

## VIDEO GAMES: A SPRINGBOARD FOR ENHANCING STUDENTS' L2C

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### ABSTRACT

Scholars believe that to learn a new language successfully, an optimal situation is required. Brown (2007) has enumerated several principles that a successful classroom should be imbued with; one of these principles that play an integral role in second language education (SLA) is self-confidence. Sampasivam and Clément (2014) outline a functional model that explains how rich forms of contact can enable L2 learners to develop their second language confidence (L2C). Based upon current studies, one of the best avenues for augmenting the self-confidence of learners is to provide a learning environment and atmosphere where language learners can attain their self-confidence step-by-step in a safe environment. Similarly, one of the best strategies to achieve this is Task-based language teaching (TBLT) where not only the seeds of self-confidence can be implanted within learners, but the gradual progress of self-confidence growth can be programmed, by studying from an easy to a difficult task. Some researchers have argued that there are many similarities between TBLT and playing video games. For instance, Rapeepisarn, Wong, Fung, and Khine (2008) specify that various game genres can be used to target different learning objectives. Role play games, strategy games or simulations, for example, can be used to integrate skills by using holistic problem-solving activities. What is more, according to Franciosi (2011), regarding flow theory, videogames provide the optimal situation for engagement and participation. On this basis, a small case study was conducted to explore EFL students' perceptions on the usefulness of video game playing about assisting their English language learning and building their self-confidence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The students were well acquainted with video games, but their EFL proficiency varied, being at the elementary to intermediate levels. The analysis of data supported the proposition that playing video games can positively nurture self-confidence in EFL language learners. Also, the results provided some support for Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) model and suggested that some sense of automaticity and motivation was also fostered within learners along with building their self-confidence in the use of the language during video game playing. Recommendations are made for future research to explore in more depth this form of contact space, including the linguistic and cultural nature of the video game experience and the ensuing interactive demands.

**Keywords:** Case study, EFL learners, L2C, Self-confidence, Task-based language teaching, Video games, Language learning

### INTRODUCTION

The main thrust of this inquiry is to illuminate and foster change in language teaching methods that will enhance learners' EFL skills through capitalizing on their digital literacy and take advantage of the pedagogical attributes of digital games or video games. Gros (2007, p. 23) notes "[d]igital games are user-centered; they can promote challenges, co-operation, engagement, and the development of problem-solving strategies." Nowadays, a critical

way that children and young people become acquainted with the virtual world is through their involvement in playing video games. This interaction with technology can change ways of learning, and the way knowledge is constructed (Newcombe & Brick, 2017; Siemens, 2010). Engagement and motivation offer essential advantages for the use of video games, which are a vital aspect of successful learning, but these alone are not enough for students to fully achieve their educational and language learning goals. It is well established that learners also need to develop confidence in themselves and in their ability to succeed, which playing video games have been found to assist (Sevin & Decamp, 2016).

In effect, like books and movies, video games can be used in different ways. One of the main reasons why games are so significant is because of their content and interactivity, which can make the real world easier to understand. On the other hand, however, some video games are known to be undesirable because they may include violence and misogynistic themes (Gros, 2007). Thus, it needs to be acknowledged that advocacy for the playing of video games as a potential educative strategy is dependent upon the quality of the design and content is suitable for the purpose (Gershenfeld, 2014).

To investigate the issue of developing students' self-confidence in EFL learning through video game playing this study sought to add to the research field by seeking students' opinion. Thus, this research delves into one of the most important language principles in focusing on self-confidence and exploring whether EFL students' playing of video games is viewed by them as being able to help build their self-confidence.

## **VIDEO GAMES AND LINKS TO PEDAGOGY**

### **Task-Based Learning and Teaching**

Recent research shows strong support for the capacity of playing video games in adding to both teachers' and students' repertoires of pedagogical and learning approaches, respectively. Task-based learning and teaching (TBLT) is one approach that is argued to be applicable to video game playing as a pedagogy (Rapeepisarn, Wong, Fung, & Khine, 2008) and as Hamari et al., (2016, p. 3) explain the ensuing engagement in 'play' with demanding tasks can lead to deep learning in keeping with Tochon's (2013; 2014) in-depth approach and cognitive apprenticeship involved in experiential learning and the importance of educational semiotics:

The integration of work and play characterizes the psychological state that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has called "flow." Flow refers to a state of mind characterized by focused concentration and elevated enjoyment during intrinsically interesting activities (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, & Shernoff, 2003).

