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MOTIVACIÓN Y PERCEPCIONES ESTUDIANTILES HACIA EL USO DE VIDEOJUEGOS COMO HERRAMIENTA DE APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA EN EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR

MOTIVATION AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE USE OF VIDEO GAMES AS A TOOL FOR ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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RESUMEN: Jugar videojuegos pone a buena parte del estudiantado en contacto cotidiano con el inglés fuera del aula. Ese potencial se ha estudiado sobre todo en Europa y Asia, y apenas se ha documentado en la educación superior latinoamericana. El presente trabajo analizó qué motivación y qué percepciones manifiesta el alumnado universitario respecto del uso de videojuegos para aprender inglés como lengua extranjera. Se adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo, descriptivo y de corte transversal. El cuestionario, de tipo Likert y 20 ítems, fue respondido por 150 estudiantes de tres carreras de la Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Sede Morona Santiago: Ingeniería Ambiental (n=54), Zootecnia (n=51) y Contabilidad y Auditoría (n=45). Las cinco dimensiones evaluadas fueron motivación hacia el inglés a través de videojuegos, utilidad percibida, habilidades lingüísticas percibidas, actitudes hacia la integración curricular y patrones de exposición, con una fiabilidad global de α=0,87. Las medias se ubicaron entre 3,42 y 4,01 sobre 5, dentro del rango favorable. La motivación encabezó la valoración (M=4,01; DE=0,85) y los patrones de exposición quedaron al final (M=3,42; DE=1,11). Entre carreras aparecieron diferencias significativas en motivación (F=4,12; p=0,018) y en patrones de exposición (F=5,38; p=0,006). Los estudiantes, en suma, ven en los videojuegos un estímulo para acercarse al inglés; llevarlos al currículo formal exigiría, en cambio, una planificación pedagógica expresa.

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Palabras clave: Videojuegos, motivación del estudiante, actitud del estudiante, inglés (segunda lengua), enseñanza superior, aprendizaje de lenguas

ABSTRACT: Playing video games brings a good share of the student body into daily contact with English outside the classroom. That potential has been studied mainly in Europe and Asia and has hardly been documented in Latin American higher education. The present work analyzed the motivation and the perceptions that university students express regarding the use of video games for learning English as a foreign language. A quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional approach was adopted. A 20-item Likert-type questionnaire was answered by 150 students from three programs at Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, Sede Morona Santiago: Environmental Engineering (n=54), Animal Science (n=51), and Accounting and Auditing (n=45). The five dimensions assessed were motivation toward English through video games, perceived usefulness, perceived linguistic skills, attitudes toward curricular integration, and exposure patterns, with an overall reliability of α=0.87. Means fell between 3.42 and 4.01 out of 5, within the favorable range. Motivation headed the ranking (M=4.01; SD=0.85) and exposure patterns came last (M=3.42; SD=1.11). Significant differences between programs appeared in motivation (F=4.12; p=0.018) and in exposure patterns (F=5.38; p=0.006). Students, in short, see video games as an incentive to engage with English; bringing them into the formal curriculum, by contrast, would call for explicit pedagogical planning.

Keywords: Video games, student motivation, student attitudes, English (second language), higher education, second language learning

INTRODUCCIÓN

Video games have evolved from an exclusively entertainment-oriented phenomenon to a focus of growing interest in educational research (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). In the specific domain of foreign language teaching, video games offer an informal linguistic immersion environment where players are exposed to vocabulary, grammatical structures, and communicative patterns in English in a contextualized manner, motivated by the game narrative rather than academic obligation (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). The argument goes back to Gee (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), for whom games embody learning principles formal education would do well to borrow: identity, interaction, production, a willingness to take risks, and problem-solving that means something to the player.

