



CALL RESEARCH BRIEF

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Title: Summary of L2 writing practice: Game enjoyment as a key to engagement	
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Original Text Allen, L. K., Crossley, S. A., Snow, E. L., & McNamara, D. S. (2014). L2 writing practice: Game enjoyment as a key to engagement. <i>Language Learning & Technology</i> , 18(2), 124–150. http://llt.msu.edu/issues/june2014/varneretal.pdf	
Rationale /Overview of the study This study investigated the effects of using the app Writing Pal (W-Pal), which provides explicit writing instruction and educational games, on students' engagement, motivation, and writing improvement. This study compared first language (L1) and second language (L2) students' writing experiences using W-Pal. Forty-two high school students in the US participated in the study in 10 sessions over four weeks. The 10 sessions were divided into two sessions for pre- and post-test, while eight sessions were for main writing activities involving W-Pal. The findings indicated that the L2 students reported higher levels of engagement and enjoyment with the W-Pal writing practice than the L1 students that recognized boredom due to game difficulty. Additionally, the L2 students demonstrated improvement in their writing performance. The study concluded that using game elements in writing practice for both L1 and L2 students increased their perceived engagement and enjoyment, leading to optimal writing performance. However, The results of L2 students demonstrated stronger relation between game enjoyment and overall enjoyment. It suggested that a game-based approach to language learning can be beneficial to motivate and engage language learners in the learning process.	
Research methods Approach: The researchers conducted an experimental study focusing on the use of W-Pal. Both L1 and L2 groups used W-Pal for the entire eight sessions. Participants: Forty-two students consisting of 16 L2 and 26 L1 speakers of English participated in the study. They were identified as male (18) and female (24). The participants were recruited via various means such as internet advertisements, flyers, and informal invites. The present study focused on the relation between language background, predicted game enjoyment, and overall engagement in W-Pal writing exercises	

Focal Activity: The Writing Pal (W-Pal) tutoring system was used as a writing exercise in game-based activities for both L1 and L2 participants for eight sessions within four weeks. The W-Pal contained lessons in video format and game-based writing exercises with automated feedback for users.

Data Collection: A pre-test and post-test, including a writing proficiency section (25-minute SAT-style essay), were the primary tool to collect the data on participants' writing performance. Supplementary instruments used were reading skills tests, vocabulary knowledge tests, self-reported writing attitude and perception surveys, and writing strategy knowledge surveys.

Data analysis: The researchers examined the improvement between L1 and L2 writers' performance after the main activity in the W-Pal by comparing the pre-test and post-test essay scores. Self-reported survey results were collected to measure students' attitude and engagement in game-based writing activities.

Results

The study provides empirical evidence that:

1. Integrating W-Pal game-based activities in writing practice fosters engagement and motivation for language learners.
2. L2 students, particularly in this study, reported high levels of enjoyment and interest when using W-Pal.
3. Game-based activities supported the improvement of both L1 and L2 students' writing proficiency.
4. No specific features of the W-Pal were identified as affecting L2 students' engagement in the learning activities and writing progress.

Practical Implications

This study adds to the body of research on integrating digital games into writing activities. It indicates that W-Pal has the potential to be an engaging tool, particularly in writing class. The study also shows that:

1. Using game-based activities can be an effective strategy to engage students and increase their motivation in writing exercises, as this study evidently recognized stronger relation between students' positive experience with games and their holistic views of the task activities.
2. W-Pal can provide immediate feedback on students' writing, helping them identify areas of strength and weakness in their work, and providing opportunities to practice and improve writing skills.
3. W-Pal can engage L2 students in writing activities and improve their literacy skills.

The present study measured students' motivations, engagement, and perceived learning by using self-reported survey. Future studies should consider observing classroom activities that reflect students' active participation and positive progress in the task. In that way, researchers can accurately describe students' engagement. Additionally, studies can explore engaging learning with educational games by recruiting a higher number of participants, which allows more generalizable results.

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers can

1. Explore games that are engaging and enjoyable to students as a writing practice strategy and integrate them into class activities.
2. Encourage students' collaboration through game-based writing practice to complete a writing task.

3. Provide feedback on students' writing tasks within the games or after completing the games as it is of key importance in improving students' writing.

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