



The Impact of Online Games on Understanding English Subjects in Elementary School Students: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The development of digital technology has brought great influence in the world of education, including in English learning at the elementary school level. One form of technology that is widely used by students is online games. This article aims to examine the impact of online games on the understanding of English subjects through a literature study of ten articles published in the period 2022–2025. Through a descriptive thematic approach, the articles were reviewed to review the impact resulting from the use of online games. The results of the study show that online games contribute positively to improving vocabulary acquisition, comprehension of sentence structure, and student learning motivation. However, negative impacts such as addiction, use of foul language, decreased motivation to learn, and sleep pattern disturbances have also been found. Therefore, the active role of parents and teachers in supervising and directing the use of online games is very important so that the benefits can be maximized and the negative impact is minimized. With wise and controlled use, online games have the potential to become an effective alternative learning medium in improving English language skills in today's digital era. This study is expected to strengthen the pedagogical basis for the use of games as a language medium..

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology in the era of modernization and the era of globalization as it is today has brought significant changes in various aspects of life Halijah et al., (2023) The developments that have occurred in the current era are in the world of technology, communication, and transportation are also experiencing rapid development Nurhijah et al., (2022). One of the developments in the world of technology is the development of online games , especially among students. Online games are not only a means of entertainment, but can also be a medium that has the potential to improve and also support the quality of learning, especially in English learning. Many online games use English as the primary language, be it in play instructions, character dialogue, and interaction between player and player. This allows players, especially students, to be exposed to the vocabulary, sentence structure, and context of English use that have an indirect positive impact.

In the context of learning English, understanding vocabulary is the basis for mastering reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills Ratnalestari, (2023). This is one of the challenges in learning English. Especially with online games, it can be a channel of negative impact in students' daily lives. The negative impacts that students get are such as addiction, harsh speech, lazy learning, lack of sleep and so on Rahmatullah & Diana, (2022). Therefore, the role of parents and teachers is important for children. Parents as the first figure for children are the figures who are the first example and the first teacher for them, with the role of parents in supervising, guiding, and directing can minimize the negative impact that will be experienced by children. Just like a teacher, as the second parent of a child, the teacher provides education, teaching, both subject matter and other moral teachings. Providing knowledge and guidance to its students can be an opening-door for them to reduce online gaming.

Previous research has proven that online games have a positive impact on the comprehension of English language learning, be it in vocabulary acquisition, word spelling, and language skills. The

research in question is a study conducted by Fahonah et al., (2023) which revealed that the group that used online games tended to master and acquire more vocabulary compared to the group that did not use online games. Other studies have shown similar results in terms of language skills, such as research conducted by Octaberlina, (2023) which revealed that the use of music apps and games can affect their vocabulary comprehension and language skills. However, at the same time, online games have a negative impact, which happened in a study conducted by Sunandari et al., (2023) revealed that they often experience emotional turmoil and often speak abusive words that indicate the negative impact of playing online games.

Some of these studies show that there is an influence when using online games in the comprehension of English language learning, be it in the comprehension and mastery of vocabulary, word spelling, and English language skills. Easy access to the internet and also online games among students can provide potential in their application in learning, both English learning and learning other subjects. However, by providing open access to the internet and online games, it is hoped that teachers and parents can provide guidance in using them. So that with supervision and guidance from teachers and parents, they can neutralize the negative impact given by using online games.

Online games are in high demand and so popular at the moment, that it is often found that many people play games either from cellphones, laptops, PCs, or tablets. It is not uncommon for elementary school children to leave the house and go to certain places with their friends just to play games. With many variants of game genres, such as MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games), MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena), FPS (First Person Shooter) allows children to play various games freely. So that it becomes the basic foundation for them to learn about English. With this, the use of Wordwall games and also Quizziz is a medium that teachers can use in learning activities. Despite the prevalence of these games, few systematic reviews have explicitly examined their pedagogical impact, especially in elementary English acquisition contexts. This gap highlights the importance of this review, which aims to assess not just the presence of online gaming but its tangible influence on students' vocabulary development, motivation, and overall English competence.

There have not been many systematic reviews that highlight the direct relationship between online gaming and English comprehension at the primary school level simultaneously. So, through this research, it is hoped that it will be able to open up thinking to understand how the impact of online games, both positive and negative impacts for students, on comprehension in English subjects. With this understanding, it can be expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the potential use of online games as an alternative learning medium in the digital era like today and is expected to always organize the use of online games so that they do not have a negative impact on children.

