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## Digital Game-Based Language Exposure: Indonesian University Students' Perceptions of English Reading In Genshin Impact

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#### Keywords

Digital Game-Based Learning; Genshin Impact; Informal Language Learning; Language Selection; Reading Comprehension

#### Abstract

This study investigated how language selection in Genshin Impact influenced Indonesian university students' perceptions of English reading comprehension and explored the motivations behind their language choices. Employing a qualitative case study design supported by descriptive quantitative data, data were collected through screening questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using thematic analysis. The research involved 33 questionnaire respondents and 6 interview participants selected through purposive sampling. The findings revealed that the majority of participants (81.8%) perceived English-language gameplay as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition, reading speed, and exposure to contextual language use. However, English was also perceived as cognitively demanding due to complex narrative structures and fantasy terminology. Meanwhile, Indonesian was preferred for narrative comfort, emotional connection, and easier comprehension. Students' language choices were strongly influenced by motivations related to self-improvement, authenticity, entertainment, localization quality, and social interaction. The study suggests that narratively rich video games can function as meaningful informal learning environments that support English reading development outside formal educational settings.

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## Introduction

Video games underwent a profound transformation in recent decades, evolving far beyond their original purpose as mere entertainment into complex virtual worlds that served as powerful learning contexts. According to researchers such as (Polvonov, 2023) , (Reinhardt & Thorne, 2020), and (Shaffer et al., 2005), these digital environments enabled players to develop entirely new ways of thinking and enhanced cognitive skills, such as problem-solving and consequential decision-making, by seamlessly integrating cognitive processes, social interactions, and modern technology. This evolution was particularly evident in the Indonesian context, where the country emerged as a significant market for the global video game industry. This growth drove extensive language localization strategies among developers, who then often included Indonesian language options to cater to local audiences. While this localization trend was designed to increase accessibility, it simultaneously raised critical questions about its long-term impact on players' English language proficiency, particularly in games that were narratively rich and required in-depth reading comprehension.

Historically, the gaming landscape in Indonesia was quite different, where the lack of local language options created an informal learning environment highly conducive to incidental language acquisition. During this period, players were often forced to interact with English-language games to progress, allowing them to strengthen their English skills without any explicit intention to learn. (Chik, 2014) argued that in these out-of-class settings, gamers exercised significant autonomy by managing their play as a learning practice that differentiated between leisure and education. This phenomenon was strongly supported by fundamental linguistic theory, particularly Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis. (Krashen, 1985) stated that language was not always acquired through rigorous study but was often acquired subconsciously through exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input. This was reinforced by (García-Carbonell et al., 2001), who highlighted that the interactive nature of simulations and games created a bridge between task-based learning and communicative competence. Furthermore, (Al-Jifri & Elyas, 2017) demonstrated that this mechanism was highly effective in facilitating new vocabulary acquisition in young players due to the incentive to understand game instructions.

The specific mechanisms of this learning process were further clarified by (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001) concept of Task-Induced Involvement. This theory suggested that the effectiveness of incidental vocabulary retention was directly tied to the level of cognitive engagement required by a particular task. Tasks that demanded high levels of engagement, such as analyzing a game's narrative or following complex instructions, facilitated much stronger retention than passive exposure. In games like Genshin Impact, the need to understand the text created a natural urge for players to process English input deeply. This effectiveness was also related to the implementation of gamification elements that increased player engagement and motivation (Saleem et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2015).

In the context of the Indonesian gaming community, Genshin Impact was repeatedly identified by researchers as an effective tool for language learning. Quantitative studies demonstrated the game's efficacy in improving specific linguistic areas, such as English vocabulary, as noted by (Dien, 2023). Furthermore, research by (Azizah & Warni, 2024)

indicated that the game's interactive features, such as the chat function, contributed significantly to improving English communication skills. However, (Gris & Bengtson, 2021) cautioned that although evidence of the effectiveness of game-based learning (GBL) was well documented, the assessment methods used had to be continuously evaluated to ensure that player engagement was truly aligned with the learning outcomes achieved.