Several theoretical traditions have been brought to bear on the link between gaming and English learning. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), offers an explanatory framework for the enjoyment-driven motivation associated with video games, and it occupies a central place in current accounts of L2

motivation (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). Games satisfy the needs for autonomy (the player chooses what to do, when, and how), competence (level progression and immediate feedback reinforce a sense of achievement), and relatedness (multiplayer games foster interaction and belonging) (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). From the perspective of language acquisition, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) suggests that comprehensible exposure to the language in low-anxiety contexts facilitates acquisition, conditions that video games provide by offering linguistic input in English within a ludic and non-evaluative environment (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**).

Empirical evidence has grown steadily. Reinhardt (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) and Hung et al. (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) conducted comprehensive reviews of digital game-based language learning (DGBLL) and concluded that exposure to video games in English is associated with positive effects on receptive vocabulary and listening comprehension. In Sweden, Sundqvist and Wikström (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) found that the adolescents who played in English most often scored better on vocabulary than classmates who did not play. York (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) and Chen and Yang (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), studying Japanese and Taiwanese university students respectively, found positive perceptions toward video games as English learning tools measured through Likert scales. More recently, Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) observed that students who interacted with commercial video games in English reported greater motivation and higher perceived vocabulary retention than those who only read the game texts.

A further strand of research has examined the moderating role of game type. Peterson (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) documented that massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) generate sustained opportunities for synchronous written and oral interaction in the target language, whereas single-player titles provide predominantly receptive input. Rama et al. (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) similarly observed that collaborative gameplay environments afford conditions associated with second language development, including goal-oriented communication and negotiation of meaning among players. These findings indicate that the linguistic affordances of video games vary considerably across genres and platforms, a distinction frequently overlooked in studies that treat video games as a homogeneous category (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**).

Despite the growing evidence, research on video games and English learning in the Latin American higher education context remains scarce (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). Most studies have been conducted in Asia and Europe (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), with student populations whose conditions of technology access, English exposure, and language motivation differ substantially from those characterizing Ecuadorian university contexts (**¡Error! No se**

encuentra el origen de la referencia., **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). In Ecuador, the Academic Regime Regulation (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) establishes English proficiency as a graduation requirement in higher education. Students at universities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, such as the Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Sede Morona Santiago, come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and their relationship with video games as a site of extramural English exposure has not been investigated. Sylvén and Sundqvist (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) noted that gaming frequency and game type are key moderating variables that determine learning potential, but these usage patterns have not been documented in Ecuadorian university populations.

The gap identified in the literature justifies the need to generate empirical evidence from underrepresented contexts (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). The objective of this study was to analyze student motivation and perceptions toward the use of video games as a tool for English as a foreign language learning in higher education. The specific objectives were: (a) to identify perceptions across five dimensions: motivation, perceived usefulness, perceived linguistic skills, attitudes toward curricular integration, and exposure patterns; (b) to compare perceptions among students from three non-linguistic university programs; and (c) to explore the association between self-reported exposure to English through video games and perceptions of usefulness and motivation.

MATERIALES Y MÉTODOS

A quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional design was employed (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). This approach is suitable for characterizing attitudes and perceptions in specific populations without variable manipulation or longitudinal follow-up, as a preliminary step toward the eventual design of pedagogical interventions integrating video games into English language teaching.

The study was carried out at ESPOCH Sede Morona Santiago, in the city of Macas, Morona Santiago Province, Ecuador. The students enrolled in the regular academic period who were taking English I, English II, English III, or English IV made up the accessible population. Sampling was non-probabilistic and by convenience: the 150 participants were all those who agreed to take part. The distribution by program was: Environmental Engineering (n=54; 36.0%), Animal Science (n=51; 34.0%), and Accounting and Auditing (n=45; 30.0%). Of all participants, 82 (54.7%) were male and 68 (45.3%) were female. Ages ranged from 18 to 26 years, with a mean of 20.8 years (SD=1.74).

A 20-item Likert-type questionnaire was designed, distributed across five dimensions: motivation toward English through video games (5 items), perceived usefulness of video games for learning English (4 items), perceived linguistic skills developed through video games (4 items), attitudes toward curricular integration of video games (4 items), and patterns of English exposure through video games (3 items). Response options were: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree. The instrument underwent content validation through

expert judgment by three specialists in foreign language didactics and educational technology. Following the incorporation of their observations, a pilot test was conducted with 30 students not included in the final sample. The overall reliability was high, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, and individual dimensions obtained values between 0.79 and 0.90. Two caveats attach to the instrument, namely the absence of factor analysis and the limits of an agreement format for capturing how often something is done; both are taken up in the limitations.

