

# Using Mainstream Video Games to Promote Learner Motivation towards English as a Second Language in Tertiary Level Education

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Prominent thinkers and researchers in the field of ELT/L (English Language Teaching/Learning) such as R.C. Gardner and Stephen Krashen stress on the importance of student motivation, attitudes and on the importance of interesting/ compelling learning material to trigger the two former factors {ex: Krashen's *Compelling (not just interesting) Input Hypothesis*}. As such, this study was designed to investigate whether MVGs (Mainstream Video Games)<sup>1</sup> can be successfully incorporated into formal ELT/L environments at tertiary level of education to promote student motivation towards learning ESL (English as a Second Language). For the purpose of this research, 75 First year undergraduates of Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, belonging to the Intermediate level of English Language proficiency were exposed to ESL lessons based on MVGs on a particular day of the week (Friday) when their attendance is lowest, for 12 weeks. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used to triangulate the data. The analysis of quantitative data (attendance records of students) revealed that the use of MVGs in ELT/L can lead to dramatic improvement in student attendance (94.9% attendance as an average). Content/ discourse analysis and thematic analysis methods were deployed to analyze the qualitative data i.e., 70 questionnaires given to students and interviews with students (10) and instructors (2). Through the analysis of qualitative data, certain dominant aspects of ESL lessons based on MVGs were identified which were responsible for effecting major attitudinal change in students towards the teacher, the ESL programme and towards learning ESL. For instance, it was found that the MVG based lessons were catalytic in triggering active learning as opposed to passive learning, student-centered learning, providing a sense of achievement and boosting the self-confidence of students. These attitudinal changes were identified to have enhanced and intensified the motivational levels of students towards learning ESL. Since the introduction of MVGs made an overwhelmingly positive change to the ESL learning atmosphere, it is suggested that MVGs should be utilized as a learning aid or a method in ELT/L contexts.

**Keywords:** Mainstream Video Games, Learner Motivation, ESL, Tertiary Level Education

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<sup>1</sup> Video Games are typically used for entertainment purposes and not for educational purposes.