

# Online Games to Improve English Vocabulary Awareness in Daily Speech

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## ABSTRACT

This research is a case study on a seven-year-old boy who lives in Bandung, Indonesia where there are some different languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, and Indonesian are used dominantly. The use of English language reflecting some characters in online games has given deep impact to the awareness of English vocabulary on a child. The words sounding interesting, used repeatedly, and easily spoken up have made him doesn't find many difficulties to catch them up. Analyzing the word classes of English vocabulary comprehended is the way to obtain the answer. This study is a part of longitudinal study. The data analyzed were taken within the period of six weeks. The results show that some English vocabularies used in online games are improving seen from the number of English vocabularies spoken and comprehended. This condition is supported by having good communication between or among the addresser and the addressee(s) who use some codes providing the signs and structural information for constructing and deciphering messages Mode of contact by which social and psychological connections are established between or among them. All of the results reveal that online games proved to be effective in improving English vocabularies awareness for the respondent.

**Keywords:** Awareness, English vocabularies, online games, word classes.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research into online games has expanded and there has been increasing concern with regard to problematic or excessive use of online games, whereby play interferes with other areas of life and negative consequences occur. A study relating with English and online games is done by Bawa, Watson, and Watson (2018) who states that there is a positive impact for using the MMOG curriculum in the teaching and learning process. Online games that use a lot of English in the choice of words make the players have to struggle to be able to hear, imitate, pronounce and understand the words correctly. Similar opinion is stated by Baek and Park (2019) who say that role playing in language learning basically has learners taking a role of a particular person or character and acting out as if they are the real person or character. The positive effects of role-play by arguing that the technique can animate the learning atmosphere, provoke interests to learn and make the language acquisition impressive (Liu & Ding, 2009 as cited in Baek & Park, 2019). Peterson (2010) suggests features of MMORPGs and their potential advantages to second language learning. Based on the result of those previous research,

it can be concluded that playing online games also could give positive consequences to the players.

Language reflects culture so that the existence of a language will be at the forefront of describing the existence of culture in a community. Language and culture are two things that mutually synergize with one another. Language is often used as an indication of the existence of a culture. Many countries in the world make language as an identity, such as a cultural identity. When speakers acquire or carry out the process of acquiring a second language, speakers also carry out a process of maintaining their first language. These factors ultimately lead to bilingualism or even multilingualism in a community. The tug of war between mastery of the first language and the second language is unavoidable. Everything is obtained from the speaker's birth until his death and is used in his daily life.

English language, used as one of the second languages, appears in almost all areas of human life. One area that is very often in contact with English is the media domain, which includes animated films, music and games using online media. The acquisition of English, through the media of animated films, music and games using

online media is an issue which continues to grow. English holds the status of native language in Indonesia. The international Standard English (SE) is still the first model to follow in many countries. SE represents a variety which is commonly recognized to have prestigious and intelligible vocabulary, grammar and orthography (Crystal, 1995 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015). It is identified as a particular dialect of English, which is not localized and does not have significant variation, and well known as the appropriate educational target in teaching English (Stevens, 1985 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015). English used as an international language for a global purpose differs from the type used for local purposes. She points out that English as an international language is used for communication between countries, whereas for local purposes, it is used for communication within multilingual societies (McKay, 2002 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015).

The term Linguistic awareness refers to the ability of conscious reflection on certain features of primary linguistic activities like listening and speaking. From a psychological perspective, linguistic awareness represents the ability to change attention from the content to form (Magnusson & Naucle'r, 1993, as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015). In an interesting description of linguistic awareness, it was defined metaphorically like a glass window (Cazden, 1976 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015), where attention is switched from what is seen through the window to the glass itself. 'Linguistic awareness refers to the awareness of all linguistic levels (phonology, morphology, orthography, syntax, and semantics), like segmentation of sentences to words; words to sound parts (rhyme and onset), syllables to phonemes, identifying morphemes in words; and finally, judgment of grammatical correctness (Lyster, 2001 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015).

Some researchers have searched any topics relating with English language awareness. A statement mentioned is that the difficulty of mother tongue English speakers uses English grammar correctly because they grow and develop in a multilingual environment (Flynn, Foley, & Vinnitskaya, 2004). According to Siegler (1985), students who are familiar with the host nationals' linguistic background, have a strong conceptual framework to understand the differences, and adjust to the new context easily. This was supported by a statement that shows that language was the biggest barrier in communication with the host nationals among 196 international students at a public university in New Zealand (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015). The labels used for English such as 'my English' and 'your English' represent that it is not the sociolinguistic norms which determines the appropriateness of a linguistic behavior but it is the functionality of the language which seems to

be the principal criterion to evaluate one's given interaction inter-subjectively. The central idea of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is that language functions, not simply as a device for reporting experience, but also and more significantly as a way of defining experience for its speakers (Sapir, 1931 as cited in Khojastehrad & Sattarova, 2015). The different culture gives deep impact to the use of the language.