No pedagogical intervention with video games took place. What the study gathered were perceptions grounded in the experience students already had with games in English. An informational session preceded the questionnaire: the purpose of the research was explained there, confidentiality was guaranteed, and informed consent was obtained. The questionnaire itself was completed in person during class hours. Authorization came from the academic authorities of ESPOCH Sede Morona Santiago. Because this was not clinical research and no sensitive health data were handled, approval by an institutional ethics committee was not required; even so, the usual principles for research with human participants, namely informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality of the data, were respected throughout.

All processing was carried out in SPSS version 27. Each dimension and each item was summarized through means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. One-way ANOVA served to compare the three programs, once normality (Shapiro-Wilk) and homogeneity of variance (Levene) had been verified. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to explore how exposure patterns related to the remaining dimensions. The significance threshold was set at $p<0.05$. Several comparisons were run on the same data, so the familywise error rate may be inflated, and these results warrant a cautious reading.

RESULTADOS

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics and gaming habits of participants. Of the 150 students, 127 (84.7%) reported playing video games with some frequency. Of these 127 gamers, 98 (77.2% of gamers; 65.3% of the total) indicated that they played video games wholly or partly in English. The most frequent game genres among gamers were action/adventure (42.5%), followed by role-playing games or RPGs (28.3%), sports (18.1%), and strategy (11.0%). The 23 students who reported not playing video games (15.3% of the total) were included in the overall analysis, since the questionnaire permitted responses based on general perceptions rather than direct experience alone.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics and gaming habits.

Variable	n	%
Environmental Engineering	54	36.0
Animal Science	51	34.0
Accounting and Auditing	45	30.0
Male	82	54.7
Female	68	45.3
Play video games	127	84.7

Play in English	98	65.3
Action/Adventure	54	42.5
RPG	36	28.3
Sports	23	18.1
Strategy	14	11.0

Note. N=150. Game genre percentages calculated on n=127 gamers.

The 98 students who reported playing in English were additionally asked about the specific titles they used (Table 2). The most frequently mentioned games were Free Fire (42.9%), Fortnite (38.8%), and Call of Duty in its Mobile and Warzone versions (35.7%). All three belong to the action/adventure genre and share a feature relevant to language exposure: their interfaces, voice commands, and player communication systems operate predominantly in English. Sports games such as FIFA/EA FC (31.6%) were also frequently reported, although their linguistic content is primarily limited to sports terminology. League of Legends (24.5%) and Valorant (19.4%) are notable in that they require real-time strategic communication among players. Minecraft (22.4%) and Genshin Impact (12.2%) offer extensive narratives and descriptive texts. This diversity of titles indicates that English exposure through video games is not homogeneous: each game offers a distinct linguistic profile.

Table 2. Most played video games in English.

Video game	n	%
Free Fire	42	42.9
Fortnite	38	38.8
Call of Duty (Mobile/Warzone)	35	35.7
FIFA/EA FC	31	31.6
League of Legends	24	24.5
Minecraft	22	22.4
Valorant	19	19.4
GTA V / GTA Online	18	18.4
Genshin Impact	12	12.2
Others	15	15.3

Note. Percentages calculated on n=98 English-language gamers. Multiple response.

Table 3 presents the descriptive results by dimension. All five dimensions obtained means between 3.42 and 4.01 out of 5. Motivation toward English through video games obtained the highest mean (M=4.01; SD=0.85), followed by attitudes toward curricular integration (M=3.89; SD=0.88) and perceived usefulness (M=3.76; SD=0.93). Perceived linguistic skills obtained a mean of 3.58 (SD=1.02) and exposure patterns registered the lowest mean (M=3.42; SD=1.11).

Table 3. Student perceptions by dimensión.