A. Literature Review

In recent years, there has been an increase in attention to the potential use of online games in learning, especially in English learning at the elementary school level. In this literature review, we will group the results of previous research into three main themes: (1) improvement of vocabulary and language skills, (2) affective impact and motivation of learning, and (3) risks and negative impacts of using online games.

1) Improved Vocabulary and Language Skills

The majority of studies have found that online games can improve English vocabulary mastery for elementary school students. Research conducted by Setya Dewi & Ganing (2022) and Temaja (2023) shows that the use of multimedia-based educational games and e-matching games can significantly enrich students' vocabulary. This finding is reinforced by Octaberlina (2023) who states that the combination of games and music provides a positive stimulus to vocabulary understanding and basic communication skills.

Meanwhile, Fahonah et al. (2023) and Sunandari et al. (2023) emphasized that children who regularly play online games tend to be more familiar with English vocabulary, especially terms that are often used in games such as "jump shot", "buff", or "GG" (good game). This shows that direct and contextual exposure to foreign languages in games can be an effective means of language acquisition

2) Affective Impact and Learning Motivation

Some studies have also highlighted the contribution of online games to the affective aspects of students, such as learning motivation and interest. A study by Asyri et al. (2024) used a quantitative approach and found that Word Wall-based games were able to increase students' learning motivation in five aspects: satisfaction, attention, relevance, confidence, and willingness. Similar findings were stated by Carmelia et al. (2024), who observed that the use of online games can make students feel more enthusiastic and interested in learning English than conventional methods.

3) Risks and Negative Impacts

On the other hand, not all findings show positive results. Several studies highlight the negative impact of online gaming use, especially if it is not properly supervised. Research by Sunandari et al. (2023) noted that although vocabulary improved, students also experienced emotional turmoil and rude speech habits that were mimicked from the gaming environment. Wailissa (2023) and Asy'ary et al. (2023) added that impacts such as addiction, eye fatigue, and sleep pattern disturbances also appear when the intensity of gaming cannot be controlled.

A comparison of the findings between these studies indicates that the effectiveness of the use of online games in English language learning is highly dependent on the context of implementation, the type of game, and the role of supervision from teachers and parents. The use of structured games with an educational approach and good time control tends to produce a positive impact. On the other hand, if used without direction, it will risk causing negative effects that interfere with the student learning process.

4) Implications for Current Research

The synthesis of this literature review strengthens the urgency and relevance of research on the influence of online games on the understanding of English subjects. The gap between positive impacts and negative risks is the basis for this study to offer a more balanced perspective in assessing the potential of online games as an alternative learning medium at the elementary school level.

2. Method

This study uses the Literature Review Study method, which is a method that is carried out by reviewing, analyzing, and summarizing various literature sources that are relevant to the topic being studied. Literature Review Studies aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific problem or phenomenon. Through this approach, researchers can compare various results of previous research and find gaps or gaps in research that can be used as the basis for further research. The process included four main phases:

1. Identification: 23 articles were identified using search engines such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, Mendeley, and Consensus with the keywords: "Online Games" AND "English Learning" and "Elementary School."
2. Screening: Titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance, resulting in 18 articles.
3. Eligibility: Articles were assessed based on inclusion criteria: full-text availability, relevance to elementary English education, use of online games, and being published between 2022– 2025.
4. Inclusion: 10 articles met all criteria and were included for full analysis.

Articles were then analyzed using a thematic content analysis to classify the findings into categories: vocabulary acquisition, motivation, and negative effects. Both qualitative and quantitative findings were synthesized for comparison and triangulation.

This research follows the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and MetaAnalyses) guidelines to facilitate the process of searching and selecting articles. PRISMA is an evidence-based guideline designed to assist researchers in and report on the results of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in a comprehensive and transparent manner. The PRISMA guide includes four main stages, namely Identification (identifying all relevant articles), Screening (screening

articles based on inclusion and exclusion criteria), Eligibility (determining the eligibility of relevant articles), and Included (determining the articles to be analyzed). The guide is used to make the literature review process more directed and objective. The journal search method uses online media such as Google Scholar, Mendeley Search, Consensus, and Semantic Scholar. With the keywords "Online Games" and "English Learning". The articles obtained are 23 articles that have nearly same initial after that remove duplicate article and become 17, after removing duplicate articles the next step is Screening to fine title, abstract and keyword then become 14 articles, the 14 articles that been Screening also enter on Eligibility to find relevant class for the study and found 10 articles that full text, also open access and published from 2022-2025.

