual novels can enhance learning enjoyment, behavior, effort, persistence, and cognitive learning (Himes, 2022). The identification of key dimensions, including teaching through choice, scripted sequences, mini-games, exploration, and non-interactive

teaching, in educational visual novels provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the intricate relationship between educational content delivery and story progression, offering valuable insights with broader implications for the integration of interactive narratives in education (Camingue et al., 2020).

The Visual Novel Game of English Conversation Gambits has a strong favorable influence on students' progress in conversation gambit mastery (Aliv Faizal, 2017). Using A3! Visual Novel not only enhances the vocabulary of non-Japanese learners but also fosters a deeper curiosity about the visual, audio, storytelling, and character aspects of the game, thereby motivating players to learn the Japanese language (Putri et al., 2022). The collective evidence suggests that visual novels serve as versatile and impactful tools in education, offering a dynamic approach that not only engages students but also supports various aspects of the learning process. The implementation of visual novels into educational settings looks to have the possibility to deliver interesting and effective learning experiences, particularly in language learning.

Visual Novel

Originated from Japan, the term visual novel, derived from the Japanese word *bijuaru noberu*, is a type of interactive fiction or video game that combines narrative storytelling with visual elements, often featuring static or animated images, character sprites, and background music (*Visual Novel - Wikipedia*, n.d.). Visual novels are a genre of video games that typically have little gameplay elements and a greater focus on the storyline (Geest, 2015). Visual novels offer a unique blend of storytelling and interactivity, making them a compelling medium for those who enjoy narrative-driven experiences. Visual novels present narratives in a context-rich environment where players make decisions that impact the storyline (Camingue et al., 2020). The plot of a visual novel is conveyed through written text, frequently complemented by character dialogue, descriptions, and internal monologues. Unlike traditional novels, visual novels allow players to make choices at key points in the story, influencing the direction of the narrative and leading to different outcomes.

In visual novels, atmosphere plays a role in both immersions and affecting the play's decisions. The visual composition in visual can convey narrative-related information to players and stimulate their imagination throughout the gameplay novel (Pratama et al., 2018). To further engage readers in the narrative, plenty of visual novels include voice acting, sound effects, and background music. Characters are one of the most important visual elements due to their responsibility to convey the emotional tone of the character-focused narrative over the course of gameplay (Kar, 2023). A character's design can affect visual performance just as their personality can affect the plot, which is why having a cast of characters that contrast and complement each other is as important visually as it is story-wise (Peo, 2019). Character arc is a technique used in visual novels to improve the plot by letting readers interact with and has an impact on the development and relationships of the

characters. Character arc is the transformation or inner journey of a character throughout a story (*Character Arc - Wikipedia*, n.d.). The player can feel more invested in the characters' growth thanks to this interactive storytelling technique, as well as the ever-changing, static scenes and mood-appropriate character graphics.

METHOD

Design and Samples

The research approach used in this study is the qualitative and systematic literature review (SLR) method to identify and evaluate relevant studies on visual novels as an engaging media for learning English skills.

Instrument and Procedure

This study used five previous studies as a data collection tool that discusses similar topics starting from 2015 to 2023 with the keywords Visual Novel, English Language Learning, and Reading Comprehension. The data has been collected using search engines such as Academia, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Scopus, and Semantic Scholar. The data of five previous studies are used to collect previous findings with a narrow research question which is the use of visual novels as an engaging media on various language competencies, including reading comprehension, vocabulary expansion, and motivation for language learning.

Data Analysis

Table 1. The Selected Articles as the Data of this Research

Study	Objective	Data set	Methods	Relevant Finding
Mutia, T.B., (2020) The Use of Visual Novel Video Games and Students' Vocabulary Learning DOI: https://doi.org/10.37742/jela.v2i1.24	Analyzes the encouraging of instantaneous vocabulary retention and the complexity of vocabulary from what participant get and learn through playing visual novel.	Test	Qualitative Research	Video games is engaging the ability to create a story for the player to follow is enhanced motivation in language learning and vocabulary learning.
Páez, J. (2020). Graphic visual novels impact on	To value 6th Grade students'	Test and interview	Qualitative Research	Visual/Graphic video