Language acquisition is an acquisition process that is owned and passed by almost every individual who performs verbal communication. Language acquisition is divided into two, namely first language and second language. The naming of the first language and second language is meant that the first language is the language that is acquired when speakers are born and raised. The second language is the language obtained after the first language is obtained, in other words the second language can be Indonesian, English, and so on. The second language is owned for various reasons, such as to establish communication with people of different cultures, to keep up with technological developments and many more, sometimes the process is carried out consciously or unconsciously by the speakers. Mastery of a second language has the aim of gaining agreement in conveying ideas in a wider realm.

Based on the description outlined above, this research will be done by collecting data about the English vocabularies comprehended by a seven-year-old boy who lives in Bandung, Indonesia where there are used some different languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, and Indonesian in his environment. This research focuses on the word classes of English used when the boy's playing some kind of online games such as Minecraft, Roblox, Growtopia. The first language in this study is Indonesian language, the local language where the speaker was born and raised, and also as the official language mastered. The improvement on comprehending English vocabularies used during playing some online games will show the vocabulary awareness on him in context of playing online games.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Online Games**

Longman et al. (2009) concluded that players derived social support from fellow online gamers which is, in turn, associated with improved wellbeing. In addition, online games have been linked with skill development. Chen (2009) described MMORPGs as providing opportunity for communication, problem solving, teamwork and shared goals, highlighting the potential benefits of these interactions on social relationships, communication skills and some cognitive functions

Games in general and online ones in specific as effective educational aids which result in learners'

increased motivation and improved performance during the process of vocabulary learning. Ashraf et al. (2014) said that it's also worth mentioning that people learn more, if necessary, as they say "Necessity is the mother of invention", and this issue was clearly observed during the treatment. Participants in "online games" had to understand the content of the context written on the screen to survive or win the game. On one hand, the gamers became more interested in playing and wished to achieve better results, and on the other hand, they tried to learn more new words in addition to the vocabulary prepared for the class. The more and sooner they acquire the new vocabulary, the better they play the game.

## 2.2. English Vocabulary Awareness

Magnusson and Naucle'r (1993) state that from a psychological perspective, linguistic awareness represents the ability to change attention from the content to form. We cannot be clear about just what actual phenomena the words are supposed to describe—we cannot even identify the phenomena properly, let alone explain them (Wilson, 2005). Thus, both research in reading and special pedagogies designed to improve reading will be geared, consciously or unconsciously, to some conception of what reading is or what the ability to read consists of

1. "Reading" presumably involves more than just making appropriate pronunciation: it involves some kind of *understanding* of what is read. But how much *understanding*, and understanding of what? Of grammar and syntax and sentence-structure only, or of semantics also?
2. What kind of *content* does "the ability to read" involve? What vocabulary is supposed to be used; what subject matter is the person supposed to be familiar with? Nursery rhymes, shopping lists, descriptions of everyday occurrences at school, fairy tales, the lyrics of pop music, or what? Whether a person is "able to read" or not will be largely relative to this content and vocabulary. One might even ask
3. What kind of script or *symbols* are we talking about? A person can read English (in capital letters or minuscule), Chinese ideograms and Egyptian hieroglyphics, mathematical equations, maps and charts, graphs, musical scores, and many other things: there is no reason to suppose that there is something called "the ability to read" which is totally independent of the symbolic medium

## 2.3. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a subfield of linguistics that research various aspects of language, as a means to explore ways in which language forms are shaped by and

shape the context of their use (He, 2003). The study of "language in action", so to speak is called discourse analysis (Danesi & Perron 1999). It is coded behavior. In order for compiling the data in analyzing a discourse, Jakobson (1960) mentioned that there are six constituents that characterize all speech act, they are:

1. An addresser who initiates the communication of a message,
2. A message that s/he recognize must refer to something other than itself,
3. An addressee who is the intended receiver of the message,
4. A context that permits the addressee to recognize that the message is referring to something other than itself,
5. A mode of contact by which physical, social, and psychological connections are established between the addresser and addressee,
6. A code providing the signs and structural information for constructing and deciphering messages.