For more details, the following are the steps of the PRISMA method in this study can be seen in Figure 1.

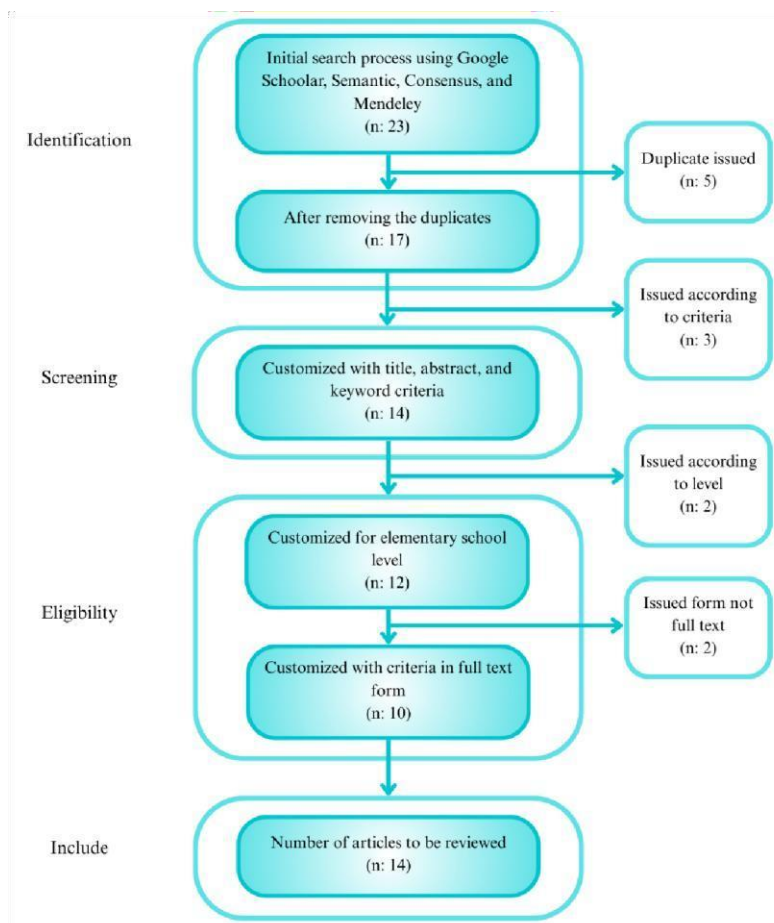


Figure 1. Flow of PRISMA research methods

The articles that have been obtained through the stages of the PRISMA method in the flow image above are then further analyzed and presented in the form of a table. The aspects listed in the analysis table contain important information from each article, such as the title and year of publication, the research method used, as well as the results of the main findings and efforts made related to the use of online games on the understanding of English learning in elementary schools. The purpose of compiling this table is to facilitate comparisons between articles and identify patterns or differences in the approach used, so that researchers can draw more comprehensive and meaningful conclusions from the results of the literature review.

3. Results and Discussion

The inclusion criteria used in this study include articles using Indonesian and English, research articles published in the last 3 years (2022 – 2025), research on online games and understanding of English subjects, be it vocabulary, language acquisition and English language skills, articles that use qualitative and quantitative research methods, articles whose samples come from students at the

level Elementary School, Full Text Articles, and Open Access. Selected articles must meet the inclusion criteria. Articles that are unrelated and unrelated to online gaming towards the understanding of English subjects will be disqualified. The article selection strategy can be seen in the following Table 1:

Table 1. Article Selection Strategy

No	Category Discussion	Search Engines	Search Results
1	Articles of the year 2022-2025	Google Scholar, Consensus, Mendeley Search, Semantic Scholar	23
2	Relevant titles		18
3	Presenting about online games and understanding of English subjects		10
Results Discussed			10

The articles reviewed based on the categorization determined by the researcher, which focuses on the impact caused by online games on the comprehension of English language learning. The selected articles are then presented in the form of Table 2. The following are the results of an analysis of articles related to the impact of online games on English comprehension.