Research on flow, in general, has found that utilizing high degrees of skills in challenging tasks results in deep concentration, absorption, or immersion.

Hamari et al. (2016) go on to point out that "[t]o reach flow, the level of skill must increase to match the challenge. Sufficient practice may be needed until the skill is mastered" (p. 4). Thus, for EFL students to learn in this way the design of the video game and the essential tasks are vital to their success (Ellis, 2003; Franciosi, 2011). Moreover, when applied to students learning English as a foreign language the task design becomes even more intricate in that it needs to be pitched at the optimum level for the student to use the language to successfully make meaning and structured to include sufficient challenge (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010; Vygotsky, 1997). On this basis, it becomes clear that the quality of the game design, the nature of tasks, as well as the hierarchical structuring of demands, have the potential to impact on whether students can sustain their participation in ongoing play, so raising the issue of 'extent of

success' impacting the learner's self-confidence (Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2008; Zheng, 2012). As noted then, the way the design builds-in language learning and practice become an additional challenge from the task-based learning and teaching, and language pedagogy viewpoints (Ellis, 2003). However, in Ellis' (2003) discussion of a definition of a task, it can be as broad as "an activity that necessarily involves language" (Nunan, 1989). However, he draws upon several definitions that highlight a range of task dimensions as necessary to consider. These are (1) the scope of the task, (2) the perspective from what a task is viewed, (3) the authenticity of a task, (4) the linguistic skills required to perform a task, (5) the psychological processes involved in task performance, and (6) the outcome of a task (p. 2). Thus, it can be argued that video games provide a different pedagogical approach but at the same time one that has the potential to bring together sound pedagogical strategies that can engage students and foster English as a foreign language learner second language acquisition.

### **Considering the Video Game**

The idea of video games as pedagogical tools and mechanisms for EFL learners to develop their proficiency and build their confidence in L2 use is relatively new and may still be met with some criticism because of the paucity of research that addresses how language tasks are accommodated in successful contexts for learning. Even for other purposes for learning, video games have been treated with suspicion not discounting the 'bad press' so to speak regarding those that are well known for their intense violence and impact on cognition (Zvyagintsev et al., 2016). Esposito (2005, p. 1) cites Newman who specifies:

While scholars identify a range of social, cultural, economic, political, and technological factors that suggest the need for a (re)consideration of video games by students of media, culture, and technology, here, it is useful to briefly examine just three reasons why video games demand to be treated seriously: the size of the video games industry; the popularity of video games; and video games as an example of human-computer interaction.

Given this evidence for the prolific up-take of video games, while on the one hand there are concerns about the level of violence involved others have seen an opportunity to use them because of their interactive capacity and their ability to create a virtual space for learning. Importantly, for the current investigation into the ability of video game playing to build language learners' self-confidence Rapeepisarn (2012, p. 181) has found the pedagogical approach embedded in the playing of video games to be 'student-centered learning.' This argument is justified in the pedagogical principles identified as applicable to video gaming pedagogy. These include involving the student in (a) learning by doing, (b) making their own decisions about learning [learner autonomy], (c) building a real-world skill, (d) encouraging critical thinking and (e) developing problem-solving skills. He shows a direct parallel between these skills and those identified by the Federation of American Scientist (2006) as applicable to the capacity of games to be used pedagogically. The Federation of American Scientist (2006, p. 47) note that "many video games require players to master skills in demand by today's employers."

Although video games can be played just like games, Esposito (2005) argues they need to be recognized and accepted for their cultural, artistic, and narrative forms, and also as educational tools, and even more so their ability to foster learning and the building of learner autonomy that in turn builds self-confidence. It is also pointed out that the notion of 'game' is not new. Most societies can identify with playing some game. To define game is not necessarily easy other than one would associate 'rules' with the concept of the game. While some video games are associated with adeptness (Esposito, 2005), Frasca (2004) moreover points out that video games include features that are literary, performative, and playful and she stresses such

games are operating within a digital environment, where the context might be one of virtual reality. At a more critical level, Salen and Zimmerman (2003, p. 80) define video games as “a voluntary interactive activity, in which one or more players follow rules that constrain their behavior, enacting an artificial conflict that ends in a quantifiable outcome”. It suggests a strategic element and draws attention to the potential for the player to bring high level metacognitive, problem-solving processes to the gaming context.