Recently, the research focus expanded to include qualitative perspectives exploring how students perceived the benefits of such learning. Recent studies confirmed that gamers viewed games as a legitimate tool that improved their reading and vocabulary skills. Researchers such as (Adaby & Jaelani, 2025) and (Arfani & Nita Kaniadewi, 2025) documented this positive perception among students, finding that learners recognized games as meaningful contexts for incidental language exposure. The use of technology in reading comprehension activities was shown to enrich the learning experience and motivated students to engage more deeply with complex texts (Tobar-Muñoz et al., 2017). Although local research continued to grow, significant gaps remained. Most previous studies approached the topic quantitatively, measuring vocabulary gain or comprehension scores as end results, without investigating the subjective processes that drove player behavior. Specifically, little attention has been given to why players consciously choose one language over another within a game, and how that choice is shaped by their motivational orientation toward English learning.

There remained a pressing need for a deeper qualitative understanding of the subjective processes and motivations that guided gamer behavior, particularly regarding the reasons behind conscious language choices. This aligned with the Gaming Involvement and Informal Learning (GILL) framework by (Iacovides et al., 2014), which emphasized that gamers' identities and levels of engagement significantly influenced what and how they learned. Furthermore, the motivational dimension of language teaching was crucial, as initial exposure to a foreign language through digital media could shape students' attitudes and willingness to invest further in mastering that language (Lamb, 2017).

The tension between choosing a native language for personal comfort and choosing a foreign language for a more authentic or educational experience was a global phenomenon. International research explored how different communities reacted to localization. For example, (Ellefsen & Bernal-Merino, 2018) examined the reactions of French-speaking gamers to localization efforts, where language preferences were influenced by proficiency level and personal background. Similarly, (Jarrah et al., 2023) examined communities in the Arab world regarding the use of localized versions of popular titles like PUBG and Free Fire, demonstrating that positive attitudes toward localization depended heavily on the technical quality and linguistic issues presented.

By focusing specifically on language choice among university students in Indonesia, this study seeks to address these critical gaps in the literature. Through a qualitative lens, this research aims to provide deep insights into the complex relationship between digital gaming habits, narrative comprehension, and autonomous language acquisition in an increasingly localized digital world. To achieve this objective, this study explicitly addresses the following two research questions: first, what are the perceptions of non-English major university students

regarding the influence of their chosen language in Genshin Impact on their English reading comprehension? Second, how do English language learning motivations shape a player's choice of in-game language within this digital environment?

## Method

### Research design

This study primarily employed a qualitative case study design (Yin, 2018) supported by descriptive quantitative data from a preliminary questionnaire to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of language choice in video games. The choice of qualitative methods was based on the primary research objective of exploring the subjective reasons and processes behind player choices, rather than simply measuring statistical effects (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative approach, which focused on player experiences through interviews, aligned with the methodological path taken by previous researchers seeking to understand the nuanced process of language acquisition in the context of video games. In this context, case studies allowed researchers to observe player behavior in detail within a complex, informal learning environment (Yin, 2018).

### Research sample

Participants in this study were active university students in Indonesia who were not majoring in English education or literature but regularly played Genshin Impact. The identities and personal data of these respondents were kept confidential in accordance with research ethics standards to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their subjective experiences. Participant recruitment was conducted through online gaming communities and university circles to obtain data relevant to the research target profile. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which participants were deliberately selected based on specific criteria that best answered the research questions (Creswell, 2013). This was done to ensure researchers gained a rich diversity of perspectives from players with varying language preferences.

### Research procedure

The data collection procedure was designed in two interconnected stages using two primary instruments: a screening questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The first stage began with the distribution of an initial screening questionnaire aimed at recruiting a pool of potential participants, with a target of 33 responses. The questionnaire was designed to collect participants' demographic information, gaming habits, language preferences, and initial perceptions regarding English learning through Genshin Impact. Several Likert-scale items were also included to explore students' perceptions toward game-based language learning and their motivations behind language selection.

From this data set, the researcher selected 6 participants to proceed to the next stage, namely in-depth semi-structured interviews (Ruslin et al., 2022). Participant selection was based on their responses to the screening questionnaire to ensure diversity of language

preferences, encompassing players who predominantly used English, predominantly Indonesian, and those who frequently switched between both languages. The semi-structured interview guide was constructed based on the theoretical frameworks employed in this study, particularly Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Task-Induced Involvement, and the Gaming Involvement and Informal Learning (GILL) framework. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed participants to elaborate on their personal experiences, perceptions, and motivations regarding language choice and English reading comprehension in greater depth (Ruslin et al., 2022).