## 2.4. Word Classes of English

According to Velupillai (2012), languages differ radically in how many classes they have and in the proportions of these classes. Some languages have an extremely limited set of closed class words (or functional categories), while others have a high number of such words. Some languages have only two open word classes (or lexical categories), others, like English, have as many as four separate such classes.

### 2.4.1. Lexical Classes

General indications of features that typically cluster together in a given word class may represent the world language. Language may have up to four major open class parts-of-speech, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. These categories rely on a cluster of features, both semantic (denoting meaning), grammatical and syntactic (how items are combined).

#### 2.4.1.1. Nouns

Noun typically refers to things, persons and places, but also includes abstract notions such as feelings, ideas, and so on. Grammatically, nouns may typically be marked for number, case, gender and definiteness, for instance through morphological processes, but also, especially in the case of languages with predominantly analytic strategies, through syntactic processes.

English has two numbers, singular and plural, as in chair versus chairs. Definiteness indicates whether we are

referring to a general example of an entity or a specific entity, as in the difference between a man and the man.

#### 2.4.1.2. Verbs

Verb typically refers to actions and processes, but also states. Grammatically, verbs may typically be marked for tense, aspect, mood, voice and various devices for manipulating valency, as well as polarity. Verb may also be marked for person agreement, where a grammatical marker indicates the number and person of an argument, most commonly the subject. Verbs typically function as predicate, typically form the core of the sentence or clause and typically have “a relational meaning, relating one or more participants to an event”.

#### 2.4.1.3. Adjectives

Adjectives typically denotes qualities or attributes, modify nouns. Grammatically adjectives may be specified for degree, either morphologically or syntactically, and may combine with degree words that cannot combine with nouns or verbs.

#### 2.4.1.4. Adverbs

Adverb is arguably the most heterogeneous of all word classes. Adverbs typically modify categories other than nouns. Thus, adverbs may modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, prepositions, and so on, but not nouns. There are five main subclasses distinguished: (i) setting adverbs of space and time; (ii) manner adverbs; (iii) degree adverbs; (iv) linking adverbs; (v) sentence adverbs.

### 2.4.2. *Functional Classes*

Closed word classes typically consist of function words (or grammatical words). Closed classes tend to be small in size, since what makes them closed is the fact that new words are not readily added.

#### 2.4.2.1. Pronouns

Pronouns are used to substitute a noun or a noun phrase. Subtypes of pronoun are personal, possessive, demonstrative, indefinite, relative, reflexive, reciprocal and interrogative pronouns. None of these subcategories are absolute but vary depending on language as well as on theoretical orientation.

#### 2.4.2.2. Adpositions

Adpositions are words that express the relation between the noun phrase they given and some other element in the clause or sentence. There are prepositions that precede the noun phrase they govern and postpositions that follow the noun phrase they govern.

#### 2.4.2.3. Numerals

Numerals are sets of words used to indicate the precise number of something. They typically have characteristics of both open and closed class words. Cardinal numerals are used to express the number of individuals in a set, as in four cats. Ordinal numerals are used to express the rank in a series, as in the fourth car. Grammatically numerals may either constitute their own closed class, or overlap with other word classes in the language.

#### 2.4.2.4. Articles

Articles are used to indicate whether the noun phrase referred to is identifiable or not. Definite articles encode specificity and are used with an identifiable noun or noun phrase. Indefinite articles are used when an entity referred to is not presupposed to be identifiable by the addressee.

#### 2.4.2.5. Auxiliaries

Auxiliaries are semantically more or less empty verbs conveying mainly grammatical information. While some auxiliary verbs can be used as full verbs and thus have a semantic content, when they function as auxiliaries their primary task is not to convey meaning but grammatical information.

#### 2.4.2.6. Conjunctions

Conjunctions serve to connect entities (words, phrases or clauses). There are two types of conjunctions, those that assign the entities an equal status (coordinating conjunctions) and those that make one entity subordinate to another (subordinating conjunctions).

#### 2.4.2.7. Interjections

Interjections are typically used to express emotions, but there are other functions as well. Interjections are often monomorphemic, do not take any morphological marking, and very often display sound sequences otherwise not typical for the language.

Interjections may have different functions. Expressive interjections indicate the speaker’s mental state. Cognitive interjections indicate the state of knowledge or thoughts of the speaker. Conative interjections are utterances directed at an addressee. Phatic interjections are used as communicative cues.