### *Play and story*

Video games generally embrace simulations, and within this, the player is connected to the story within which they adopt a role. Fransca (as cited in Esposito, 2005, p. 3) propounded that “Narrative is based on semiotic representation, while video games also rely on simulation, understood as the modeling of a dynamic system through another system.”

As noted earlier the element of ‘play’ involved in video games can be seen as central to learning and particularly in the game situation where the player needs to grasp and understand what is required within their role. To introduce what playing a video game is, Salen and Zimmerman (as cited in De Kosnik, 2015, p. 177) maintain that “play is the free space of movement within a more rigid structure. The play exists both because of and also despite the more rigid structures of a system”. As the learner plays the game, the game design should be sophisticated and responsive enough to support the learners’ ability to grow in the L2 and ideally experience ‘flow,’ which is the one factor that will maintain the learner’s motivation to learn. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) also consider three classifications of game form: “game for the sake of play, ludic activities (all the non-game behaviours considered to be playing – a kitten batting a ball, children playing house), and being playful (the spirit of play) [arguing that] play is a free movement within a more rigid structure” (p. 304), cited in Whitton, 2014, p. 113). Regardless of which form of the game is considered it would seem that each provides an opportunity to use the L2 language and cognitive and metacognitive skills within the parameters of the particular context, so as Karmer argues (as cited in Pettey, Bracken, & Pask, 2017, p. 23):

the play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ordinary life.

The quality of the story and narrative contained in a game has been found to be an essential factor, particularly for single players. In Väisänen’s (2018) research the most “popular genres were first-person shooters, role-playing games, and strategy games” (p.47). He describes how student Marko explained:

Games without a good story often failed to hold his interest in them for long. As he mentioned, gameplay was often what grabbed his interest in a game, but it was the story that held his interest for a more extended period. The story of a game is also what made him return to the same game time after time for multiple playthroughs (p. 48).

Also, Väisänen (2018) found that for the Finnish participants in his study their knowledge of EFL was generally perceived by them as an advantage as they tended to play games in the English language. This research suggests that playing video games singularly in English could be motivational for those weaker EFL learners, whereas others are motivated by having to compete.

### *Audiovisual apparatus*

As Esposito (2005, p. 3) specifies in her 'short and simple definition of what a video game is' that:

Audiovisual apparatus is necessary to support video game playing, and this comprises the electronic system. The video game player needs computing capabilities both in the capacity of the computer system to support video game playing and in personal skills as a user, besides appropriate input devices (controllers, mouse, keyboard, etc.) and output devices (screen, loudspeakers, etc.).

These requirements loom as an equally relevant consideration if students are not to be put off by inadequate technology and resultant negative experience. Attitudes to the use of technology in EFL learning are recognized as an important factor in influencing its uptake for educational purposes (Uzunboyin, Hürsen, Özütürk, & Demirok, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial that language learners be supported with appropriate audiovisual equipment to be able to successfully play video games that teachers select, to pave the way for an anticipated positive learning experience, which in turn would help build learners' positive self-concepts (Djigunović, 2015; Šporčić & Glavak-Tkalić, 2018).

Video games may be accessed in arcades, on various consoles and regular computers and mobile digital technology, and so forth. Video games facilitate human-computer interactions and can be conceptualized as user interfaces (Esposito, 2005). Juul (2004, p. 140) points out there are significant differences between video games and their 'non-electronic precursors.' He notes:

The main difference between the computer game and its non-electronic precursors is that computer games add automation and complexity - they can uphold and calculate game rules on their own, thereby allowing for richer game worlds; this also lets them keep pace. So computer games create more worlds, more real time, and more single player games than non-electronic games. (The combination of automation and pace essentially paved the way for the real-time strategy game.) Games with pace seem to be more compelling, or at least more immediately appealing, than turn-based or non-pacing games.

What is more, Esposito (2005, p. 3) cites Rouse (2004) in considering this shift to interactivity as the vital trait of gameplay, claiming "the gameplay is the component of the computer games that are found in no other art form: interactivity. A game's gameplay is the degree and nature of the interactivity that the game includes" (p. 24). It would seem that this is the essence of the contribution that video games can make to English language learning, since, by causing highly motivated communicative interactions for virtual 'real-life' purposes in order to play provides the 'space' to communicate in and practice the language component typically missing from EFL programs. Also, about the present research, this opportunity is vital to EFL learners becoming confident in the use of English in this way, which in turn would help develop their self-confidence (Yang, Noels, & Saumure, 2006).