The semi-structured interview sessions were conducted online to facilitate communication with the participants. All interviews were recorded after informed consent was obtained, and the recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. During the interviews, the researcher occasionally restated or clarified participants' answers to minimize misinterpretation and ensure that the intended meanings were accurately understood. These transcriptions then served as the primary data source for understanding participants' narratives regarding their perceptions of English reading experiences and motivations behind language selection while playing Genshin Impact.

### Data analysis

The final stage of the methodology involved analyzing the collected data using thematic analysis following the general procedures proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, the researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data and identify recurring patterns related to participants' perceptions and motivations. Initial codes were generated from meaningful statements and then grouped into broader themes corresponding to the two research questions, such as perceptions of reading improvement, understanding of game content, learning motivation, authenticity, and language comfort.

The themes were continuously reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and relevance to participants' experiences. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, the researcher also compared the interview data with questionnaire responses to identify consistent patterns across participants. Representative excerpts from participants were then selected to support the interpretation of each theme in the findings and discussion sections. Through this systematic procedure, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how university students negotiated language choice, reading comprehension, and learning motivation within the localized digital environment of Genshin Impact.

The participant profile table was intended to provide contextual variation and support the interpretation of findings related to language preference and learning motivation. In the result section, questionnaire respondents are identified using numerical codes (e.g., P2, P15), while interview participants are represented using pseudonym-based participant codes (e.g., IA-ENG, IR-ID).

**Table 1.** Participant Profile

<i>Participant Code</i>	<i>Dominant In-Game Language</i>	<i>Length of Playing Experience</i>	<i>Self-Reported English Reading Confidence</i>	<i>Main Motivation</i>
IA-ENG	English	>2 years	High	English habituation and authenticity
IP-ENG	English	>2 years	High	Original experience and global communication
IE-B	Both	1–2 years	Medium	Language practice and flexibility
IF-B	Both	>2 years	Medium	Mood-based language switching
IR-ID	Indonesian	>2 years	Medium	Relaxation and narrative comfort
IN-ID	Indonesian	1–2 years	Medium	Easier comprehension and enjoyment

## Results and Discussion

### Results

This section presents the data collected from 33 university students who did not major in English to explore their linguistic experiences in Genshin Impact. The participants came from various academic programs and locations across Indonesia, which provided a wide range of perspectives on digital language learning. According to the initial screening results, the students demonstrated different preferences for their in-game text and subtitle settings. Specifically, 12 participants, representing 36 percent of the total, chose Indonesian as their primary language for better understanding. Meanwhile, only 6 students, or 18 percent, consistently used English to challenge themselves. The largest group consisted of 15 participants, or 45 percent, who frequently switched between both languages depending on their current needs or the complexity of the task. These varied language choices established a clear starting point for analyzing how university students perceived the impact of gaming on their reading skills and what motivations guided their behavior in this localized digital world.

Regarding the first perspective, which explores the influence of language choice on English reading comprehension, the majority of participants perceived a positive development in their English reading skills, specifically in terms of vocabulary growth and information processing speed. Students felt that the repetitive nature of certain terms in the game made it easier to memorize new words compared to traditional learning methods. Furthermore, the impact of these gaming habits extended beyond the virtual world and into academic activities. For instance, participant IA-ENG reported a significant improvement in his ability to read university-level literature, such as scientific journals, noting:

"Because I am used to translating character dialogues quickly in my mind, I have become faster at catching the point of the discussion when reading complex academic texts."

This indicated that the cognitive training provided by narratively rich games like Genshin Impact could enhance a student's ability to navigate other forms of English texts more efficiently. Similarly, participant IE-B felt that her reading ability developed because the game served as a constant practice tool that exposed her to new vocabulary. However, some participants noted that this improvement was not instantaneous and required long-term

commitment. Participant IF-B observed that while development occurred, it was a gradual process, stating:

"It takes at least two to three years or more to become significant. The most noticeable progress is found in mastering new vocabulary and expressions that rarely appear in common daily conversations."