Table 2. Impact of Online Games on Comprehension English Subjects

Article	Purpose	Respond	Method	Findings
Multimedia Interaktif Berbasis Game Edukasi Dua Dimensi Pada Muatan Bahasa Inggris Materi Pengenalan Kosa Kata (Setya Dewi &	The purpose of this study is to introduce English vocabulary using interactive multimedia based on educational games.	9 students in grade VI, including 3 highachieving students, 3 medium-achieving students, and 3 low-achieving students.	Qualitative and quantitative descriptive analysis.	Based on the results of the test, it was shown that they knew vocabulary in English.

Article	Purpose	Respond	Method	Findings
The Implementation of E-Matching Game for English Teaching to Enrich Elementary School Students Vocabulary (I Gede Bagus Wisnu Bayu Temaja, 2023).	The purpose of this study is to improve English vocabulary using E-Matching Game.	Grade V students of SD Lab Undiksha Singaraja	Qualitative and quantitative with pre-test and post-test technique.	According to grade V students of SD Undiksha Singaraja, the use of E-Matching Games is considered good to enrich English vocabulary and they always ask to continue to apply it at the next meeting
Using Games to Learn English for Young Learners in Darussalam Elementary school (Desi Purnama Sari & Evi Lestaria, 2023)	The purpose of this study is to improve English language skills in private schools of SD Darussalam.	Students with special needs, 4 of which are disabled and visually impaired	Qualitative descriptive.	The results obtained from this study showed that they were enthusiastic and gave a positive response during the game where they showed improved language skills and understood what the researcher said and gave.
English for Young Learning Method through Games and Songs for Elementary School (Octaberlina, 2023).	The purpose of this research is to improve language skills and master English vocabulary as much as possible through music and games	Grade 1, 2, and 3 students (5-7 years old) at SD Kota Tulungagung	Qualitative	The results showed that students responded positively in the form of enthusiasm, vocabulary understanding, and language skills during the game
Dampak Penggunaan Game Online Terhadap Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris pada Anak Usia 9-10 Tahun di Gunung Pati, Semarang, Jawa Tengah (Fahonah et al., 2023).	To find out if the use of online games can improve English language skills in children aged 9- 10 years and to identify the influence of online games on children, as well as to find out the impact of online game use on English learning	Elementary school children with an age range of 9-10 years, of which 3 are Rasya, Vino and Azzam.	Qualitative	The results obtained were that the group that used online games tended to master a lot of vocabulary compared to the group that did not use online games, for example jumpshoot, knock down, savage, maniac, buff, attack, rush, weapon, and others.

Article	Purpose	Respond	Method	Findings
Pengaruh Game Online terhadap Perbendaharaan Kata Siswa di Sekolah Dasar (Sunandari et al., 2023).	This study aims to find out how online games affect students' vocabulary in elementary school.	3 elementary school children.	Qualitative	The results of observations and interviews that have been conducted show a positive impact on vocabulary, such as GG stands for Good Game, Safe Zone, Noob, Auto, Pro and others. They also often experience increased emotions and often speak rudely.
The Influence of Online Games on Elementary School Children's Language Acquisition (Asy'ary et al., 2023)	This study aims to explain the language acquisition of children aged 911 years in grade 4 elementary school through a semantic study, namely a study in the form of the meaning of verbs, adjectives, nouns.	24 male students in class 4A of SDIT Ibnu Mas'ud, Ambarawa District, Semarang Regency.	Qualitative	The results showed that 24 boys in class 4A knew and understood vocabulary, as well as the acquisition of English vocabulary had an effect on communication in daily life.
Dampak Game Mobile Legends Terhadap Penguasaan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Pada Siswa SD (Wailissa;, 2023).	This study aims to describe the impact of the Mobile Legends game on the mastery of English vocabulary of elementary school students.	27 students of class 5A SDN Lembursitu	Qualitative and quantitative.	Based on the test results, it shows that the Mobile Legends game has a big impact on the acquisition of English vocabulary by 60%.
Pengaruh Wordwall Online Games (WOW) Terhadap Pembelajaran Kosakata Bahasa Inggris Untuk Siswa Kelas IV Sekolah Dasar (Asyri et al., 2024).	This study aims to determine the increase in the level of student vocabulary performance	121 5th grade students of SDN Negeri Sembilan, but only 60 students participated in the study.	Quantitative	The results of the ttest showed that the online game WordWall (WOW) can improve vocabulary comprehension and improve memory related to word spelling.