Dimension	M	SD	α
Motivation	4.01	0.85	0.90
Perceived usefulness	3.76	0.93	0.86
Perceived linguistic skills	3.58	1.02	0.84

Curricular integration attitudes	3.89	0.88	0.85
Exposure patterns	3.42	1.11	0.79
Overall	3.73	0.94	0.87

Note. M=mean; SD=standard deviation; α=Cronbach's alpha. Scale 1-5. N=150. Dimension means were computed from raw item responses; minor differences with respect to the average of the rounded item means reported in Tables 4-8 are therefore expected.

In the motivation dimension (Table 4), the highest-rated item was "Video games make me want to learn more English to better understand the game" (M=4.22; SD=0.78). The lowest-rated item was "Video games have motivated me to seek additional English courses or resources" (M=3.62; SD=1.04). This pattern suggests that the motivation reported by students is linked to the enjoyment of the gaming experience and the desire to comprehend game content, with limited reported transfer to the active pursuit of formal language study.

Table 4. Items of the motivation dimensión.

Item	M	SD
Want to learn more English to understand the game	4.22	0.78
Motivated to learn English through something I enjoy	4.15	0.81
Video games make me want to improve my English	4.02	0.86
More interested in English because of video games	3.98	0.88
Motivated to seek additional English courses	3.62	1.04

Note. Scale 1-5. N=150.

In the perceived usefulness dimension (Table 5), students reported a favorable perception regarding informal vocabulary learning (M=4.05; SD=0.82) and listening comprehension improvement (M=3.92; SD=0.87). Perceived usefulness for written production was lower (M=3.65; SD=0.99), and grammar learning received the lowest rating in this dimension (M=3.41; SD=1.05). This contrast is consistent with the nature of language input in video games, where oral and lexical exposure predominates over explicit grammatical structures, as documented by Bytheway (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) in research on vocabulary acquisition in MMORPGs.

Table 5. Items of the perceived usefulness dimensión.

Item	M	SD
Informal vocabulary learning	4.05	0.82
Listening comprehension improvement	3.92	0.87
Written production improvement	3.65	0.99
Grammar learning	3.41	1.05

Note. Scale 1-5. N=150.

Within the perceived linguistic skills dimension (Table 6), students reported greater perceived development in vocabulary (M=3.95; SD=0.89) and listening comprehension (M=3.82; SD=0.94) than in oral production (M=3.32; SD=1.08) and writing (M=3.22; SD=1.14). The higher standard deviations in oral production and writing indicate considerable dispersion, probably associated with differences in game type: players of multiplayer titles may report a greater perceived development of productive skills than those who play single-player games, although this was not tested directly.

Table 6. Items of the perceived linguistic skills dimensión.

Item	M	SD
Vocabulary	3.95	0.89
Listening comprehension	3.82	0.94
Oral production	3.32	1.08
Writing	3.22	1.14

Note. Scale 1-5. N=150.

In the curricular integration attitudes dimension (Table 7), the highest-rated item was "It would be interesting if English teachers used video game elements in their classes" (M=4.12; SD=0.80), while "Video games can be as useful as a textbook for learning English" registered the lowest mean (M=3.68; SD=1.02). The difference between the two items suggests that students perceive video games as a complement to, not a substitute for, formal instructional materials, a pattern consistent with technology acceptance models in which perceived usefulness shapes adoption intentions (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**).

Table 7. Items of the curricular integration attitudes dimension

Item	M	SD
Use video game elements in class	4.12	0.80
Complement English class	3.98	0.85
Play video games as English homework	3.78	0.95
As useful as a textbook	3.68	1.02

Note. Scale 1-5. N=150.

The exposure patterns dimension (Table 8) obtained the lowest overall mean (M=3.42; SD=1.11). The highest-rated item was "I play video games with the language set to English" (M=3.65; SD=1.08). The lowest-rated item was "I intentionally seek video games in English to practice the language" (M=3.22; SD=1.18), indicating that most students who play in English do so out of preference or availability rather than as a deliberate learning strategy, so that whatever acquisition takes place in this context is largely incidental (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**).