On the other hand, a few participants expressed a more neutral view. Participant P12, for instance, believed that their English reading ability was primarily shaped by a formal English course rather than the game, suggesting that for some, the game was more of a place to apply existing skills rather than a primary source of learning. Despite these differing views on the scale of impact, the overall perception remained that engaging with English texts in the game contributed to a more natural and interesting way to understand sentence arrangements and long-form narratives.

Turning to the second perspective within this domain, participants had varying perceptions regarding how their language choice affected their understanding of the game's narrative and technical content. For students who predominantly used English, there was a strong belief that this language provided a more complete and accurate representation of the game world. Participant IP-ENG noted that Indonesian translations sometimes felt incomplete or less connected compared to English, highlighting an example where a specific term like "lunar" was translated into something that did not fit the context, which led him to choose English as a more reliable source for understanding the story. Similarly, participant IA-ENG emphasized that the quality of translation was crucial because a poor translation could lead to wrong messages, especially in serious plot moments where English felt more appropriate and formal. However, the perception of English as a superior medium for understanding was often balanced by its high cognitive demand. Many participants found the English used in Genshin Impact to be challenging due to its complex fantasy terminology and occasional use of Old English. Participant IA-ENG mentioned that reading lore books in English required him to be in a fresh condition because the complexity could be overwhelming. For some students like IF-B, the difficulty of understanding specific English terms actually slowed down their progress in the story, explaining:

"While English is more general, it takes more time to process the dialogue, which is why I sometimes switch to Indonesian to understand the core essence of the mission more efficiently."

This suggested that while English provided technical clarity, it could hinder the narrative flow for those who were not fully proficient. In contrast, participants who favored Indonesian perceived it as the most effective tool for deep and immediate understanding, primarily to avoid misunderstandings that might occur when using a foreign language. Participant IR-ID expressed that using Indonesian allowed him to understand the lore deeply without much effort because it was his daily language, adding:

"The Indonesian localization is particularly engaging because it incorporates relatable slang and jokes that make the story more enjoyable and easier to digest."

Similarly, participant IN-ID chose Indonesian to ensure she could follow the narrative deeply without the challenge of translating every sentence. Many participants agreed that using their native language allowed them to have a fun and barrier-free experience while playing. Ultimately, the choice of language shaped how students interacted with the game content. While some viewed English as a way to access the authentic experience and technical clarity, others saw Indonesian as a necessary medium for emotional connection and narrative ease. These findings indicated that the perception of game content was not just about translating words, but also about how the chosen language aligned with the player's goals for either academic development or personal entertainment.

As a final perspective on these comprehension factors, the survey results revealed a very positive initial perception regarding the use of Genshin Impact as a language learning tool among the participants. A significant majority of the students, totaling 81.8 percent, agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the process of learning English through the game. This enjoyment was closely linked to their self-confidence, as 84.8 percent of the respondents felt more confident using the language when it was presented in a fun and engaging way. Qualitative evidence supported this trend, with participants noting that the game environment made studying profound topics or deep knowledge much more enjoyable than traditional methods. The efficacy of the game in improving specific linguistic skills was also highly recognized by the participants. The data showed that 87.9 percent of the students believed they could improve their overall English skills through their regular playtime. Specifically, 90.9 percent of the respondents highlighted the benefits of reading dialogues and stories for understanding new vocabulary. Motivation and cognitive engagement were also central to how participants perceived the game as a learning medium. Around 81.8 percent of the students felt that understanding the story or lore was a necessary requirement to fully enjoy the gaming experience, which created a natural incentive to process English texts. Although 57.6 percent of the participants felt more motivated to learn English after playing, the study also identified a certain level of cognitive effort involved in this process. Specifically, 63.6 percent of the respondents found that reading long narrative texts in English was more tiring than reading regular dialogues. This suggested that while students were motivated to engage with the language to experience the original story, they were also aware of the mental energy required to process complex narrative content.