Article	Purpose	Respond	Method	Findings
Survei Game Online untuk Meningkatkan Kosakata Dalam Bahasa Inggris di Kelas Tinggi Sekolah Dasar (Carmelia et al., 2024).	The purpose of this study was to gather information and examine how online games help elementary school students' vocabulary in English.	100 students of grades IV (four) and V (five) of SD Negeri Pekojan 03.	Quantitative	Research shows that elementary school students in grades IV (four) and V (five) who use online games have good English vocabulary skills, by 78%. However, a small percentage of students need additional attention from teachers.

Based on the description of the results presented in the table above, it can be seen that the results of the determined research amount to ten. From the ten articles, it can be seen that the use of online games has an effect on the understanding of English learning, be it on the acquisition and mastery of vocabulary, language skills, understanding sentence structure, and increasing students' motivation to learn. The discussion of the article shows that the use of online games can be an alternative solution to learning activities that are considered boring for elementary school students.

Behind the results obtained from the use of online games, it was found that there were negative impacts of several articles discussed, such as addiction, eye pain, harsh speech, and easy emotions which were influenced by several factors, namely the intensity of time when playing in 1 day, losing when playing, and often absorbing harsh words that should not be digested and spoken. So with this, supervision from teachers and parents is expected to be able to regulate the use of online games so as not to cause children to become addicted to playing online games.

3.1. Results and Discussion 2

The findings reveal that while most studies demonstrate positive vocabulary acquisition through online games (e.g., game-specific terms such as "buff," "maniac," or "safe zone"), the scope of analysis is often limited. Only three studies (e.g., Asyri et al., 2024; Carmelia et al., 2024; Temaja, 2023) implemented pre-post testing methods, while others relied on observational or interview-based qualitative reports. There is a lack of triangulation and rigorous instrument testing in the quantitative data presented.

Moreover, most of the reviewed studies do not articulate a specific theoretical framework, leaving a gap in understanding the cognitive or socio-constructivist mechanisms at play. From a Vygotskian perspective, games that include peer interaction simulate authentic learning experiences. Yet, very few studies directly analyzed collaborative learning behavior, dialogue complexity, or pronunciation improvement. This suggests a need for future studies to focus on experimental designs with larger samples and clearer language-skill measurements (e.g., syntactic mastery, pragmatics, listening comprehension) beyond vocabulary memorization.

1) Online Games in English Learning

The phenomenon of improving English vocabulary and skills through online games can be explained through the concepts of behaviourist and constructivist theories. The behaviorist, as formulated by B.F. Skinner, repetition and reinforcement are the source of learning. Indirectly, online games have provided a reinforcement system, namely in the form of scores, levels, rewards, and challenges, to motivate players to stay engaged. As long as students fail or succeed in playing, they understand or use English terms correctly in the context of the game sooner or later, they also get a positive experience that strengthens the relationship between stimuli (words/sentences in the game).

On the other hand, the constructivist view emphasizes that new learning occurs when individuals actively construct meaning based on experience. Viewed from this perspective, students

do not only study the material passively, but also actively learn it, namely in forming language understanding through in-game interactions, either through instructions, dialogue, or collaboration between players. Online games based on narrative, strategy, or collaboration, such as in the MMORPG or MOBA genre, create an active and motivating learning environment.

From the results of the review of 10 articles, most of the studies do not emphasize the explicit use of theoretical frameworks. The majority only present observational data and interview results without linking them to a specific learning model, so that the meaning of the research results becomes less deep. In addition, most studies are descriptive and use small, non-random sampling, which reduces the generalization of the findings. For example, a study by Sunandari et al. (2023) that only involved three students as informants, which makes its conclusions not widely applicable.

In the context of education in Indonesia, the use of online games as a learning tool has great potential, but it is hindered by structural challenges. Students have not fully received equal access to sufficient internet facilities and quotas. Digital inequality between regions and limited infrastructure facilities for each school are one of the main obstacles. In addition, the lack of digital literacy from teachers and parents is also an obstacle in utilizing the potential of game learning. With that obstacle, making strategic plans and learning models using online games is delayed. As a result, the learning to do system also provides less opportunities for exploratory learning and based experiences, as online games say.

Although the results of the study show a positive trend of the use of online games towards English language learning, there is a need for more progressive education policies, relevant teacher training, and curriculum approach strategies that allow for pedagogical and strategic integration of digital media.

