

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Video games are becoming more than just a form of entertainment or a method to pass the time. These are immersive experiences that have an impact on users' thoughts, actions, and even learning. Otome games have become more and more popular across the different genres, particularly among younger audiences who are drawn to romantic simulations with strong visual and narrative aspects and long-plot stories. The game "Love and Deepspace" has been notable not only for its breathtaking graphics and poignant narrative, but also for the languages it employs, primarily English, with rich dialogue, voice acting, and text-based interactivity.

Otome games such as "Love and Deepspace" have been proven to enhance learners' motivation and vocabulary acquisition through interactive narratives and text-audio elements. A study further indicates that high engagement with narrative-based video games correlates positively with vocabulary mastery, emphasizing the game's relevance in developing listening and reading skills (Erya & Taloko, 2024).

Although "Love and Deepspace" is primarily designed as a fan-service game for pleasure, users must be proficient in English in order to interact with the game. This is because there aren't many languages available in the game. English becomes the default and frequently the only language available for gameplay for many foreign players who do not speak these

languages. In order to enjoy the game and make wise decisions throughout the plot, the player must rely on their ability to read and absorb English texts, comprehend spoken dialogue, and follow narrative clues.

Players may enhance their vocabulary, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and even grammatical understanding through frequent exposure to in-game texts, voiceovers, and interactive dialogue options. For example, following in-game texts, character monologues, and storyline choices can improve listening skills; vocabulary acquisition can happen organically as players are exposed to new words and phrases throughout the game; and voice-over conversations can improve reading abilities.

In order to advance through the story, players must read and comprehend substantial amounts of text because these games usually rely on lengthy written dialogue and narrative descriptions. Players are encouraged to meticulously follow the story, deduce character motivations, and comprehend intricate emotional exchanges as they make decisions that impact the plot. Because players must retain information from previous scenes and use contextual cues to make meaningful judgments, this active participation encourages deep reading. Furthermore, otome games frequently employ rich, expressive language with a range of tones and registers, which can enhance emotional literacy, sentence structure recognition, and vocabulary learning.

“Love and Deepspace” is a mobile otome game developed by

InFold Games and officially released on January 18, 2024. Originating from China, the game belongs to the otome genre that focus on romance and character-driven storytelling, typically targeting a female audience, the game is rated 12+ on the Google Play Store, indicating that its content is designed to be accessible and appropriate for adolescent and older player. However, certain content may be less suitable for younger audiences. This game combines interactive narrative elements, immersive world-building, and high-quality graphics with voice-acted dialogue, allowing players to form emotional connections with multiple male characters throughout the storyline.

Players take on the role of the female protagonist and navigate various narrative branches by making choices that influence character relationships and plot development. The game supports five language options; *Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Japanese and English*. Yet it is widely accessed by global players all-around the world, making the English version the most commonly used for international users.

In today's interconnected world, the English language plays a crucial role as the mainly medium of international communication. It is widely recognized as a global lingua franca, used extensively across various domains such as education, science, technology, business, and digital media. English proficiency is increasingly viewed as a valuable skill, not only for academic advancement but also for career

development and global engagement. As a result, the demand for accessible and engaging ways to learn and improve English continues to grow, especially among young learners who seek informal yet effective learning environments.

Recent research has highlighted the potential of game-based learning as a way to improve reading skills. Games have been shown to increase student engagement, motivation, and engagement, while promoting deeper learning and understanding of complex concepts (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017).

Examining the primary classifications, benefits, and drawbacks of game-based learning strategies in the classroom as well as how they are used in games are the goals of this study. This study uses an example-driven research approach to highlight important trends by examining a chosen number of exemplary GBL cases, in contrast to other review studies that gather all of the field's literature.

English language learning commonly involves four main skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In digital game-based environments, these skills are often presented through various forms of textual input, audio interaction, and player engagement. In “Love and Deepspace”, players are exposed to narrative texts, voiced-acted dialogues, and interactive features that relate to these English skills to varying degrees. However, the game does not equally facilitate the development of all four skills. Instead, it provides opportunities for learning specific linguistic

components within each skill area rather than supporting full skill mastery.

This research does not only seek to highlight the educational value hidden within digital entertainment but also supports the broader goal of making language learning more accessible, enjoyable, and relevant in today's contexts. As the world continues to embrace technology in all areas of life, including education, exploring unconventional tools such as otome games becomes increasingly valuable. This effort aligns with the Islamic perspective on the pursuit of knowledge, as emphasized in the Qur'an Surah Al-Mujadilah, verse 11:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ١١

This verse reflects the high regard Islam places on the pursuit of knowledge, regardless of the medium through which it is acquired. In the context of this research, "Love and Deepspace" serves as an innovative and engaging tool for enhancing English skills. Through features such as reading narrative texts and listening to spoken dialogue, the game provides players with opportunities to improve their vocabulary, grammar, and overall language comprehension. Thus, utilizing such a platform for learning aligns with Islamic values that encourage the continuous development of knowledge and personal growth.