Shifting the focus to student motivations and how they drive language choice, the first motivational aspect involves learning-related desires, which can be divided into conscious and unconscious goals. The desire to improve English proficiency was a dominant motivation for many participants when selecting their in-game language. Many students viewed the game as a deliberate tool for self-improvement, where they consciously chose English to practice their reading skills in a more enjoyable environment. Participant IA-ENG described using English as a daily obligation and a habituation tool so that he could become accustomed to reading and understanding information in a foreign language. In addition to conscious learning, some students also experienced unconscious or indirect language acquisition through their gameplay. They might not have set out with the primary goal of studying, but they recognized

that the game naturally facilitated learning as they interacted with the content. The interviews further clarified how these learning motivations were sustained over time. Participant IE-B shared that she initially used Indonesian but eventually switched because she wanted to train her English, stating:

"I found the game to be highly motivating for this purpose because I really wanted to train my English skills in a practical environment."

Similarly, participant IP-ENG mentioned his proactive drive, stating:

"I am constantly striving to train my English ability by reading the English translations in the game."

These statements indicated that for many Indonesian university students, the choice of language in Genshin Impact was a strategic decision intended to maximize their exposure to English input. By integrating language practice into their daily leisure activities, students were able to maintain a high level of engagement with the learning process while pursuing their personal interests in the game world.

The second motivational dimension involves external and influencing factors, such as translation quality, originality, and social dynamics. For many participants, the English version of the game was perceived as a more reliable and original source of information compared to the localized Indonesian version. Participant IP-ENG highlighted that the sense of getting the original experience was his main reason for choosing English, observing that certain nuances, such as character impressions and specific technical terms like passive descriptions, were often clearer and more complete in English. Similarly, participant IA-ENG felt that English was more appropriate for serious narrative moments because the Indonesian translation sometimes used language that felt too informal or contained jokes that did not match the formal atmosphere of the story. However, the localized Indonesian version had its own unique appeal that motivated other students to stay with their native language. Participants like IR-ID and IN-ID found the Indonesian localization to be very engaging because it used relatable slang and humor that felt connected to their daily lives. Participant IF-B, who frequently switched between languages, provided context on this contrast by stating:

"The Indonesian version is much more interesting for the general public because of its humor and comedy, whereas the English version can sometimes feel a bit stiff and formal."

This contrast showed that while some students prioritized technical accuracy and an original feel, others prioritized emotional connection and narrative entertainment through high-quality localization that reflected their own culture. Social influence and community engagement also played a critical role in shaping language preferences. For some students, their social circle acted as a strong motivator to use a specific language. Participant IA-ENG mentioned that most of his friends also used English, which created a shared habit within their group. Similarly, participant IE-B explained that her shift toward using English was influenced by her interaction with the global community. The desire to be part of a larger international audience also drove students like IP-ENG, who used English so that he could share his in-game progress on global forums and be understood by people from different countries. On the other hand, the study also found that some students maintained a high level of autonomy in their

choices. Participants IR-ID and IN-ID both stated that their choice of language was entirely personal and was not influenced by their friends or the communities they followed. This indicated that while social factors were a powerful external motivator for many, some students prioritized their own comfort and personal goals above social trends.

The third and final motivational dimension highlights the primary drivers that ultimately dictate language selection among these students, which are generally divided between the goal of self-development and the desire for effortless entertainment. For participants who prioritized academic and linguistic growth, the choice of English was driven by the necessity of long-term habituation. Many students realized that English was a global language that was essential for their future careers and academic activities. This proactive approach was also supported by the belief that using English in a fun environment like a game made the learning process feel less like a formal task. In contrast, the primary driver for students who consistently chose Indonesian was the pursuit of relaxation and emotional ease. For these players, gaming was a temporary escape from their academic responsibilities, and they did not wish to encounter additional challenges while following the story. Participant IR-ID stated that his motivation was purely to have fun while playing, explaining that using a native language allowed him to enjoy the game without having to think too much about the meaning of each word. This view was strongly reinforced by participant P15, who explicitly stated:

"I played games for entertainment, not for learning."