## 3. METHOD

This study is qualitative research and is a part of longitudinal study that begins with an understanding of the role of time (George & Jones, 2000 as cited in Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010). This research focuses on the study of change and containing at minimum three

repeated observations (although more than three is better) on at least one of the substantive constructs of interest as stated by Chan (1998) that minimum number of repeated measures for a longitudinal design is three, but more than three is best. Two are insufficient for a number of reasons, and given. "Providing an excellent overview of them, we present the following as a summary" (Singer and Willett, 2003, pp. 9-10, 2003 as cited in Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010).

The data were collected for six weeks with some repeated observations. The conversations spoken by a seven-year-old boy who lives in Bandung, Indonesia when he's playing online games during are recorded and transcribed. The word classes of English used during the play are analyzed. Some other aspects such as the context, the participants (the addressee and the addresser) are observed.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Findings

The words produced by the participant in week one can be seen in the Table 1. In the following week (week 2), the words spoken by the participant in week one can be seen in Table 2. Meanwhile, the words uttered by the participant in week three can be seen in the Table 3.

**Table 1.** Words spoken week 1

Words	Word class	Meaning
Teleport	Verb	Move to other places
Pickaxe	Noun	T-shaped hand tool used for digging.
Kill	Verb	An act to cause the death
Flint	Noun	Tool used to start fires.
Infinity	Noun	Endless
Buy	Verb	Obtain in exchange for payment

**Table 2.** Words spoken week 2

Words	Word class	Meaning
Shut	Verb	Position so as to block an opening; close
Undo	Verb	Negate the last command done
<i>Envil</i>	Noun	A kind of weapon
Login	Verb	Gains access to a computer system
Server	Noun	A piece of computer hardware or software that provides functionality for other programs or devices

**Table 3.** Words spoken week 3

Words	Word class	Meaning
Single player	Noun	Only one player is expected throughout the course of the gaming session
Give away	Noun	Give a gift

**Table 4.** Words spoken week 4

Words	Word class	Meaning
Unmute	Verb	Speak up
Crash	Verb	Stops functioning properly and exits
Google search	Verb	A search engine provided by Google

**Table 5.** Words spoken week 5

Words	Word class	Meaning
By the way	Interjection	Talking of
Soldier	Noun	Warrior
Register	Noun	Fast storage

The words produced by the participant in week four can be seen in the Table 4. As for the words spoken by the participant in week five can be seen in Table 5. Meanwhile, the words produced by the participant in week six can be seen in the Table 6.

From the observation, it was found out that every week there were some new words spoken by the boy. The new words with various word classes are comprehended. The boy knows well where and when the words used when he's playing the online games.

### 4.2. Discussion

An addresser who initiates the communication of a message comes from anyone who joins and plays together in the play. An addressee who is the intended receiver of the message comes from the other players in the game. Playing online games is a kind of play that everyone around the world could join. Ignoring sex, age, education, they just need the same passion, that is a play.

**Table 6.** Words spoken week 6

Words	Word class	Meaning
Sell item	Verb	An act of selling
Horse	Noun	A domesticated one-toed hooved mammal.
Bed wars	Noun	A kind of war
Network	Noun	Sharing resources

A message that the respondent easily recognizes refer to the words used in the play. The number of English vocabularies used are increasing during six months. Some word classes found in his speaking are verbs, nouns, and interjections. Comprehending those words are shown by having mutual understanding among the players.

Contexts that permit the addressee to recognize the message are various. One example is a game constructing some buildings with their environment surrounded. A mode of contact is a kind of psychological connections done among the gamers. They have the same background knowledge about the game they are playing specifically for some particular meaning for some words. Informal language used during the play reflects the mode of contact. They have averagely same competency both in mastering the language and the content.

Some codes providing the signs and structural information spoken use some languages that are Indonesian, English, and Sundanese language. It's because the respondent lives in a multilingual environment.

## 5. CONCLUSION

English vocabularies with various word classes are used to communicate among the players on the online games. Ignoring the different background among the player and having good understanding about the words used make the boy keep playing the online games well.

Based on the statement above, it can be concluded that playing online games could intervene the awareness of English vocabulary on a non-native English boy who lives in a multilingual environment. The boy could make the fluently pronunciation and get an understanding for some particular words through his "reading" skill.

Presenting some scripts or fascinating symbols used in online games attract so deep that the boy easily remembers and it supports the boy to have "the ability to read". Finally, the words used on the online games become his daily words. The words play a role in his efforts to convey ideas or thoughts. Playing in online games could become a booster to present that awareness.

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