Table 8. Items of the exposure patterns dimensión.

Item	M	SD
Play with language set to English	3.65	1.08
At least 3 hours weekly in English	3.38	1.15
Intentionally seek video games in English	3.22	1.18

Note. Scale 1-5. N=150.

Table 9 presents the comparison by program. The ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in motivation ($F(2,147)=4.12$; $p=0.018$; $\eta^2=0.05$) and exposure patterns ($F(2,147)=5.38$; $p=0.006$; $\eta^2=0.07$). Tukey's post hoc test indicated that in motivation, the difference occurred between Environmental Engineering (M=4.22; SD=0.79) and Accounting and Auditing (M=3.75; SD=0.91) (p=0.014). In exposure patterns, both Environmental Engineering (M=3.68; SD=1.02) and Animal Science (M=3.52; SD=1.08) differed significantly from Accounting and Auditing (M=3.01; SD=1.15) (p=0.004 and p=0.031 respectively). Effect sizes were small according to Cohen's criteria (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**): $\eta^2=0.05$ for motivation and $\eta^2=0.07$ for exposure patterns.

Table 9. Comparison of means by program (ANOVA).

Dimension	Env.Eng.(M)	Anim.Sc.(M)	Acc.Aud.(M)	F	p
Motivation	4.22	4.01	3.75	4.12	0.018*
Perceived usefulness	3.89	3.78	3.58	1.98	0.141
Perceived ling. skills	3.72	3.55	3.42	1.65	0.195
Curricular integration	4.01	3.88	3.74	1.72	0.183
Exposure patterns	3.68	3.52	3.01	5.38	0.006*

Note. *p<0.05. Tukey: motivation Env.Eng. vs Acc.Aud. (p=0.014); exposure Env.Eng. and Anim.Sc. vs Acc.Aud. (p=0.004, p=0.031). N=150.

Perceptions were also analyzed by sex (Table 10). Males scored significantly higher than females in motivation (M=4.18; SD=0.78 vs. M=3.80; SD=0.89; $t(148)=2.82$; $p=0.005$) and exposure patterns (M=3.68; SD=1.02 vs. M=3.11; SD=1.12; $t(148)=3.28$; $p=0.001$). No significant differences were found in the remaining dimensions. This result is consistent with evidence from Sundqvist and Wikström (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) and Sylvén and Sundqvist (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), who documented that males tend to play video games more frequently than females.

Table 10. Comparison of means by sex (t-test)

Dimension	Male(M)	Female(M)	t	p
Motivation	4.18	3.80	2.82	0.005*

Perceived usefulness	3.82	3.68	0.92	0.359
Perceived ling. skills	3.65	3.49	0.98	0.329
Curricular integration	3.95	3.82	0.88	0.380
Exposure patterns	3.68	3.11	3.28	0.001*

Note. *p<0.05. Male n=82; Female n=68. df=148.

Correlational analysis (Table 11) revealed positive and significant associations between exposure patterns and the remaining dimensions. The strongest association was observed with motivation (r=0.52; p<0.001), followed by perceived usefulness (r=0.45; p<0.001), perceived linguistic skills (r=0.41; p<0.001), and curricular integration attitudes (r=0.38; p<0.001). These results suggest that students who report greater exposure to English through video games also tend to report greater motivation and perceived usefulness. However, given the cross-sectional design, these associations do not allow causal inference.

Table 11. Pearson correlations among dimensions.

	MOT	PU	PLS	CIA	EP
Motivation (MOT)	—	0.49**	0.43**	0.58**	0.52**
Perceived usefulness (PU)		—	0.56**	0.47**	0.45**
Perc. ling. skills (PLS)			—	0.40**	0.41**
Curric. integration (CIA)				—	0.38**
Exposure patterns (EP)					—

Note. **p<0.01. N=150.