This group of students valued the efficiency of understanding the narrative over the potential educational benefits of using English. Furthermore, the study identified several specific factors that acted as catalysts for these decisions, such as the quality of technical information and social connectivity. Students who were more focused on the gameplay mechanics or meta often found that the English version provided more reliable information for character builds and item descriptions. Participant IP-ENG emphasized that he used English because it was more general and allowed him to share his screenshots on global forums where more people could respond. Meanwhile, students who valued the localized humor and cultural references of the Indonesian version were driven by the unique flavor of the translation. Summarizing this fluid decision-making process, participant IF-B noted:

"My choice often depends directly on my mood. I might switch to Indonesian when I feel too lazy to read in English, but I will return to English when I want to try a more challenging experience."

These findings showed that language choice was a flexible process where students balanced their immediate need for comfort with their long-term goals for English proficiency..

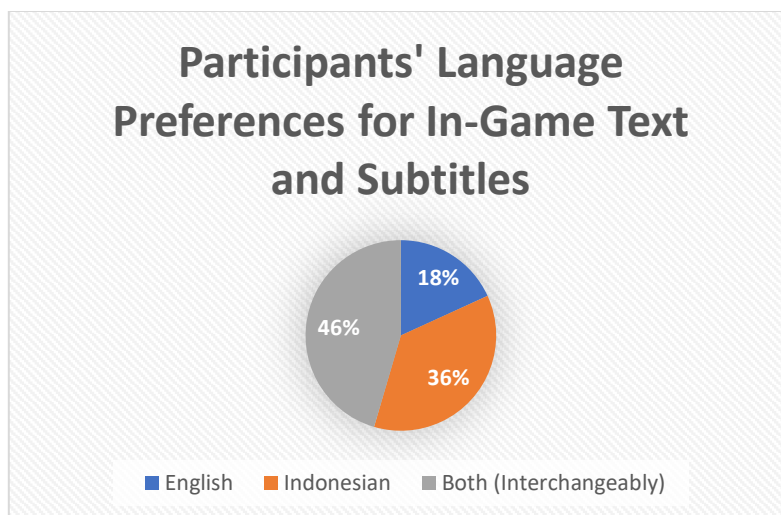


Figure 1. Participants' Language Preferences for In-Game Text and Subtitles

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Students' Perceptions

No	Statement	1	2	3	4
1	I enjoy learning English through games like Genshin Impact.	0 (0%)	6 (18.2%)	16 (48.5%)	11 (33.3%)
2	I feel more confident using English if I learn it in a fun way.	0 (0%)	5 (15.2%)	14 (42.4%)	14 (42.4%)
3	I think I can improve my English skills through Genshin Impact.	1 (3.0%)	3 (9.1%)	19 (57.6%)	10 (30.3%)
4	Reading dialogues and stories in English in Genshin Impact helps me understand new vocabulary.	0 (0%)	3 (9.1%)	17 (51.5%)	13 (39.4%)
5	I feel the need to understand the story or lore to enjoy Genshin Impact fully.	2 (6.1%)	4 (12.1%)	13 (39.4%)	14 (42.4%)
6	I must read item or skill descriptions in English carefully to play well.	5 (15.2%)	7 (21.2%)	12 (36.4%)	9 (27.3%)
7	I feel more motivated to learn English after playing Genshin Impact.	4 (12.1%)	9 (27.3%)	16 (48.5%)	4 (12.1%)
8	Reading long narrative texts in English in the game feels more tiring than reading regular dialogues.	2 (6.1%)	10 (30.3%)	5 (15.2%)	16 (48.5%)
9	I feel that getting an 'original' story experience is the main reason I choose to read in English.	2 (6.1%)	14 (42.4%)	10 (30.3%)	7 (21.2%)

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree.

### Discussion

The result of this study demonstrates that language selection in Genshin Impact functions as more than a simple technical preference among Indonesian university students. Instead, language choice reflects a dynamic interaction between cognitive engagement, learning motivation, personal identity, and entertainment needs within a localized digital environment. The participants' experiences suggest that narratively rich video games can create meaningful opportunities for informal English learning while simultaneously allowing players to negotiate between educational goals and personal comfort.

This positive perception toward improved reading ability strongly supports Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, which proposes that language acquisition occurs through exposure to meaningful and comprehensible input. In this context, English dialogue, quest descriptions,

item explanations, and lore texts act as continuous sources of contextualized language input. The routine exposure to in-game terminology functions as a natural form of vocabulary reinforcement that gradually improves familiarity with English expressions and sentence structures. This process is especially visible among English-dominant users who associate routine gameplay with faster reading comprehension and increased confidence when encountering academic or digital English texts outside the game environment.

