D-ESL

Inclusive video game design ideas for a language course
Benefits of Video Games for your students

How can video games help with SLDs?

Introduction

Myths and negative stereotypes surround **video games** when they actually **bring many benefits to the players**. They can be even more beneficial for students with **Specific Learning Disorders** (henceforth **SLDs**), who may:

- o have low self-esteem,
- o be depressed,
- o be unmotivated,

With intrinsic engaging and motivating aspects, games can be a very powerful addition to language classes.

Benefits that games can bring

Motivation and engagement

The main advantage that may come to mind is that **video games can help your students become enthusiastic learners, by building their self-confidence**.

Games can be very **engaging and motivating**. They usually come with a **reward system** (trophies, levels, items, etc.), which makes them particularly suitable for learning. Engagement and motivation with games comes also from the fact that games provide **a safe, fun environment,** where students feel more comfortable experimenting and don't fear making mistakes.

Increased attention

Games can help capture students' attention. Not only because they are appealing and fun, encouraging students to be focused on the game, but **games can also train students' focus time**. Research indicates that games can assist students experiencing attention problems. A study, for instance, indicates that playing action games for a certain amount of time can drastically improve the reading abilities of children with dyslexia (Franceschini, et al, 2013).

Memorisation

Games can help students practice critical points of a school subject, with **active participation**. This fosters **deeper memorisation**, as it can ensure that students go beyond rote memorisation. In addition, game mechanics may promote repetition of more difficult points.

Planification &Time management

Many productivity apps offer time management and planification tools in a more engaging way, by adopting game mechanics. Having a to-do list with a **reward system** (levels, trophies, badges etc.), for instance, may help with motivation..

Take a look at our sheet "Gamified platforms for planification and for language learning".

Development of key skills

Games may help develop several key everyday life skills. For instance, because they commonly include some sort of puzzles, they are very good at helping players develop **problem-solving skills**. Games can, by often being very visually stimulating, can also **train visual skills**. People that have a biased picture of games may be surprised to learn that they can help develop **social skills**. There is a multitude of games where players interact with each other and have to collaborate in order to win.

Choosing a game

Even though games offer lots of benefits**, teachers should carefully choose what game they want** to incorporate into their learning sequences. Whereas **you could encourage playing games at home** when you think students could benefit from it, **the content of a game to use in class should make sense with the content of the class**.

Moreover, **some games may fit your case better than others, and be more inclusive than others**. For instance, they may involve more difficult physical manipulation, not give enough time for your students to complete the game objectives, or not offer suitable accessibility options.

Conclusion

Video games often get a bad press, even though they can bring a **number of cognitive benefits and are a valuable learning tool**. Fostering motivation and engagement, games can also help with attention and memorisation, which make them **even more adequate for students with SLDs**. They may also train key skills, such as problem-solving, visual and social skills.

Resources and references

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