students' reading comprehension skills. (Trabajo de grado). Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Bogotá – Colombia	perceptions at John Dewey School when using Graphic/Visual novel videogames to enhance their EFL reading comprehension skills during first semester 2019			games present in terms of language, a whole involvement experience for players.
Prasetyo, R. A., & Kuswardani, R. (2021). Developing students' reading ability using visual novel for high school students. <i>Journal of Research on English and Language Learning (J-REaLL)</i> , 2(2), 132–139. https://doi.org/10.33474/j-reall.v2i2.11336	To aid the students in learning English using visual novel	Test	Design and Development	Visual novel can be use as a teaching aid for students to learn English because visual novel can offer the students not only knowledge but also an enjoyment.
Suyana, A. D. (2016). <i>Improving Students' reading Ability by Using Visual Novel Entitled Invisible Me</i> (Doctoral dissertation, STATE ISLAMIC INSTITUTE).	To reveal the implementation of visual novel to improve the students' reading ability and to recognize the improvement of students' reading ability using visual novel at VIIIA of SMPN 1 Wonoboyo.	Teaching Reading and Test	Classroom Action Research	Visual novel is a media that could make students more interest with the material in teaching reading.
Wangi, W. I., (2015) <i>Multimodality in Simulation Games: Vocabulary Learning Through Visual Novel</i> . T1 - English Education	To find out the types of multimodes in simulation game, especially visual novel that can be used in English	Test and Observation	Descriptive Approach	Visual novel is motivate people to learn English vocabulary.

	vocabulary learning.			
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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from various studies suggest that visual novels can serve as effective supplementary tools in English language classes, offering a multisensory and interactive learning experience. Through their ability to create fun and interesting learning experiences, stimulate comprehension, and give learners a meaningful way to acquire vocabulary, visual novels can enhance reading comprehension, motivation, and vocabulary acquisition. Visual novels can improve language proficiency, assist learners to retain language, and encourage intrinsic motivation for language learning when included in education. The research findings collectively support the idea that visual novels can be valuable tools for English language learning, offering a dynamic and immersive approach that enhances various language skills and fosters deeper motivation for language learning.

Visual Novel for Language Learning Motivation

The findings from the study by (Prasetyo & Kuswardani, 2021) align with motivational theories in language learning, particularly emphasizing the role of motivation in fostering a positive and effective learning experience. Furthermore, the exposure to cultural aspects within visual novels resonates with integrative motivation, as learners connect with the language through understanding its social context, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references. In the theory of motivation in language learning emphasizes the importance of integrative motivation, which involves a genuine interest in the culture associated with the language (Kholid et al., 2017). The findings support the idea that incorporating cultural elements through visual novels enhances the overall language-learning experience, making it more meaningful and memorable. The study aligns with the broader perspective that enjoyable and engaging learning experiences contribute to increased effort, persistence, and cognitive learning, as suggested by (Himes, 2022). The findings suggest that the interactive and culturally rich environment provided by visual novels caters to intrinsic motivations, ensuring that learners are driven by personal interest and the desire to achieve language learning goals.

Visual Novel for Enhancing Reading

The findings from the study by (Suyana, 2016) align with theories that emphasize the multifaceted nature and importance of reading as a fundamental skill. The implementation of the visual novel "Invisible Me" demonstrates the innovative use of media to enhance students' reading abilities. The use of visual novels in this study is seen as an innovative way to engage students in the reading process, fostering interest in the material and stimulating comprehension. Furthermore, the improvement in students' reading abilities observed in the study corresponds with

theories that underline the multifaceted components of reading comprehension. Reading comprehension involves various aspects such as fluency, vocabulary, and interpretative strategies (Lee & Chang, 2017). Another opinion from Nurteteng & Purnama (2023) stated that reading comprehension is the process of reader in constructing or understanding what has been read. The findings from Suyana's study suggest that the visual novel intervention positively impacted students' abilities to identify the main idea, and specific information, understand word meanings, and increase their vocabulary. This supports the notion that reading comprehension is a complex skill that can be enhanced through innovative instructional methods.

Additionally, according to (Páez, 2020), the study reinforces the idea that incorporating visual novels into reading instruction not only improves skills but also enhances students' enjoyment of the learning process, aligning with theories emphasizing the role of positive learning environments in promoting literacy development. Overall, the study's findings resonate with theories highlighting the multifaceted nature of reading and the importance of engaging and innovative instructional methods to enhance reading skills.