### *Self-confidence/L2C, self-concept, and self-efficacy in EFL learning*

For decades, scholars have endeavored to describe concepts such as self-confidence, self-concept, and self-esteem since they are well recognized as important influences on learning and no less relevant to being successful in EFL learning. Mercer (2014, p. 163) notes that "the self can be thought of as a coherently organized dynamic system encompassing all the beliefs, cognitions, emotions, motives and processes related to and concerning oneself." Mercer (2014) notes how learners' 'self-confidence' may fluctuate depending on the dynamics of the learning situation, and personality traits may also exert an influence.

Other pioneer investigators have focused on the concept of self-esteem describing it as either a sense or worthwhileness (to have a good feeling and perception about yourself) or about your capability and performance. However, Branden (as cited in Berbiglia, 2000, p. 52) defines self-esteem in terms of confidence, firstly as: “[c]onfidence in our ability to think, confidence in our ability to cope with the basic challenges of life”, and secondly as “[c]onfidence in our right to be successful and happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants, achieve our values”. Thus, it is argued by the present author that if EFL learners can grow their self-confidence as they proceed through experiencing success, as Richards and Renandya (2002) note, increasing their capability to accomplish a task enhances their drive for risk-taking in their language use among their peers.

Mercer (2014) chooses to focus on ‘self-confidence’ arguing it to be the tighter term but cautions that the complexity of the self-system “implies the need to maintain an awareness and humility about the limits of our knowledge and research on the self . . . It is clear that while the idiodynamic data provide rich insights into the dynamics of one aspect of the self-system, out of practical necessity, they represent only a fragment of the larger puzzle of the self” (p. 173).

In relation to this, Sampasivam and Clément (2014, p. 25) focus on second language confidence (L2C), which her research showed “to be highly correlated with objective measures of L2 achievement besides path analyses indicating that it resulted from motivation and achievement”. When applied to video gaming experience it would be expected that students who experience success would have high L2C. She notes that this was not the case in pre-digital communication technology days, such that these results may reflect that L2 learners today have increased opportunities through technology and different media to make contact to interact in the language. To some extent, this was reflected in Väisänen’s (2018) study where older learners felt their EFL was sufficient and their autonomy was evident in their approach being to seek assistance if needed. Sampasivam and Clément’s (2014) review of the literature also highlights that L2C plays a powerful and positive role in adjustment and acculturation processes of international students and immigrant participants alike, although there is the potential for it to compromise L1 identity and abilities depending on context. A further positive of acquiring L2 confidence is that it has been shown to moderate the relationship between discrimination and identity incongruities and stress (Clément et al., 2001). “That is, only when L2C was low, did those who reported facing high levels of discrimination or had identity incongruities also report experiencing more stress. Thus, L2C can play an important buffering role and consequently relate to overall well-being” (Sampasivam & Clément, 2014, p. 30).

Additionally, Sampasivam and Clément (2014) propose a functional model of the determinants of L2C building on Harwood’s (2010) taxonomical framework for referring to ‘contact space’ in L2 SLA. They note that this model of L2C is operationalized according to Clément’s (1980) original definition. In brief, the proposed functional model outlines the variables that impact on a language learner achieving second language confidence. In the main, this relies upon the learner’s perception of the importance of L2 learning and subsequent self-involvement where the frequency and quality of contact with the L2 group are seen as having an impact on L2C. However, related to this is the ‘richness’ of this experience, which refers to, “the multiplicity of channels through which the L2 is experienced and the immediacy with which one must provide feedback [whereas] . . . Self-involvement, . . . refers to the extent to which one is involved in the communication part of the L2 contact” (Sampasivam & Clément, 2014, p. 33). Importantly, for understanding how this applies to language learners at different proficiency levels Sampasivam and Clément (2014) go on to explain:

. . . . It is expected that engaging in contact that is rich in form, or specifically, contact that involves multiple channels and allows feedback leads to an increase in L2C. That is, simply being able to comprehend or take in L2 input is expected to impact levels of

L2C positively. Given that more productive forms of contact require some interactivity, it is expected that such contact will also lead to greater self-involvement . . . That is, while richer forms of contact are expected to lead to increased L2C, even contact that is low in richness is expected to lead to increased L2C if it occurs frequently . . . As such, those with adequate L2 proficiency are less likely to be overwhelmed by richer forms of contact and are, therefore, more likely to experience the positive benefits of contact. For example, when considering CMC-related contact experiences, Satar and Ozdener (2008) found that for introductory-level students, only engaging in less affluent forms of contact led to a decrease in anxiety and consequently to greater L2C (Sampasivam & Clément, 2014, pp. 33-34).