2) English as a Competency for Elementary School Age Children

Strengthening English skills through online game media is in line with the principles of second language acquisition (SLA). In the constructivist framework developed by Vygotsky, social interaction and scaffolding became an important component. Online games that allow teamwork or competition between players can serve as an effective mediation environment in language acquisition. In addition, the use of English in the context of play makes the learning process more meaningful because it is tied to real situations that are relevant to the child's world.

The studies reviewed tend to emphasize explicit vocabulary acquisition, but most have not systematically measured other linguistic skills, such as syntax, phonology, or pragmatics. There are almost no studies that examine speaking or listening skills directly and measurably. Research conducted by Octaberlina (2023), for example, mentions the improvement of language skills in general, but does not detail what type of skills are measured and with what kind of instruments.

In terms of approach, most studies use descriptive qualitative methods without adequate data triangulation. The lack of validity and reliability tests of the instruments in quantitative studies is also a weakness. Few articles use pre-tests and post-tests to measure effectiveness empirically.

The context of basic education in Indonesia places English as a local or extracurricular content in many regions, so the time and approach tend to be limited. In fact, the digital era has opened up opportunities for Indonesian children to be exposed to English naturally through digital media. This is where online games can be a bridge between a formal curriculum and an informal learning environment. However, this requires a learning strategy that focuses not only on academic outcomes, but also on the student's learning process and experience.

Given the great potential and challenges that exist, a blended learning approach that combines conventional methods with online and digital game media needs to be seriously considered in education policies, especially at the elementary school level. In addition, there needs to be a clear pedagogical and evaluative framework so that the use of games is not only spontaneous or based on the teacher's individual initiative, but becomes an integrated part of the national English literacy development strategy.

3) The Impact of Online Game Use

a) Positive Impact

With the use of online games as a medium for learning English, of course, it has a considerable positive impact, not only in the acquisition of vocabulary, but users can increase their relationship with the outside world by just playing online games. The positive impact that can be felt certainly has a significant effect in daily activities, for example when operating televisions, washing machines or electronic goods that use English as the main language in instruction for their use, in addition to that in English learning activities students are able to understand some vocabulary and sentence structures that may not have been taught at school. This is evidenced by research conducted by (Ratnalestari, 2023) where the study found that children who play online games experience an increase in English vocabulary when interacting in online games.

b) Negative Impact

With the positive impact given when playing online games, both directly and indirectly, there are still negative impacts while using online games. Generally, online games are developed with the aim of entertainment and learning, but then there are too many online game users and too often spend time just playing online games, so that activities that can be said to be useful for physical or mental health are not carried out. The negative impact produced by playing online games too often can cause sore eyes, easy to be ignited by emotions, especially when losing play, addiction, laziness, too often saying rudely and so on. The negative impact will damage personal and mental health, both slowly and quickly.

3.2. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research analysis, it can be concluded that online games play an important role in understanding English subjects, especially at the elementary school level. The positive impact generated in using online games can improve, acquire, and strengthen students in language skills. This is due to the use of English as the main language in play instruction, dialogue, and interaction in online games, so that it indirectly encourages students to learn independently.

With these positive impacts, of course, there are negative impacts that cannot be underestimated if there is no supervision. Harsh speech, addiction, eye fatigue, disturbances in sleep patterns and learning motivation are all negative impacts that occur when playing online games. This negative impact often occurs due to the lack of supervision of parents and teachers, as well as weak management of students' time in dividing time between learning and playing.

Therefore, an active role of parents and teachers is needed to guide, supervise and direct students in using online games wisely. The use of online games in teaching and learning activities does have a significant impact, but it must be designed and utilized in a structured manner. With the results of this research, it can be an encouragement in curriculum planning and the development of a more planned learning model based on educational games that can be used by elementary school students. Planning strategies and the right approach, online games have great potential to become an effective, efficient, fun, and relevant means of learning English to the changing times. In addition, the next research is expected to examine more specifically the impact of online games on the understanding of English learning in all aspects of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) at various levels of education. Apart from that, curriculum planning and the development of learning models along with game-based learning strategies can be developed in a more structured and directed manner to maximize the potential use of online games and minimize the negative impact that online games have on students.

Author Contributions

Bimo Nugroho Budiansyah: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review and Editing.

Candra Utama: Supervision and Validation.

All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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