

# Unlocking the Power of Online Gaming: Exploring Its Potential as a Language and Communication Tool in the English Classroom - A Survey

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## Abstract

Online games are believed to have excellent potential because they can hold students' attention for long durations. It empowers the learners to participate more actively in the whole learning process. Communication is crucial in industry and higher education, so students must be proficient in LSRW (listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills. This study used a quantitative research method, a survey questionnaire, to gather tertiary-level students' perspectives on utilising online games to strengthen language and communication abilities. The participants in this study were tertiary-level students, and their ages ranged between 17 and 24 years. Google Forms was used to gather the responses to the survey. The collected data has been analysed using the SPSS (Statistical software for the social sciences). The result of the study shows that the use of online games in English language learning is becoming more popular, and learners are more interested to learn and practice the language through online games.

**Keywords:** online games, communication skills, tertiary-level students

## 1. Introduction

Online games have a lot of potential because they can keep learners focused for long periods of time. Games play an essential role in the educational process, student motivation, and student interest. It is suitable for various academic contexts, and most learning goals may be attained through games (Prensky, 2001). According to (Gee, 2010), Well-designed challenges in games provide a source of motivation for player development and progression. Games require a lot of skill because players must follow the rules to reach their goals. Learners need regular practice to acquire a certain skill, and motivation is critical to consistent practice. It does, however, stimulate students' creativity and information retention. English is the most widely spoken language in the world, and it has become a must language to speak to join higher education or jobs. Currently, technically proficient students are deficient in communication. Communication is crucial in industry and academia, so students must be proficient in LSRW (listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) skills. When students listen, they are exposed to a wide range of English usage, including vocabulary, fluency, intonation, and accent, which ultimately leads to fluency in speaking the language. When it comes to reading, it's a receptive skill that expands one's vocabulary and advances the understanding of a specific topic. Reading proficiency is a complex process that requires both natural development and formal instruction. It may be developed with the assistance of modern technology. During this epidemic, students' use of electronic devices expanded manifold. Researchers have discovered that the incidence of depression and anxiety among students has grown (Pandya & Lodha, 2021). They relate this to the rapidly increasing use of online courses and students' unregulated use of technological devices. Recent research shows that technology may speed up learning processes, detect students' needs, and optimise assessment procedures (Zhang & Nunamaker, 2003).

## 2. Background

Students are always highly motivated to engage in game-based learning. Rather than more conventional forms like pen and paper, technology can stimulate students' interest in literacy activities. In the last 20 years, more study has reportedly been done on game-based learning (Felicia, 2012; Gee, 2010; Ke, 2009; Prensky, 2001; Squire, 2005).

(Yolageldili & Arikan, 2011) concentrated on accurate grammar and listening comprehension, while (Connolly et al., 2011) taught stories using alternative reality games. According to (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012), games improve students' verbal ability and comprehension. (Vandercruysse et al., 2013) claim that competitive gaming increases challenge, concentration, motivation, and participation. (Reinders & Wattana, 2014) Findings suggest that participants feel more comfortable, optimistic, less feared, and more willing to talk. (Khazaee et al., 2016) Employed two sets of participants, players, and observers, but the results were almost similar. According to (Wichadee & Pattanapichet, 2018), the intervention group was more motivated and outperformed the control group in terms of test scores. Since the development of games, several experiments have been conducted to see whether they can be used to teach players a certain skill. In addition, the study outcomes showed that students were excited about employing online digital games in ESL (English as a Second Language) classrooms. ICT (Information and Communications Technology) resources, like online games, can be used in the classroom to help students learn English.

### **3. Rationale**

The survey study examines students' perspectives on online games and technology in language acquisition. Furthermore, governments and educational institutions have not yet suggested a specific policy framework or regulations for using games and technology in education. It is evident in many areas across Europe, the United States, and Australia, where it is the role of the teacher or institution to include games in the curriculum (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2017). Online games depend on the same procedures and rules that are applied in the classroom to help with learning. For effective language education, game-based learning includes a range of learning methods. Game-based learning strategies are a novel way to increase students' reading abilities while playing a game. Therefore, this research is aimed to see how effective online games are in improving language and communication skills and student perspectives in the English classroom.

