

RPG as a Tool for English Learning: Students' Perception of "Genshin Impact"

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role-playing game, Genshin Impact, as a tool for English language learning. Students' perceptions of enjoyment, interaction, and gender differences in relation to perceived English acquisition are the focus of the study. Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition is used in the study to explore how gameplay can support language learning by tackling problems such as the limited engagement in traditional English teaching methods, the unstructured nature of incidental learning, and possible gender inequalities in game-based learning outcomes. A correlational research design was conducted on 86 students from selected private and public universities who actively played Genshin Impact. A 25-item Likert-scale questionnaire was distributed in the data collection stage and Pearson Correlation and Independent Samples T-Test in SPSS were used to analyse the data. Findings revealed significant positive relationships between enjoyment, interaction, and perceived English acquisition, while gender differences were not statistically significant. Based on these results, it can be said that Genshin Impact offers an engaging and inclusive environment for language learning, thus integrating structured game-based activities can increase learning motivation and competency in communication. It can be implied that RPGs have the potential to complement formal instruction. Adopting longitudinal and methodological triangulation approaches in exploring sustained learning outcomes and skill-specific impacts should be done in future research.

Keywords: Genshin Impact, gameplay, English acquisition, language learning, enjoyment

INTRODUCTION

English is prominently used as the primary default language in many online games, including Genshin Impact, where players are required to listen and read to understand quests, dialogues, and the game's lore. These elements require players to process written and spoken English in real-time, often while making tactically crucial decisions.

Where such contexts are immersive, they may promote understanding of skills by combining entertainment with purposive language activity (Fakhrudin, Astuti, Rustipa, & Wahyuni, 2021). Moreover, such indirect language learning also contributes to the improvement of the players' grammar and pronunciation (Winaldo & Oktaviani, 2022). The game environment becomes a place where language is learned in the context of use and repeated exposure. As such, gaming can be an informal but conducive environment to learn language.

The Co-Op Mode, a popular social component in Genshin Impact, enables players to join and play with other players from the same server, in completing challenges, discovering the world, and defeating enemies. This feature promotes engagement and teamwork, aspects which could result in meaningful interaction in English among players. Participants make plans, exchange items, and form relationships through voice or text chat. These dialogues frequently reflect conversational patterns, useful for language exercises (Azizah & Warni, 2024). As a result, cooperative play not only helps establish social relationships but also offers a dynamic setting for increasing language competence.

From a user point of view, using English in both individual and cooperative gameplay offers dual benefits for language learning. Individual play strengthens comprehension through narrative and quest engagement, and Co-Op Mode initiates active communication and teamwork. This combination allows players develop receptive and productive English skills in fun and interactive way, creating a balanced environment.

Traditional language instruction methods in English usually employ inflexible, teacher-centred methodologies that emphasise grammar drills or rote memorisation over active participation. Although these approaches provide a certain amount of structure, they can hardly captivate students' interest, resulting in reduced enjoyment and motivation for learning. Studies indicate that low levels of engagement in language classes become detrimental to retention and the development of long-term abilities, particularly where language learners are passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants (Mariappan, 2023). The lack of meaningful engagement may cause students to perceive learning English as a chore rather than an opportunity for growth.

Although students nowadays have ample chances to use English in authentic situations (media, online platforms, games), most of these opportunities are incidental rather than planned. Incidental learning can be powerful, but without structure, it may lead to uneven skill development and missed opportunities for deeper understanding. Learners may acquire vocabulary or expressions without understanding exactly how to use them; they are unable to apply what they have learned in different contexts. This absence of deliberate design in learning experiences can also contribute to limited progression over time.

Furthermore, differences in engagement between male and female students' game-based learning environments can result in unequal learning outcomes. Several studies have reported that males and females tend to differ in motivation, interaction style, as well as in persistence levels in digital game-based learning (Baker et al., 2024; Nadeem et al., 2023). If these disparities are ignored, they can cause uneven access to the benefits of such tools, with language learning contexts with no exception. This becomes a cause for concern regarding inclusivity and fairness, as certain learners may be inadvertently disadvantaged by the design or delivery of game-based learning experiences.

Collectively, the identified challenges serve to highlight a need for bridging structured, engaging, and equitable paths for learning English through digital games. Although it has been found that traditional methods lack engagement, incidental opportunities lack structure, and gender disparities risk inequity, little has been published on exploring how a well-established RPG such as Genshin Impact can simultaneously tackle all three issues. This is the gap that this study aims to fill by discovering how students perceive the game as a tool for English language learning, taking into consideration aspects of engagement, structure, and inclusivity.