Even though narrative-based games like "Love and Deepspace" are very popular, many players are still ignorant of the language learning opportunities they offer. Although the primary purpose of these games is

pleasure, players must interact with rich written information and spoken dialogue. However, because players might not be aware that they are honing their English language abilities while playing, the educational value of these games is often disregarded. This inadvertent learning process emphasizes the need of investigating how gaming elements might function as useful resources for non-formal language learning, especially for students who favor immersive and interactive environments over conventional classroom settings.

English learnings materials are commonly categorized based on proficiency levels, ranging from basic to advanced. In this study, the English content presented in “Love and Deepspace” is primarily contextual and narrative-based, requiring players to have at least a basic to lower-intermediate level of English proficiency to understand the gameplay. Therefore, the game is considered more suitable for learners at the A2-B1 level based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*.

This study has several limitations, particularly in productive skills. The research primarily focuses on smaller linguistic components rather than providing a comprehensive assessment of overall language proficiency.

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. Otome Games

Otome games are Japanese visual novel style games targeted mainly at women, where the player takes on the role of the female

protagonist who develop romantic relationships with male characters through branching narrative choices (Lopez, 2019). It is also a sub-genre of story-based video games that focuses on romantic narratives targeted mainly toward a female audience.

2. Love and Deepspace

“Love and Deepspace” is a 3D Dating Simulator that allows you to step into an interactive sci-fi world, 12+ rated otome game that combines romance, science fiction, and action elements. The game focuses on story-driven gameplay, character development and interactive communication between the player and the *Love Interests* through narrative text, voice-acted dialogue, and in-game features.

3. English Language Skills

English language skills refer to the core competencies in the English language, including listening, reading, speaking and writing. Each skills have their own components. These are the focus of analysis in relation to the game's features.

4. Language Exposure

Language exposure refers to the amount and quality of contact a learner has with a target language. In this study, exposure occurs through reading texts in main story, listening to conversations or voice-acted dialogues, imitate the dialogue of the main protagonist, and choose the reply options in the game “Love and Deepspace.”

5. Game-Based Learning (GBL)

Game-Based Learning (GBL) refers to a learning approach that incorporates game elements, mechanics, or full game environments to support educational outcomes. It uses games as a medium to engage learners, increase motivation, and provide contextualized practice of skills and knowledge.

6. English Proficiency Level

The English language used in “Love and Deepspace” is categorized at the basic to lower-intermediate level based on *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. The game mainly employs everyday vocabulary and simple grammatical structures supported by visual and contextual elements.

C. Research Question

The main thing that will be discussed in this study is:

How are selected game features in “Love and Deepspace” used as media learning of English language components?

D. Objectives of Study

This study's goal is to examine the potential of selected game features to be used as learning media for several components of English skills. This study focuses on identifying specific linguistic components that can be facilitated through these features rather than evaluating overall English proficiency. By analyzing selected features in “Love ad Deepspace”, this

research aims to explore how game-based interactions may support the learning of English at the component level.

E. Significance of Study

1. Theoretical Significance

By showing that in-game elements like voice interactions, interactive choices, and story-based content can support both receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) English skills, this study advances the theoretical understanding of game-based language learning. By offering evidence from a contemporary interactive game “Love and Deepspace”, which combines technological characteristics, visual appeal, and narrative immersion, the findings enhance the body of previous literature.

2. Fostering emotional connection

By using features in the game, the research aims to create an emotional connection between players and *Love Interests*, making reading or listening more enjoyable and increasing student motivation. This can lead to a more significant impact on improving many English skills, as students are more likely to be invested in the myth story, any features such as voice call or video call, chat, etc. This also encourages players to invest more deeply in the game through supporting elements embedded within its features, which may require a significant amount of time and gradually strengthen the connection between players and the in-game characters.

3. Applying gamification principles

By incorporating elements of gamification, such as interactive storytelling and character development, the proposal can demonstrate the effectiveness of these principles in enhancing English skills. This can have implications for educational settings, where gamification can be used to increase student engagement and motivation.

4. Implications for literacy education

The research's finding can inform literacy education by highlighting the potential of otome games as a tool to improve English skills. This can have implications for developing innovative approaches to literacy education, particularly in areas where traditional methods may not be effective. The study suggests potential implications for literacy studies by illustrating how digital games may extend the concept of literacy beyond conventional texts into interactive and multimodal environments.