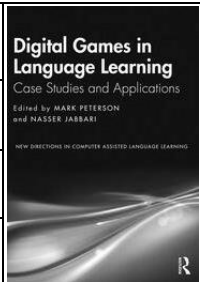


Digital Games in Language Learning: Case Studies and Applications

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Digital Games in Language Learning: Case Studies and Applications		
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Language teachers have long used games to provide opportunities to practice using language and receive immediate feedback in an engaging, interactive setting. With more and more learners having access to computers, mobile devices, and the internet, teachers may also leverage digital games to expand learners’ opportunities for virtual exchanges beyond the classroom (Clark et al., 2016). However, existing research on using digital games for foreign language learning is somewhat limited, which highlights the necessity for a more comprehensive and detailed investigation in this field. To address such limitations in scope, *Digital Games in Language Learning: Case Studies and Applications*, edited by Mark Peterson and Nasser Jabbari, provides an extensive overview of the use of digital games for second language development. This book takes a fresh approach to digital game-based language learning by moving beyond the traditional concentration on pedagogy (e.g., Becker, 2017) to illustrate how digital games can significantly boost learning outcomes. It presents a collection of engaging case studies that explore critical issues in the field, such as the need for a learning theory specifically for game design and the challenge of measuring language development beyond vocabulary.

The volume opens with an introductory piece on digital games in language learning, followed by eight chapters that explore various aspects of digital games, including game creation tools, virtual reality, conversation analysis, gamified digital books, and cross-cultural communication. Each chapter maintains a consistent organization, introducing a specific research topic and providing an in-depth exploration of theory and application in second and foreign language

learning using digital games. Following the discussion of the emergence and current state of digital games in language learning in the introductory chapter, Chapters 2-4 describe theoretical frameworks and instrumental approaches in digital games and language learning. Chapter 2 by Huang and Schmidt presents a review of 65 studies from 2011 to 2020, examining the theoretical underpinnings that have guided and informed existing empirical studies of digital game-based language learning, learner-based theoretical research, and the central role of SLA theory, emphasizing sociocultural, cognitive, and motivation theories. In Chapter 3, Berns and Ruiz-Rube review 12 studies on using game creation tools for language learning (e.g., MIT App Inventor, GameSalad, and GameMaker), highlighting positive educational outcomes of language learning and motivation as well as teacher training in coding when designing digital games. Chapter 4 by Dixon presents a detailed framework to identify, describe, and analyze the different instances of language use (i.e., registers) within a specific target audience of digital games with comparable game mechanics and designs. Such identification of linguistic input in different game types provides language teachers with a structured approach to identifying and utilizing the unique language registers and game mechanics in digital games for contextualized language learning. This process may enhance form-meaning-use associations and potential transferability to real-world contexts.

Chapters 5-9 examine case studies on digital game-based language learning for second language learners. The chapters in this section cover a variety of digital games, from cooperative puzzle games fostering language learning (Chapter 5) to immersive virtual reality experiences (Chapter 7), each of which showcases distinct approaches to online interaction for language learners. Through different research methods, the authors investigate how these games influence language learning outcomes. For example, in Chapter 9, the authors examine emotional factors in a cross-cultural digital game. They demonstrated that players are more engaged and have improved perceptions of language practice in a video-based online environment (e.g., Zoom) that facilitates real-time, face-to-face interaction compared to a social virtual world (e.g., virtual reality) that provides a more immersive and exploratory experience. The themes in Chapters 5-9 also vary and overlap across chapters, discussing interactional outcomes, individual differences (engagement, motivation), and affect in multimodal settings. These case studies offer a rich exploration of digital game-based language education.

The book stands out in several aspects. Firstly, it holds significant theoretical and practical value by meticulously examining the application of digital games in language education, thereby balancing theoretical insights with practical applications. Through rigorous research and empirical analysis, it not only underscores the efficacy of digital games in facilitating language learning but also highlights how their interactive and immersive qualities can be used to enhance the educational experience. For instance, Chapter 6 reveals that the picture book design successfully promotes learners' introspection and analysis of language across different sections of the playthrough, creating opportunities for each player to develop as a resourceful learner. This exemplifies the book's practical utility in guiding educational innovation and strategy development. Another key contribution of the book is its comprehensive investigation into how digital gamification impacts content knowledge and second language acquisition across different contexts. It facilitates language learning through immersive and interactive experiences that incorporate storytelling, gamification elements, and dynamic challenges. These findings align with recent research on the efficacy of digital language learning (e.g., Dixon et al., 2022). Furthermore, the authors avoid technical jargon and make good use of

visual aids like images and tables to simplify complex concepts, which makes the book more accessible to diverse audiences, including language learners, teachers, and researchers.

There are, however, a few limitations of the book. Given the diversity of games and classroom contexts, readers may have to innovate and expand upon the cases and strategies presented when working with their students. The book could benefit by addressing the varying needs of stakeholders and the socioeconomic aspects of digital access, such as the various economic and social factors that influence an individual's or a community's ability to access and use digital technologies, such as the internet, computers, and other devices. This could offer strategies to ensure equitable participation in game-based language learning for students from diverse backgrounds. It would be valuable if the authors considered how to balance these factors for broad educational applicability.

Overall, this book fills an important gap in the academic literature by addressing this timely topic. It is rich in theory, content, and practice, with clear writing that readers will find accessible. It will serve as a useful resource for educators, researchers, graduate students, game designers, and policymakers who are interested in the latest advancements in the field and wish to implement digital games in their curricula.

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