The study will answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any correlation between students' perceived enjoyment of Genshin Impact and their perceived overall English acquisition levels?
2. Is there any correlation between students' perceived interaction levels during gameplay and their perceived overall English acquisition levels?
3. Do male and female students show any mean differences in their perceived overall English acquisition levels while playing Genshin Impact?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Second Language Acquisition theory by Stephen Krashen has greatly influenced modern language teaching approaches. The theory has outlined five key hypotheses: the Acquisition–Learning Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Input Hypothesis, and Affective Filter Hypothesis. They posit that language is best acquired through meaningful, comprehensible input in low-stress environments rather than through rote memorisation.

The theory is highly relevant in the context of the study, as players are exposed to rich English input through dialogues, quest narratives, and lore, which aligns with Krashen's view that authentic, engaging contexts foster acquisition. Several previous authors have highlighted the theory's relevance in immersive learning

environments, noting its applicability to digital media and game-based learning (Krashen, 1982; 2022; Bakan et al., 2022). These suggest that online games can serve as informal yet powerful spaces for language development. Therefore, applying Krashen's framework to Genshin Impact provides a lens to understand how enjoyment and interaction can drive English learning in a naturalistic manner.

Finally, integrating this theory into the analysis of Genshin Impact not only grounds the research in the theory's principles but also highlights the game's potential as a structured yet enjoyable learning tool.

The Enjoyment of Online Gameplay

Research on digital game enjoyment highlights that online games are particularly engaging. For instance, Adipat et al. (2021) examined game-based learning environments and their influence on student engagement and enjoyment in higher education. They found that interactive game elements such as challenges, rewards, and narratives significantly increased learners' enjoyment and willingness to participate. In addition, Chen and Liang (2022) surveyed 187 undergraduates and reported that enjoyment mediated the relationship between gamification and study engagement. Overall, these findings suggest that enjoyment was the main reason players engaged in gamification. However, both studies noted that enjoyment can decline if game mechanics become repetitive over time.

In another study by Nadeem et al. (2023), who compared traditional online quizzes with gamified quizzes found that the gamified version significantly enhanced enjoyment, particularly among female students. The inclusion of leader boards and competitive elements boosted engagement for some learners but discouraged others who preferred collaborative play. In a more interesting study, Nguyen et al. (2023) surveyed 333 students and reported that gender-typed traits, rather than binary gender, were more predictive of game preferences. In other words, traits were better predictors of what kinds of games students liked than simply whether they were male or female. These suggest that gender did not make up the main determinant of the enjoyment factor.

Language Acquisition Through Playing Games

Many studies, particularly in the gamification context, have demonstrated that players benefited in terms of language learning and language acquisition. Among them was Pinter et al. (2024), who investigated language learning "in the wild" by observing 60 children aged between 9 and 12 who played online games in English outside formal classroom settings. Using ethnographic observation and interviews, the study found that players acquired vocabulary and functional phrases incidentally through repeated exposure in authentic contexts. In a closely related study that involved 58 university students, Farhan et al. (2024) reported that cooperative gameplay in English improved both vocabulary retention and communicative confidence. They suggest that the game's narrative and cooperative features provide both input and opportunities for output. Similarly, Bakan et al. (2022) researched MMORPGs and found that players often acquired new language structures incidentally while focusing on gameplay objectives. These studies proved that by playing games, players can gain rich, contextualised input that helps enhance second language acquisition principles and at the same time, they align with Krashen's emphasis on meaningful interaction and the role of motivation in sustaining language learning.

Another convincing study is a systematic review of 25 studies on gamification in English language acquisition between 2015 and 2024. The researchers, Kumar and Hashim (2024), found that gamified environments increased motivation and positive attitudes toward English learning, particularly when tasks were designed to mimic real-life communication. They also highlight that the novelty effect of gamification can fade, reducing its long-term impact. Hence, although games like Genshin Impact are deemed as language-powerful tools, the benefits can only be sustained if they are carefully integrated into structured learning plans.