This work of Sampasivam and Clément (2014) provides a valuable theoretical base to examine the role of video games in their ability to provide an alternative ‘contact space’ for EFL learners to use the target language. The application of the theory draws attention to the variables that are expected to impact on whether EFL learners who play a particular video game might improve their L2C or not. It is therefore timely to (1) investigate the usefulness of video games as an approach to enhance EFL learning and develop L2 confidence given their potential to bridge the communicative gap in pedagogy and also (2) investigate this from the EFL learner’s or student’s perspective, regarding their self-involvement, and richness and quality of contact.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The participants of this study were five Iranian EFL language learners who had extensive experience with playing video games. Their language proficiency level ranged from elementary to intermediate level, based on the Oxford Placement Test (2018). They were all male, which reflects the present gender distribution where fewer females play video games, and the games traditionally have been oriented to the interest of males. The participant's age ranged from 17 to 23. They had all played different video games in different genres for at least three years and comprised a purposive sample of volunteers. They were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the impact of playing video games upon their self-confidence. A critical narrative from each interviewee is reported and discussed regarding the participating EFL learners’ perceptions of how their video game playing related to their self-confidence as EFL learners. At the start of the interview, which was semi-structured a brief explanation was provided about the project, which also defined the term ‘self-confidence.’ Their responses are analyzed against Sampasivam and Clément’s (2014) functional model of the determinants of L2C.

## **RESULTS**

The results of interviews are report descriptively taking each of the five participants in turn. An informative excerpt from each participant’s interview is presented and then discussed regarding its relevance to self-confidence in the use of the English language about Sampasivam and Clément’s (2014) L2C.

### *Student 1*

This student’s narrative suggests that he perceives learning English as essential and in general his explanation refers to the various aspects of the L2C model. He is aware of his level of motivation and that it can be extrinsic or intrinsic and also the importance of playing the game as a learning experience has in guarding against a loss of self-confidence in L2 since he

explains how being in a role in the game as a hero allows him to deal with it confidently. He also provides a further insight into this contact space as containing concepts or ideas that he finds useful “for other tasks in his life.”

*I like to learn the target language via a video game. There are numerous reasons why I would like to learn through video games; one of the most important is that it provides internal motivation. Indeed, whenever I play video games, I have intrinsic motivation. Even if sometimes I do not, by accomplishing a level, I again gain my motivation by benefiting from the motivation provided by the game itself. Also, the quality of games and playing the role of a hero can give me self-confidence for other tasks in my life.* Hadi (Student 1)

Thus, as mentioned above the student himself, it can be concluded that video games can be a new tool for enhancing language learners’ motivation and L2C. Also, it suggests that the quality of the student’s L2 contact in the game involved him participating in an authentic atmosphere created in the game experience, which in turn provides a sense of relief or reduction of anxiety-related the use of L2. Tellingly, it appears when players play the role of an important person or a hero, they, to some extent, can gain self-confidence, and as Hadi claims, he can transfer his learning experiences to real life. As well, a further advantage from this student’s perspective was that L2 learning through playing video games could benefit from his motivation being intrinsic rather than being more extrinsic as found in most traditional classrooms.

### *Student 2*

This student, Ali, presents a narrative that is mainly concerned with his acquisition of skills to be able to play the game as well as having the language to play the game. It is clear that he values the opportunity to privately engage in the previous tutorial, which reflects that he is concerned about the importance of being able to demonstrate that he can succeed. This narrative also reflects a concern for the quality and richness of the interactive experience in keeping with Sampasivam and Clément’s (2014) L2C model, and self-involvement, where the frequency of contact with the skills acquisition for playing the game appears optimum from the student’s perspective.

*In my opinion, video games are a suitable tool for teaching and enhancing my self-confidence. One of the best traits of video games is their tutorial phase, where players can learn the most basic skills using high-quality graphics. Moreover, then I have enough opportunity to engage in the tutorial level and attain enough skill for primary levels. Also, there is no stress in the tutorial, and students can learn their skills privately.* Ali (Student 2)

Based on Ali’s comments, therefore, it can be inferred that video games provide an excellent tutorial and that the tutorial phase of video games includes both role-play and high-quality films and graphics, which by itself can promote learners’ self-confidence/L2C. Also, players can engage in their future role and practice as much as possible privately, which is not a stressful place like the classroom where the quality of contact can decrease language learners’ L2C. From Ali’s perspective, it appears that at first, learners can learn their skills based upon a standard benchmark, and then they can engage in the competitive phase like the multiplayer games interactive approach available in most video games.