At the same time, the effectiveness of this learning process is closely related to cognitive involvement. The English narrative content in Genshin Impact is frequently described by participants as mentally demanding due to the presence of fantasy terminology, complex sentence structures, and large amounts of story-based text. However, rather than discouraging engagement, these difficulties often encourage players to process the language more deeply in order to understand the storyline and gameplay objectives. This phenomenon directly aligns with Laufer and Hulstijn's (2001) concept of Task-Induced Involvement, which emphasizes that stronger cognitive engagement contributes to deeper vocabulary retention. The participants' tendency to search for unfamiliar words, compare translations, and repeatedly encounter similar expressions suggests that game-based reading activities promote active language processing in a way that differs from conventional classroom learning.

Furthermore, a clear tension emerges between authenticity and comfort in participants' language preferences. Students who prefer English generally associate it with originality, technical clarity, and access to the intended meaning of the game narrative. For these participants, using English creates a sense of authenticity that enhances immersion and strengthens their connection to the global gaming community. English is perceived as more appropriate for serious narrative scenes and gameplay discussions because certain localized expressions in Indonesian are considered too informal or culturally adapted.

In contrast, participants who prefer Indonesian emphasize emotional accessibility, relaxation, and narrative convenience. They perceive the Indonesian localization as more relatable because it incorporates humor, slang, and expressions familiar to their daily communication. For these players, gaming primarily functions as entertainment rather than a deliberate learning activity. As a result, reducing cognitive burden becomes more important than maximizing English exposure. This indicates that language choice in digital games is not solely determined by linguistic competence, but also by the player's emotional goals, leisure expectations, and desired gaming experience.

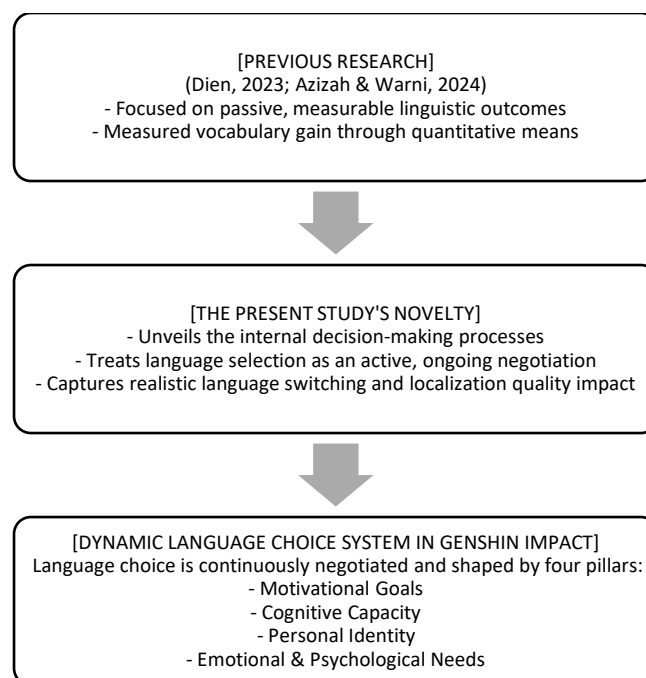
This tension between authenticity and comfort reflects the dual role of video games as both entertainment media and informal learning environments. Some participants are willing to tolerate cognitive difficulty because they view English gameplay as beneficial for self-development and future academic needs. Others prioritize enjoyment and emotional immersion, especially after experiencing fatigue from formal educational activities. This behavior demonstrates that players actively negotiate between educational aspiration and psychological comfort when selecting their preferred in-game language.

These choices support the Gaming Involvement and Informal Learning framework proposed by Iacovides et al. (2014), which emphasizes the importance of player identity and

engagement in shaping informal learning experiences. Participants who identify themselves as competitive players, lore enthusiasts, or globally connected gamers tend to choose English because it aligns with their desired identity within the gaming community. Meanwhile, students who view gaming primarily as a relaxing activity are more likely to select Indonesian to maintain narrative flow and emotional enjoyment. This demonstrates that language learning in games is strongly influenced by how players position themselves socially and personally within the digital environment.