Gender and Games

There are studies on gamification and gender differences, but they are relatively few and often not focused specifically on language acquisition. Kumar and Hashim (2024) state that gamification is widely studied for motivation and engagement, but gender-specific outcomes are underexplored in their systematic review study. Baker et al. (2024) examined gender differences in digital learning games. They found that female students

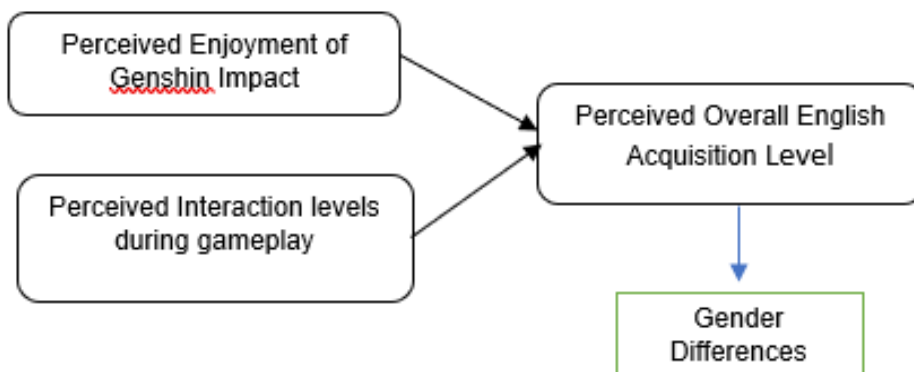
“gamed the system” less often than male students, leading to better learning outcomes in self-explanation tasks. Additionally, Richey et al. (2024) conducted a 2x2 experimental study with 240 students to explore the role of self-explanation prompts in game-based learning. While no significant gender differences were found in post-test scores, the study revealed that design features could influence engagement patterns differently for male and female players. This underscores the importance of inclusive design in educational games to ensure equitable learning opportunities. Addressing these differences is crucial when evaluating Genshin Impact as a language learning tool, as gendered engagement patterns may affect perceived acquisition outcome.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study was grounded in Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition and supported by past research. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between three independent variables: perceived enjoyment of Genshin Impact, perceived interaction levels during gameplay, and gender, and the dependent variable, perceived overall English acquisition level. The framework proposes that perceived enjoyment and perceived interaction are correlated with language acquisition. The demographic factor, gender, may reveal differences in perceived overall language acquisition between male and female players. This framework reflects the integration of both cognitive and affective factors in language acquisition as proposed in Krashen’s theory. It also recognises that game-based environments can provide both structured and incidental learning opportunities, which may influence learners differently depending on their engagement patterns.

The arrows in the diagram shows the relationships between enjoyment and overall English acquisition level variables and between interaction levels and overall English acquisition level variables, addressing Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 respectively while the gender’s role in how much English learners perceive they have acquired through Genshin Impact was also investigated by comparing the mean scores of English language acquisition between males and females.

Figure 1 The conceptual framework



At this juncture, gender was not treated as a moderating factor in the framework. By mapping these relationships, the framework aligns with the research aim of exploring Genshin Impact as a tool for English learning through the lens of enjoyment, interaction, and inclusivity.

METHOD

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationships between students’ perceived enjoyment, interaction levels, and their perceived overall English acquisition while playing Genshin Impact. It also aimed to determine whether there was a significant mean difference in the perceived overall English acquisition level between male and female users.

The study setting comprised two main contexts, which included the digital environment of the Genshin Impact game application and the academic environment of the selected private and public universities, from which the student participants were sampled. Eighty-six students were recruited using a snowball sampling method so as to pick students who played the game to answer the questionnaire.

The study used a 25-item Likert-type scale adapted from Farhan (2022), designed to measure perceived enjoyment, interaction levels, and English acquisition. Likert-type item rating ranged from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. Data were collected over 30 days using a Google Form link distributed via students' e-mails and communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. This approach mirrors methods used by Hashim et al. (2023) in recruiting university gamers for ESL research and by Costales Canonizado (2024) in efficiently gathering survey responses online. After collection, responses were stored in a response sheet, and incomplete or missing data were removed before analysis.

The data in this study were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, applying Pearson Correlation to address the first and second research questions, while an Independent samples T-Test was run to address the last research question. In this study, Cronbach's Alpha was applied to each sub scale in the questionnaire to ensure consistent measurement across items. This process provides confidence that the results are dependable and not influenced by random measurement errors. Across all sub scales, as displayed in Table 1, the reliability coefficients ranged from acceptable to strong, with an overall pattern indicating that the instrument is a dependable tool for assessing enjoyment, interaction, and English acquisition. The enjoyment sub scale, consisting of four items, demonstrated good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .79, while the interaction sub scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .70. The English acquisition sub scale showed strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

Table 1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Item	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised items	N of Items
Enjoyment	.797	.811	4
Interaction levels	.702	.725	10
English Acquisition	.932	.934	11
Overall	.899	.915	25

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: Is there any correlation between students' perceived enjoyment of Genshin Impact and their perceived overall English acquisition levels?