Visual Novel for Enhancing Vocabulary

The findings from (Mutia, 2020) and (Wangi, 2015) on vocabulary learning through visual novels align with theories emphasizing the significance of vocabulary in language development and the potential of multimodal environments to enhance language skills. Without mastering adequate vocabulary, a person will not only have difficulty communicating or even be unable to communicate at all. Apart from that, without understanding vocabulary and grammar, students will facing problems in accessing information and operating electronic devices (Amalia, 2018). The positive reactions and motivations observed in participants using visual novel video games for vocabulary learning suggest that alternative and engaging methods, such as video games, can be successful in attracting individuals who may not be particularly interested in traditional learning approaches like reading books. (Chan, 2021) states that the theory of visual novels as a unique form of interactive storytelling highlights their multimodal nature, combining text, images, and audio to create an engaging medium for learning English skills, especially reading comprehension.

The study by (Wangi, 2015) further supports the idea that multimodal environments, in this case, visual novels, can provide a purposeful avenue for vocabulary acquisition through accidental learning. The incorporation of visual, aural, and written elements in the visual novel "RE: Alistair++" showcases the potential of multiple sensory modes to aid participants in understanding the meanings of unknown words. While the meanings may not always be direct, the study suggests that individuals can grasp close meanings or even correct meanings, emphasizing the effectiveness of accidental learning through video games. Theories on vocabulary by (Syamsul, 2015) underscore the continuous and dynamic nature

of vocabulary expansion, acknowledging the role of various factors, including exposure to diverse media, in the learning process. The findings support the idea that visual novels and other multimedia, by providing multimodal learning experiences, offer a valuable option for further research on vocabulary learning in diverse environments. Additionally, the conclusion that visual novels increase players' motivation to learn and enhance their knowledge of vocabulary, as noted by (Putri et al., 2022), corresponds with the theories emphasizing the significance of vocabulary for language learning and the potential of engaging multimedia environments in fostering effective language skills. Overall, the studies align with theories that highlight the importance of vocabulary in language development and the potential of engaging and multimodal approaches to enhance language skills.

The findings regarding visual novels allowing learners to progress at their own pace and catering to individual learning styles align with the theory that visual novels are a unique blend of storytelling and interactivity (Geest, 2015). The structure of visual novels, where choices influence the narrative, caters to diverse language proficiency levels by allowing learners to explore different paths and reinforce language concepts. This resonates with the theory that visual novels present narratives in a context-rich environment, integrating visual components to augment the storytelling experience (Camingue et al., 2020). The engagement with visual novels offers learners an immersive and personalized learning experience, accommodating their preferences and promoting autonomy in language learning, as suggested by theories on autonomy-supportive learning environments (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Furthermore, the desire to uncover the plot, explore different storylines, and connect with characters provides learners with a meaningful context for language acquisition. Visual novels, with their emphasis on characters, voice acting, sound effects, and background music, create an emotionally rich environment that enhances the retention and application of language skills, aligning with (Peo, 2019). The educational benefits of visual novels in language learning, as mentioned by (Himes, 2022) support the idea that interactive storytelling can significantly impact learning enjoyment, behavior, effort, and cognitive learning. Overall, the findings and theories underscore the effectiveness of visual novels in language education, emphasizing their potential to cater to diverse learning styles, promote autonomy, and foster intrinsic motivation for language learners.

CONCLUSION

Visual novels are books and games mixed that offer an engaging and interactive learning experience. Particularly for those individuals seeking to enhance their aptitude for reading comprehension and expanding their vocabulary, visual novels hold the potential to be a highly advantageous tool. By their inclusion of captivating narratives and visually stimulating elements, visual novels have the capacity to render the process of acquiring English language skills more enjoyable and immersive. Moreover, visual novels contribute to the improvement of reading

comprehension by demanding that the reader peruse and comprehend the text to advance through the storyline.

The interpretation of visual novels additionally supports the acquisition of unfamiliar terminology and idiomatic phrases in English, as learners are exposed to a wide variety of linguistic components within the text. In addition, visual novels frequently offer valuable insights into the cultural aspects associated with the language they employ, thereby fostering a more profound comprehension of both languages. By immersing learners in context-rich stories with interactive elements, visual novels contribute significantly to meaningful language acquisition, making the process enjoyable, engaging, and applicable to real-life scenarios. The study's findings indicate that visual novels serve as a promising and helpful tool for individuals seeking to improve their language skills. The result highlights the value of visual novels as an interesting medium for language enhancement. Furthermore, the interactive aspect of visual novels offers learners an exciting environment for language acquisition that is both engaging and enjoyable.

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