### **4. Online Games**

Today's technology provides more tools than ever, which may be applied to improve the teaching and learning process. Online games are exciting tools that have predetermined rules and objectives, and they also have an element of enjoyment. Online games are a great way to learn a language. It assists learners in developing several skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also helps the learners with their vocabulary skills. Playing games with conversation can help learners hear and pronounce words more clearly. The game also helps promote reading skills as the learner must read the conversation to complete the levels. Online games have graphics, music, and animation that help children associate new words with images or audible cues and also help them understand terms better. Graphics, music, and animation help learners connect new words to pictures or sounds in online games. They also help learners understand words better by seeing them frequently and using them in different contexts. Teachers will find it more entertaining to see learners playing a video game than when the class is passively listening to a lecture or watching a video. With the help of online video games, teachers can get their students to compete with each other in a friendly way. Teachers may use the potential of gaming in the classroom by making it accessible and encouraging students to finish a series of levels. It enables students to participate more, work more diligently, and be more interested in classroom activities. There are many websites where learners can play free language games. For example, Learn English Today provides 135 free word games to help learners improve their English vocabulary while having fun doing it.

### **5. Online Games in English Language Teaching**

In recent years, there has been a rapid development of online gaming. Children who used to enjoy playing more conventional games with their peers in public places like streets and parks now prefer to do it on the computer in various virtual electronic settings (Horzum et al., 2008; Gentile, 2009). An online game is a game that is played over a network; all that is often required to play internet games is a web browser, a game application, and the appropriate device. Online gaming is more than an excellent way to spend time, like watching television or movies. It is also a source of income. Players engage in extensive interaction with one another as well as with the game itself. Educational researchers have proposed that games play a significant role in the psychological, social, and cognitive development that occurs throughout childhood (Hsiao et al., 2006). Games may be educationally beneficial when used in a classroom or any other learning environment.

Game-based learning remains one of the most successful teaching tools that can be used to facilitate creative learning. Researchers say that computer game-based learning stands out above all other forms of game-based learning because it offers a freely virtual game-based learning environment and elaborate multimedia effects in the learning environment (Hsiao et al., 2006). In today's world, many gadgets, such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops, are available to play online games with free virtual reality. The use of online games as educational tools is on the rise in various fields. (Zirawaga et al., 2017) Online games have the potential to stimulate students' attention, motivate them, and help them improve their cognitive abilities. From an educational perspective, online games provide a fun and engaging way for students to learn about various subjects while enhancing their academic skills. Online games now provide the most significant English exposure and the most exciting experiences (Cheung & Ng, 2021).

## 6. Interpersonal Skills

Communication is essential to human existence. Communication skills are the core in order to successfully connect with other people. The phrase "communication skills" involves both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication. Oral aspects include listening, speaking, and exchanging ideas and information. Non-oral aspects include facial expressions and hand gestures etc. English has become the lingua franca of business, scientific research, and future technologies. English plays a special role in having a better life because it gives you a better job and a way out of poverty and suffering. Learning English makes it possible to collaborate and communicate internationally, which is crucial in a rapidly changing world. Increasing one's English communication abilities to a higher degree might improve one's personal and professional life chances. Communication skills are becoming increasingly important in today's world, and more professions need workers with a higher level of communication proficiency. In the classroom environment, clear and effective communication may positively impact the learning process. It might be challenging for students to develop their oral communication skills and put such skills into practice while they are in a classroom (CheeKeong et al., 2014)

People with low communication skills tend to isolate themselves by avoiding face-to-face interaction. This keeps them socially isolated. As a result, people feel alone, have high levels of social anxiety, low self-confidence, a high risk of anxiety, depression, violent behaviour, and feel like they don't belong. Loneliness is something that can be seen in every stage of an individual's life. A person is said to be lonely when they experience an increase in anxiety, resentment at their surroundings, unhappiness, and the sense of being different from other people, as well as when they are unable to fulfil the desire for connection to the community. Connection with the community starts with good communication.

## 7. Research Questions

1. What are the students' perceptions of using online games in the English classroom?
2. What is the significance of online games in motivating learners to enhance their language and communication skills?