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation analysis between students' perceived enjoyment of Genshin Impact and their perceived overall English acquisition levels. The data show a mean enjoyment score of 4.19 (SD = 0.88) and a mean English acquisition score of 4.10 (SD = 0.69), with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.553$, $p < .001$. This indicates a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that higher enjoyment is associated with higher perceived English acquisition. Based on the statistical significance, it is confirmed that this relationship is unlikely to occur by chance. These results give an implication that enjoyment plays a meaningful role in maintaining motivation and engagement in language learning through gameplay. Practically, students who find the game more enjoyable are likely to perceive bigger improvement in their English skills.

Table 2 Correlation Between Students' Perceived Enjoyment of Genshin Impact Game and Their Perceived Overall English Acquisition Levels

	Mean	SD	Pearson Correlation	Enjoyment	English Acquisition
Enjoyment	4.19	.88	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.553**
English Acquisition	4.10	.69	Sig. (2-tailed)	.553**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results for RQ1 revealed a moderate positive correlation between students’ enjoyment of Genshin Impact and their perceived overall English acquisition. In other words, students who reported higher enjoyment levels tended to believe they had improved their English skills more significantly. This aligns with Adipat et al. (2021), who found that enjoyment in game-based learning environments fosters sustained engagement and deeper cognitive involvement. Similarly, Chen and Liang (2022) reported that enjoyment mediates the relationship between gamification and learning engagement, suggesting that positive emotions can enhance learning outcomes.

In the context of Genshin Impact, the immersive storyline, rich dialogues, and interactive quests likely provide meaningful and enjoyable exposure to English, which supports Krashen’s Input Hypothesis by lowering the affective filter. The findings reinforce the idea that enjoyment is not merely a motivational bonus but a central factor in sustaining language learning through games. This suggests that designing engaging gameplay experiences can be as important as the instructional content itself.

Research question 2: Is there any correlation between students' perceived interaction levels during gameplay and their perceived overall English acquisition levels?

Table 3 Correlation Between students' perceived interaction levels during gameplay and their perceived overall English acquisition levels

	Mean	SD	Interaction Levels	English Acquisition
Interaction Levels	3.48	.60	Pearson Correlation	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	.558**
English Acquisition	4.10	.70	Pearson Correlation	1
			Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001

Table 3 summarises the Pearson correlation analysis between students’ perceived interaction levels during gameplay and their perceived overall English acquisition levels. The mean interaction score was 3.48 (SD = 0.60), while the mean English acquisition score remained at 4.10 (SD = 0.70). The correlation coefficient was $r = 0.558$, $p < .001$, indicating a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that students who interact more frequently during gameplay tend to perceive greater improvement in their English skills. The significance level confirms the robustness of this relationship. These findings highlight the importance of cooperative play and communication in enhancing language learning outcomes in game-based environments.

The moderate positive correlation between students’ perceived interaction levels during gameplay and their perceived English acquisition means that students who engaged more actively in cooperative missions, in-game chats, or collaborative problem-solving tended to report bigger improvements in their English skills. These results are consistent with Farhan et al. (2024), who found that cooperative gameplay strengthened vocabulary retention and communicative confidence among university students. Similarly, Pinter et al. (2024) observed that authentic peer-to-peer communication in online games provided opportunities for incidental learning of functional phrases and conversational patterns. In Genshin Impact, Co-Op Mode facilitates such interaction by requiring players to coordinate strategies, share resources, and negotiate roles, all of which demand real-time language use. This supports Krashen’s emphasis on meaningful interaction as a driver of acquisition, as players are exposed to both comprehensible input and opportunities for output.

However, as noted by Kumar and Hashim (2024), the benefits of interaction can diminish if communication is limited to repetitive or transactional exchanges. Therefore, while interaction is a strong predictor of perceived language gains, its quality and variety are crucial for sustaining learning benefits. This finding underscores the need for game-based learning designs that encourage diverse and meaningful communicative exchanges.

Research question 3: Do male and female students show any differences in their perceived overall English acquisition levels while playing the Genshin Impact game?

This section addresses the above research question. Table 4 shows the results of the Independent Samples T-Test comparing male and female students’ perceived overall English acquisition levels.