### Student 3

Sadegh's narrative is also a profound statement regarding L2 pedagogy. He shows crucial insights into the second language learning context, having identified the need for the challenge at the appropriate level but within an atmosphere different from the traditional classroom. Moreover, his reference to classroom learning naturally is readily associated with 'failure' and this is explicitly contrasted with his perception of learning through playing video games as inviting success.

*In my experience, video games are very suitable for language learning and promoting students' self-confidence. For instance, the nature of video games offers players a challenge to experience a new atmosphere. Besides, I believe that video games invite success, not a failure. In comparison to the classroom, one failure in the classroom is enough for me to lose my self-confidence and not to try again, but in games, after lots of failures, I am not discouraged, and with one success, I forget all the failures. Sadegh (Student 3)*

In summary, according to Sadegh's view, video games can facilitate learners to begin a new challenge in their language learning. What is more, he makes explicit that the fact that the atmosphere of video games is designed for success, rather than failure, is a significant difference compared with his traditional EFL learning experiences. Thus, when flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), as cited in Franciosi, 2011), is considered his response highlights how the optimal atmosphere for sustained learning can be provided through video games (which lies between boredom and enthusiasm). Moreover, in comparison to the classroom, when students fail and make mistakes in front of their peers, they lose self-confidence. However, since video games are played in a private place, there is no one to watch students' fail, so learners do not succumb to feeling inadequate, but find more opportunity to work towards success as one would when first learning to ride a two-wheeler bicycle, and so as a result, gain better self-confidence. Regarding Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) L2C model, Sadegh's description of his experience reflects a high level of importance and self-involvement for his SLA and suggests he is experiencing rich and high-quality contact with English, although his proficiency is more at the elementary level.

### Student 4

This student's narrative proved equally insightful in referring to the importance of skill levels, and the gradual increase as the structure of the game demanded movement upwards to more complex operations. It reflects the careful sequencing of the design of the tasks involved, suggesting support for TBLT and Tochon's (2014) cognitive apprenticeship contained in the broad approach to language learning. Navid also raises the vital role of feedback in the process of learning in assisting him to 'self-correct' and be more autonomous in his language learning.

*One of the unique aspects of video games is that there are levels from easy to difficult. It is mandatory for players to accomplish one level to go to the next one. In other words, it is a gradual process and one in which players need to gain enough skill to move to the next level. Also, video games provide feedback to make players understand how they should correct themselves in different phases, which allows players to go further and try again. Navid (Student 4)*

Of note, Navid perceives video games as being inherently task based. It supports various scholars' investigations (Kafai & Burke, 2015; Mayer, 2016; Soyooof & Jokar, 2014; Soyooof, 2018) that indicate video games can be considered as a more comprehensive and developed form of task-based language learning and teaching. Since the essence of the video game involves structured and systematic tasks that are hierarchically linked from easy to difficult. As a result, players are guided to accomplish the easiest level first in order to gain the basic skills to pass sequentially to the next harder level, and so on to the hardest level. This process can create an atmosphere where students gain their self-confidence gradually, through possible trial and error but ultimately with success and an expectation of success. It is argued to be the best method, because at first, it is easy to gain self-confidence and then, at higher levels, students can rely on the skills they gained in the previous levels to take them forward. Tellingly, this kind of feedback during video game playing trains prompts and promotes players' responses and ultimate success, which boosts their self-confidence owing to their positive progress in any given phase. Navid's description of his experience suggests he has a high level of involvement in terms of Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) L2C model, thus reflecting their claim that: "[p]articipation in a rich contact experience with high self-involvement is likely to lead to an increase in L2C" (p. 34).

### *Student 5*

The remaining student, Reza, confirms much of the perceptions of his peers but adds to the knowledge by enlarging upon how playing video games can generate an element of independence in learning. Like Navid, through trial and error, he reports he has developed his skills moving up the hierarchy. He also draws attention to the freedom to take risks and explore while learning, which would not occur in the traditional classroom learning environment, where both the teacher and other students may quell his enthusiasm and cause him to try to avoid making a mistake for instance. Moreover, this student has identified as part of his self-involvement and the richness of the task he has creativity and intuition that he can apply.