## 8. Objectives

1. The study aims to investigate tertiary-level students' perspectives on online games in language teaching.
2. To explore the interests and attitudes of the students in language learning.
3. To identify and analyse the impact of online games on the development of communication skills in language learning classes.
4. To evaluate the familiarity with online language learning games and provide recommendations based on the survey findings.

## 9. Research Method

This study has used a quasi-experimental design with a survey questionnaire to gather tertiary-level students' perspectives on utilising online games to strengthen language and communication abilities. The first step was a survey conducted on students from almost every academic field. A survey is one of the most frequent ways of gathering data about attitudes and views from a large number of people. In addition to being convenient, the fundamental benefit of using questionnaires is that they collect complete information from students in a very short period. A questionnaire was created on Google Forms and distributed over social media. After the survey, the collected data was analysed in the second step using the SPSS (Statistical software for the social sciences) software to determine the mean, median, standard deviation, frequency, descriptive statistics, percentage, and Cronbach's alpha. The third step is presenting the results in the form of a discussion based on the research findings. Finally, the study will provide broad conclusions and recommendations for teachers, language instructors, researchers, and other professionals.

### 9.1 Participant

The participants in this study were tertiary-level students, and their ages ranged between 17 and 24 years. A random survey was used in order to collect the primary data that was used in this study. The researcher anticipated that having respondents from a wide range of areas would produce more positive outcomes; hence, respondents from a wide variety of fields were requested for the study. The study considered only students who had played online games in order to obtain accurate results. The respondents were given a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions that had been prepared by the researcher in Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared with the respondents. The responses of 166 individuals were gathered for analysis.

## 10. Findings and Discussion

The use of online games to improve communication skills in English language learning is becoming more popular. The

survey was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaires were treated to a reliability test in SPSS (Statistical software for the social sciences), and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient result is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of The Questionnaire

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.896	.897	15

The findings, summarised in Table 2, indicate that playing online games is beneficial for developing communication skills and language learning. A vast amount of research indicates the benefits of using online games in the classroom. Research has concluded that online games can improve language and communication skills (Khazaee et al., 2016; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012).

Table 2. Survey Questionnaire (15 Items), N=166

Survey Method	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Frequency				
				1	2	3	4	5
I like to play online games	3.35	1.111	166	13	24	41	68	20
I often play online games	2.97	1.157	166	20	39	47	46	14
I usually play online games alone	2.96	1.157	166	18	47	38	50	13
I usually play online games with my friends	3.01	1.186	166	21	39	36	57	13
Discussions during online gaming sessions help me to understand my language abilities	3.24	1.113	166	12	32	45	58	19
I easily become deeply involved in an online game	2.99	1.201	166	22	37	45	45	17
Playing the online game makes me lose all track of time	3.27	1.141	166	12	34	38	61	21
Online games are simple enough to play and effective in developing language and communication	3.12	1.066	166	16	27	54	59	10
I face difficulty understanding the concepts in online games	2.60	1.033	166	21	65	47	26	7
I can understand the appropriate meaning of the word or sentences used in online games.	3.50	.983	166	7	18	46	75	20
The game strengthens the impact of language and communication skills	3.35	1.038	166	10	24	46	70	16
I acquire new words while playing story-based online games	3.46	1.093	166	10	24	35	73	24
In post-reading, I like to look at other sources to learn more about the story in the game.	3.40	.972	166	7	22	50	72	15
The strategies implemented in story-based games are useful in developing reading skills	3.50	1.014	166	8	17	48	70	23
I will recommend online games to learners who want to enhance	2.71	1.118	166	35	29	51	51	-

After the data was collected and analysed, 41.5% of the students agreed that they like to play online games. This shows that online gaming is more popular among the surveyed students. Studies(Writer, 2019) have shown that students are more likely to learn and participate in class activities if they are allowed to play games. 42.1% of the students agreed that they like to play games with their friends, which helps them work together and take the initiative when playing educational games. Playing online games is not only a pleasurable and sociable way to pass the time, but it also promotes skills development and encourages teamwork.

