
MEDIA & ICT CONSUMPTION TRENDS

“LIMITED LANGUAGE LEARNING FROM EDUCATIONAL GAMES”

Educational video games are on the rise in education. It's been said that digital game-based learning can motivate students and transfer knowledge by providing extra support during classes. But do these educational video games succeed in reaching those objectives? Or have these learning effects been gravely exaggerated?

Do Video Games Help to Learn a Language?

In collaboration with master student Dries Meesschaert, we investigated if educational games are more effective than traditional learning methods in learning English vocabulary in elementary school. We also examined if a debriefing - a reflection on the learning experience together with the teacher - had any impact on learning effects.

The study compared three groups:

- one group played the first two missions of an educational video game and then received a debriefing;
- one group played the first two missions during the course of an entire class; and
- one group learned the vocabulary in a classroom lesson with a teacher.

The vocabulary was identical for all three groups and each received an equally long instruction period of 40 minutes. Before and after the lesson, the students took an English language test. Three weeks later, they took another.

Games Increase Interest, Classes Increase Knowledge

In the short term, results show that the game scores just as high as the class. In the longer term, however, students who received the classroom lesson scored significantly higher. The vocabulary was thus remembered for longer when a teacher had taught it. The students did feel the learning experience of games was more enjoyable than the traditional lesson. The debriefing session did not result in added learning effects compared to merely playing the game.

Games to Support Classroom Lessons

Does this mean games are completely useless within school walls? Not at all! Students find games much more enjoyable, they can be used as a teaser to arouse curiosity and achieve an initial learning effect. The teacher can then play into this in a more traditional way, to achieve longer-term learning effects. This approach offers opportunities for children who are less motivated to go to school. Games can also help boost the self-esteem of low-achieving children in traditional classes and possibly help them reach the same entry level as high-achieving students at the start of a classroom lesson

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Digital games in the classroom make the learning experience more enjoyable

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Digital games help in boosting the self-esteem of low-achieving children

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Media & ICT Consumption Trends is a partnership between iMinds Research Center Media & ICT (iMinds-MICT) and digital research institute iMinds. The project seeks to provide an overview of academic research in Flemish media and internet consumption, and links insights into transforming audiences to the current challenges for the Flemish media industries. It therefore combines results from original user-driven innovation research with conclusions from international studies and technology trends reports.

Series Editors: Tom Evens, Bart Vanhaelewyn and Lieven De Marez

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