Table 4 Analysis of Group Statistics of Independent Sample t -test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
English Acquisition	Male	36	4.21	.625	.104
	Female	50	4.01	.740	.105

From the table above, male students reported a mean score of 4.21 (SD = 0.625), while female students reported a mean score of 4.01 (SD = 0.740). As shown in Table 5, the mean difference in English acquisition between males and females was not statistically significant, $t(84) = 1.326, p = .188$, with a small effect size (Cohen’s $d = 0.290$). This indicates that gender did not significantly influence perceived English acquisition in this context. Although male students reported slightly higher scores, the difference is too small to be considered meaningful. These results suggest that Genshin Impact offers a relatively equitable language learning experience across genders.

Table 5 Analyses of Independent Samples of T-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
English Acquisition	Equal variances assumed	.188	.666	1.326	84	.094	.188	.201	.152
	Equal variances not assumed			1.363	81.804	.088	.177	.201	.148

The findings for RQ3 showed no statistically significant difference between male and female students in their perceived overall English acquisition while playing Genshin Impact. Although male students reported slightly higher mean scores, the effect size was small, indicating that gender had little practical impact on perceived language gains. This result contrasts with Baker et al. (2024), who found that male and female students sometimes differ in engagement patterns in digital learning games, with females “gaming the system” less often and achieving better learning outcomes in certain contexts. However, it aligns with Nguyen et al. (2023), who argued that individual traits and preferences, rather than gender alone, are stronger predictors of game engagement and learning benefits.

In the context of Genshin Impact, the lack of significant gender differences may be due to the game’s inclusive design, which offers multiple play styles—combat, exploration, and narrative engagement—that appeal to a broad range of players. This variety may help balance engagement opportunities across genders, reducing disparities in perceived learning outcomes. Richey et al. (2024) also noted that when educational games are designed with diverse interaction modes, gender differences in performance tend to diminish.

Nevertheless, the small mean difference observed suggests that subtle variations in engagement styles may still exist. For example, male players might engage more with competitive or combat-oriented aspects, while female players might focus more on narrative or cooperative elements. While these preferences do not appear to affect overall perceived acquisition in this study, they could influence the types of language skills practiced. This aligns with the broader literature on game-based learning, which emphasises the importance of tailoring design features to accommodate different player motivations.

Overall, the findings suggest that Genshin Impact provides an equitable platform for language learning across genders, at least in terms of perceived outcomes. This supports the idea that well-designed game environments can mitigate traditional gender disparities in educational contexts. However, further research using qualitative methods could explore whether subtle differences in engagement patterns lead to variations in specific language

skills acquired. Such insights could inform the development of even more inclusive and effective game-based learning tools.

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the positive correlations between enjoyment, interaction, and perceived English acquisition reinforce Krashen's Input Hypothesis, showing that meaningful and engaging contexts can lower the affective filter and promote acquisition. Practically, the results suggest that integrating RPGs like Genshin Impact into language learning can enhance motivation, foster authentic communication, and provide equitable opportunities across genders. This aligns with Cordoba et al. (2024), who emphasised the role of digital game-based learning in boosting higher-order thinking and language performance, and Gamlo (2019), who found that game-based tools increase learner motivation. Therefore, educators and curriculum designers can consider structured game-based activities as a complementary approach to traditional instruction, ensuring both engagement and measurable learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study has shown that Genshin Impact could be utilised as an effective supplementary material for English language learning. Enjoyment and interaction were identified as crucial factors positively associated with perceived acquisition, while gender displayed no meaningful differences. Based on Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition, the results highlight the significance of immersive, engaging, and communicative gameplay in boosting motivation and authentic language practice. The findings demonstrate that student engagement can be increased and equal opportunities for diverse students can be provided by integrating structured game-based activities into educational contexts. By linking theory and practice, this study contributes to the accumulation of evidence that digital games can facilitate traditional classroom learning.

For future research, it is recommended that the methodological, practical, and theoretical gaps identified in this study be addressed in terms of methodology, longitudinal research designs as they could strengthen evidence of sustained language gains. Theoretically, Krashen's framework explains the potential of language acquisition through meaningful comprehensible input; however, further studies need to be conducted on the long-term language gains from gameplay.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods can capture quantitative trends as well as qualitative insights in applying games for language learning. Practically, it is useful to investigate the influence of certain game modes or narrative structures on specific language skills. Theoretically, models that link enjoyment, interaction, and acquisition could be refined by considering variables like autonomy in learning or cultural aspects. As argued by Susaniari and Santosa (2024), it is essential to examine various contexts and modes of integration to optimise game-based learning. Supporting this, Esteban (2024) stresses that more genres, as well as design components of games, must be investigated. Ultimately, cooperation among educators, linguists, and game developers to create effective, fun, and sustainable language learning experiences is desired to optimise potential games for educational advancement and research.

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