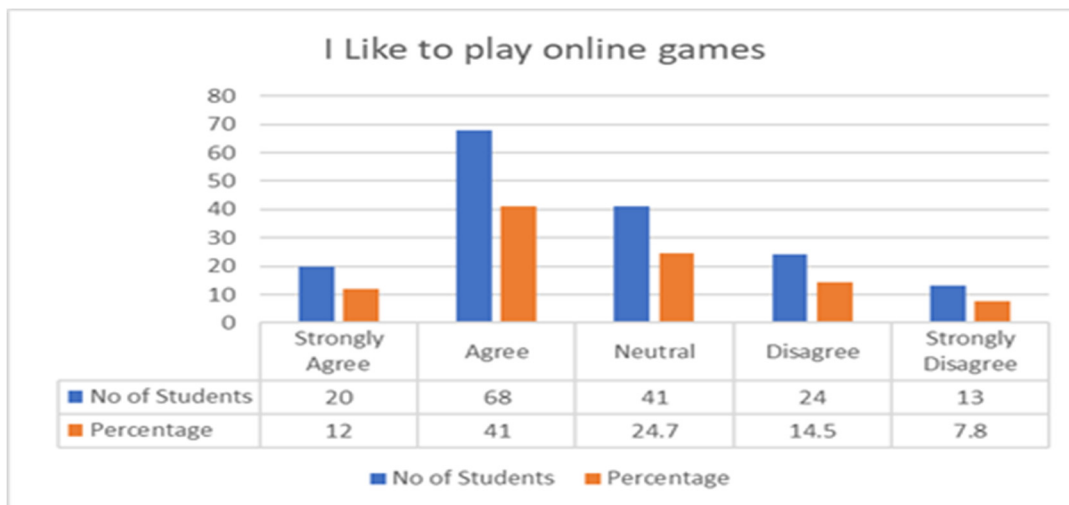


Figure 1. I Like to Play Online Games

Online games are a popular way for people to spend their free time. Some people believe that playing video games can serve a variety of purposes: to learn, to relieve stress, to compete with others, to relax, to have fun, to meet new people, and even to mentally escape from the real world (Dumrique & Castillo, 2018). Online games are a beneficial tool that can be used to help students develop the necessary skills to be successful in the language training process. Playing online games with friends leads to better teamwork and understanding. 34.3% of students said they like playing online games with friends.

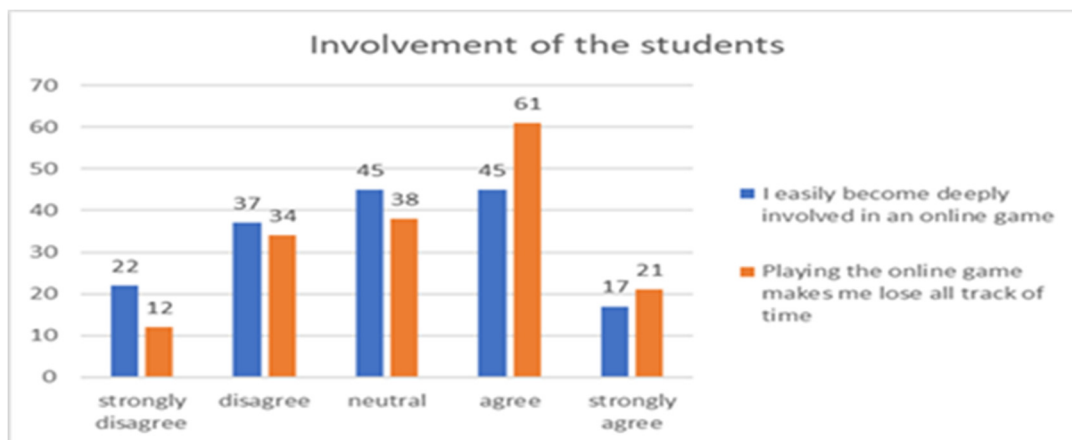


Figure 2. Involvement of The Students

Online games engage players' minds more, particularly while playing puzzle-based games. It fosters engagement and helps players enhance their problem-solving abilities through simulations and massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). Additionally, it aids in decision-making under pressure, particularly in adventure games that need players to be aware, active, and strategic (Dumrique & Castillo, 2018). The games provide a suitable environment for learning because they are interactive and require students to participate actively in the learning process. Figure 3 shows that 34.9% of the students agree that discussion during online gaming sessions helps them to understand their language abilities. Furthermore, there are several additional advantages to playing the games. The games can help students improve their ability to focus. 35.5 % of the students responded that online games are simple enough to play and effective for developing language and communication skills.