*In my experience, video games are not limited to just gaining self-confidence. There are several other characteristics that I have experienced when playing games. Motivation is one of them, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Also, by playing games systematically, I found better skills in games. At first, I did not know how to make the most basic moves, but after a moment, I became very skillful in games. Also, because there is no peer or teacher, you can use as many opportunities as you want. As a result, you sometimes can take a risk and try a different method. Sometimes, I complete a hard phase by benefiting from my creativity and intuition. Reza (Student 5)*

According to what Reza has stated, video games can not only develop self-confidence in their L2 language learning, but they can also draw out or foster students' other skills, namely, problem-solving, creativity and use of intuition. His narrative suggests that sometimes players can rely on their abilities besides their English proficiency for accomplishing a given level. As well, they can boost their autonomy as learners, because they gain and maintain particular skills as they move up the levels of complexity after enough engagement in video games as prolific players.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The paramount role of self-confidence in both EFL/ESL contexts is undeniable. One of the main issues researchers and investigators, into which many inquiries have been conducted, is the place of self-confidence. In this study, the researcher uses Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) L2C model, that outlines the elements and variables that they argue impact foreign language learners' successful SLA to investigate the EFL participants' perceptions of how playing video games impact on their learning and development of confidence in their L2 (L2C).

The researcher offered the idea of video games as a new tool for promoting EFL learners' self-confidence in the learning of EFL. Based upon what the five participants noted, clearly, it can be concluded that they perceived that video games were able to enhance their L2C. The main reasons for this included the argument that they were both extrinsically and intrinsically motivating and provided a task-based approach to their language learning that involved problem-solving to the extent that it allowed them to be more creative and autonomous in their learning. From the perspective of TBLT, they were able to describe the pedagogy involved regarding how they began with low-level skill demands and graduated to the more difficult. In addition, and certainly reflecting Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) L2C model's notion of the quality and richness of the task and how that interacts with proficiency and self-involvement, the research showed it was essential to these language learners that if they initially failed to master a task, that this was compensated for by their being able to access tailored skills development along with their being absorbed in the video game such that they could not be easily embarrassed or feel fear of being blamed or ridiculed by peers or teachers. What is more, they were able to contrast their positive pedagogical oriented experiences playing video games with their learning in traditional classrooms and in doing so their narratives provides evidence of game playing providing the optimal situation for their engagement with the language and facilitation of L2C. Also, as EFL language learners they benefitted from increased motivation in their language learning through being able to play video games, which could provide the necessary motivation for them to perform their tasks better.

Also, from the perspective of improving EFL pedagogy, several features of language learning applicable to successful second language acquisition are argued to have been attributable to the students' experience playing video games based on their perceptions of the play experience. These include learner autonomy, motivation, engagement, preparatory skills, availability of independent tutorial support, graduated learning/skills demands, task-based learning, risk-taking, intuition, and creativity, as well as being involved in playing a role in the virtual situation that has relevance to the reality of the demands of real life. As well it is concluded that the pedagogical approach emerging from the students' responses reflects Rapeepisarn's (2012) view that the playing of video games is in keeping with 'student-centered learning.' In particular, the students' views were in keeping with his pedagogical principles of (a) learning by doing, (b) making their own decisions about learning, (c) building a real-world skill, (d) encouraging critical thinking and (e) developing problem-solving skills. Thus, this research, although a small sample of students, provides is quite compelling in arguing that playing video games can build EFL learners self-confidence regarding L2C, among other attributes discussed. In this regard, the researcher finds Sampasivam and Clément's (2014) L2C model of great benefit in examining students' pedagogical experiences and supports their stance that:

This new approach should provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between contact and L2C, organize the different forms of contact being studied in the SLA context, and, in applied settings, help define the type of contact necessary for positive outcomes for L2 learners at different levels (p. 35).

In conclusion, the researcher recommends that a more extensive study is undertaken that can further illuminate the playing of video games as a form of 'contact space' in SLA that includes an in-depth focus on the game design, the richness, and quality of the tasks and nature of 'self-involvement' and L2C. It should also assist in further identifying the linguistic and cultural considerations involved in video game learning experiences and the ensuing interactive demands and what might be learned for video game design and the EFL classroom learning environment.

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