Another important element concerns the role of social interaction and community participation in influencing language selection. Several participants report that their language preferences are shaped by online discussions, friend groups, and international gaming communities. English allows them to interact more easily with global audiences, understand online guides, and participate in broader conversations regarding game mechanics and lore. This matches (Chik, 2014) argument that digital gaming environments encouraged autonomous and socially situated language learning practices. However, the study also finds that not all participants are socially influenced in the same way. Some students maintain highly independent language preferences based entirely on personal comfort and comprehension needs. This highlights the flexible and individualized nature of informal language learning in digital games

The findings of this study offer a contribution that goes beyond what previous studies have addressed. While earlier research, such as (Dien, 2023) and (Azizah & Warni, 2024), primarily focused on measuring vocabulary gain or the general effectiveness of game-based learning through quantitative means, this study reveals the internal decision-making processes that drive language behavior in a localized gaming environment. Specifically, it demonstrates that language choice in Genshin Impact is not a fixed or passive preference, but rather an active and ongoing negotiation shaped by a combination of motivational goals, cognitive capacity, personal identity, and emotional needs. This study also shows that localization quality plays a meaningful role in shaping how students relate to game content, a dimension that has received limited attention in the Indonesian context. Furthermore, by examining players who actively switch between languages rather than treating them as a separate case, this study captures a more realistic picture of how informal language learning actually occurs among Indonesian university students. These findings suggest that future research and educational practice should account for the motivational and psychological dimensions of language use in digital environments, not only the measurable linguistic outcomes.



**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework of Research Novelty: The Active Negotiation of Language Choice

Overall, Genshin Impact functions as a complex multilingual environment where players continuously balance learning motivation, entertainment goals, cognitive effort, and social identity. Informal learning through video games does not occur automatically simply because English is present. Instead, learning emerges through active negotiation between the player’s motivations, engagement level, and willingness to interact with challenging language input. Therefore, language selection in digital games should be understood not only as a gameplay preference, but also as part of a broader process of identity construction, self-development, and meaning-making in contemporary digital culture.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the use of Genshin Impact among non-English major university students in Indonesia creates a highly dynamic informal learning environment. In terms of reader perceptions, most participants experience a positive development in their English reading abilities, specifically regarding vocabulary acquisition and information processing speed. Although navigating complex fantasy terms presents cognitive challenges, students view these difficulties as part of an engaging task-based process that ultimately increases their familiarity with the English language. However, a clear division exists between the technical value of English for accurate narrative representation and the emotional value of Indonesian for localized comfort and entertainment.

The underlying motivations behind these language choices are fundamentally multidimensional. Students who deliberately select English are driven by a conscious desire to use the game as a tool for habituation, long-term self-development, and connection with the global gaming community. Conversely, those who favor Indonesian are motivated by a need for relaxation, prioritizing the removal of cognitive barriers to fully enjoy the narrative flow. These

insights indicate that player autonomy in language selection is strongly dictated by how an individual balances immediate educational goals against personal entertainment needs. Furthermore, localization quality acts as a powerful external factor, where the cultural humor and relatability of the Indonesian translation actively compete with the technical precision of the original English text.

The primary implication of this research is that narratively rich video games should be recognized as highly effective supplementary tools for independent English learning outside the formal classroom. Educators can confidently encourage students to leverage digital media they already enjoy as low-pressure environments for autonomous reading practice. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its specific focus on a single game title and its sample size of 33 verified questionnaire respondents alongside 6 interview participants. Therefore, future research should utilize broader quantitative approaches to measure actual language proficiency levels objectively, or employ longitudinal methods to track reading skill development over a longer period. Additionally, future studies comparing various game genres would provide valuable insights into how different structural game mechanisms produce distinct patterns of language learning motivation.

#### Authorship Contribution Statement

Abiyu: Generating ideas and conceptualization, developing the research design, data collection, data analysis, data presentation, results composition, and managing the entire research process. Seinsiani: Writing the literature review, organizing the discussion and conclusion, and supervising the research.

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