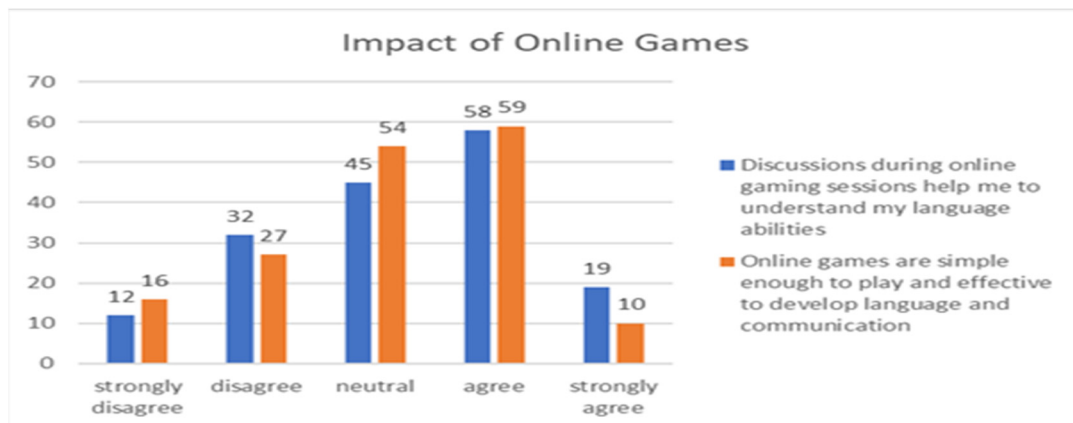


Figure 3. Impact of Online Games

Online games have an influence on language learners in a variety of ways. They give students a chance to use different words in real-life situations, which helps them improve their pronunciation and gives them the confidence to communicate clearly (AlJemely, 2022). Online games help students by providing them with opportunities to practice skills in a fun and engaging manner. It allows young learners to read, improves their reading skills and self-confidence, fosters creativity, helps them maintain good relationships with their neighbours and friends, and supports mental health. Furthermore, online games have proven to be very effective in helping students achieve proficiency in a second language (Ke, 2009; Prensky, 2001; Squire, 2005). 45.2 % of respondents agreed that they could understand the appropriate meaning of the words or sentences used in online games. It helps students gain confidence, encourages active engagement and participation, and generates excitement about learning. 44% of the students are in favour of acquiring new words while playing story-based online games.

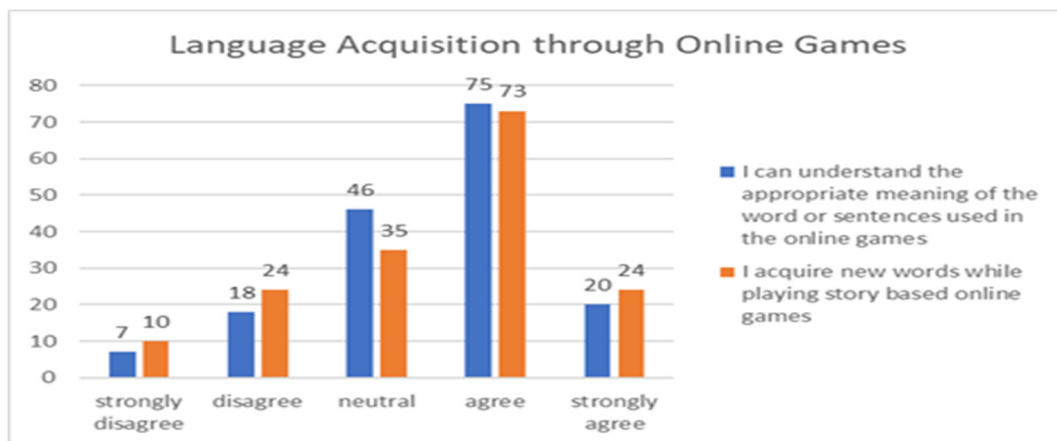


Figure 4. Language Acquisition Through Online Games

The data analysis shows that students are particularly interested in playing online games to master the language and improve their communication abilities. Games help people get better at paying attention and coming up with ideas (*Playing Video Games May Improve Your Memory and Attention*, 2023). However, it could help students take an active role in the process of learning. Online games are one of the tools with rules and goals already set, and they can also be fun. Playing games that require conversation can help students hear and communicate better. The game also helps students learn to read because they must read the chat to move on to the next level. It seems that the students prefer to play and study with their friends; as shown in the result, a majority of the students stated that they like playing online games with their friends.

**11. Conclusion**

The research highlights the effectiveness of online games and students' perceptions of online games, and it elaborates on how games might help students improve their reading skills in English-language classrooms. The perceptions of the students show that online games are an exceptional tool for language learning. Online games are a great way to learn a language. It assists learners in developing several skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It also helps the learners with their vocabulary skills. The study just focused on broad aspects of language development, such as communication skills and online games; it did not focus on any particular topic. However, when the same research is

conducted on a specific topic, the findings may differ. Teachers could find it more entertaining to observe students playing online games than passively listening to a lecture or watching a video. Teachers can encourage their students to compete in a friendly manner by using online video games. Teachers can harness the power of gaming in the classroom by making it available and encouraging students to focus on learning. Several issues must be resolved before games may be used in the classroom. Concerns related to the ethical, legal, and economic implications of employing these techniques might fall under this category. In addition, choosing the right game in which students can participate effectively is essential. Overall, the results of this survey indicate that online games could provide a positive and effective way to improve language and communication skills.

## 12. Limitations

A major limitation of this survey study is that it was conducted using a limited number of questions and participants. Future research focused on assessing what students and instructors think about commonly used edutainment games in the English classroom which may include more students from various colleges to ensure that the results are accurate. In addition to that, the use of triangulation, for instance, by conducting interviews, would be a very beneficial way to enhance knowledge on the subject of this study. Even though this study has some limitations with regard to the students' perspectives, students showed a great deal of interest in utilising online games to improve their language skills.

## 13. Scope for Further Studies

Further study is needed to fully understand the benefits of using online games in teaching language in the classroom. According to (Martins & Gresse Von Wangenheim, 2022), game-based learning research is only emerging, and there is much to learn about teaching content, pedagogical strategies, and technical support options. Various studies on online game-based learning have been conducted in many countries. While instructors may benefit from this data, additional research studies using online language learning games need to be conducted in colleges. In order to apply the findings to a wider population, more research with higher sample sizes was recommended in a number of studies. It is necessary to do further research on instructional techniques, resources, and the effects of online game-based learning on student motivation. Creative strategies employed by the teachers and the intercultural nuances in language that students learn while interacting with students from other regions are to be noted. The proficiency and fluency inculcated in the students' minds are to be given a thorough analysis through testing and evaluation. This survey looked at how students felt about using online games as a teaching tool to inspire and involve students in literacy-related activities. Based on the survey result, colleges and universities with the necessary technological infrastructure to enable game-based learning can consider offering their students the opportunity to study through online games.

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**Appendix A**

I like to play online games.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I often play online games.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I usually play online games alone.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I usually play online games with my friends.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Discussions during online gaming sessions help me to understand my language abilities.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I easily become deeply involved in an online game.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Playing the online game makes me lose all track of time.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Online games are simple enough to play and effective to develop language and communication.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I face difficulty understanding the concepts in online games

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I can understand the appropriate meaning of the word or sentences used in the online games

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The game strengthens the impact of language and communication skills.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I acquire new words while playing story-based online games.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

In post-reading, I like to look at other sources to learn more about the story in the game.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

The strategies implemented in story-based games are useful in developing reading skills.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

I will recommend online games to the learners who want to enhance their language skills.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

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