Table 12 presents the percentage distribution of responses. Because the dimensions comprise different numbers of items (between three and five), the overall row should be read as a descriptive summary across dimensions rather than as an exact aggregate of individual responses. Overall, 65.8% of responses fell in the agreement category, 19.4% were neutral, and 14.8% expressed disagreement. The dimension with the highest agreement percentage was motivation (74.2%) and the highest disagreement percentage was exposure patterns (21.3%).

Table 12. Percentage distribution of responses by dimensión.

Dimension	Disagree %	Neutral %	Agree %
Motivation	9.8	16.0	74.2
Perceived usefulness	14.2	19.5	66.3
Perceived ling. skills	18.5	21.2	60.3
Curricular integration	11.8	18.7	69.5
Exposure patterns	21.3	20.8	57.9
Overall	14.8	19.4	65.8

Note. Disagree=options 1-2; Neutral=option 3; Agree=options 4-5. N=150.

Perceptions were compared between students who reported playing video games in English (n=98) and those who played only in Spanish or did not play at all (n=52). That second group is heterogeneous, since 29 students played exclusively in Spanish and 23 did not play at all, and the two profiles could differ from each other; the heterogeneity should be borne in mind when interpreting the comparison. English-language gamers scored significantly higher in motivation (M=4.28; SD=0.72 vs. M=3.51; SD=0.91; t(148)=5.82; p<0.001), perceived usefulness (M=4.02; SD=0.81 vs. M=3.27; SD=0.95; t(148)=5.28; p<0.001), and perceived linguistic skills (M=3.85; SD=0.88 vs. M=3.07; SD=1.05; t(148)=5.01; p<0.001). Differences in curricular integration attitudes, while also favoring English-language gamers (M=4.05 vs. M=3.59), were of smaller magnitude (t(148)=3.24; p=0.002). These results indicate that those who already have gaming experience in English report more favorable perceptions, suggesting that a video-game-based pedagogical strategy would require a familiarization phase for students without prior gaming habits.

As an exploratory analysis, the relationship between predominant video game genre and perceived linguistic skills was examined. RPG players (n=36) reported higher means in perceived vocabulary (M=4.18; SD=0.75) than action/adventure players (n=54; M=3.82; SD=0.92), a difference that was statistically significant (t(88)=2.08; p=0.040). In perceived listening comprehension, action/adventure players reported slightly higher means (M=3.91; SD=0.88 vs. M=3.72; SD=0.95), although this difference was not significant (t(88)=1.02; p=0.311). These patterns are consistent with the linguistic nature of each genre: RPGs include extensive dialogues and descriptive texts, while action games prioritize rapid communication. Both comparisons were exploratory and were run on the same sample as the rest of the analyses, so they call for replication before much weight is placed on them.

Regarding gaming platform, 61.4% of the 127 gamers (n=78) reported playing primarily on mobile devices, 25.2% (n=32) on computers, and 13.4% (n=17) on consoles. Computer gamers scored slightly higher in perceived linguistic skills (M=3.78; SD=0.92) compared to mobile gamers (M=3.52; SD=1.04), although the difference did not reach statistical significance (t(108)=1.32; p=0.189).

DISCUSIÓN

The results of this study indicate that university students at ESPOCH Sede Morona Santiago reported favorable perceptions toward video games as a resource for English language exposure, with motivation as the highest-rated dimension (M=4.01). This finding is consistent with results reported by York (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) in Japan, Ebrahimzadeh and Alavi (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) in Iran, and Sundqvist and Wikström (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) in Sweden. Within Deci and Ryan's SDT framework (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**), the high reported motivation could be explained by the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness that video games offer (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). However, it must be

noted that this study did not operationalize intrinsic motivation through a specific measurement scale (such as the motivational orientations scale by Noels et al. (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**)); therefore, the interpretation is limited to enjoyment-driven motivation as reported by participants.

The hierarchy of perceived linguistic skills, with vocabulary and listening comprehension above oral production and writing, coincides with evidence from Reinhardt (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) and Sundqvist and Wikström (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). What these figures record, it should be stressed, is how students see their own progress, not any measured command of the language. Hours spent playing in English can leave a convincing impression of improvement without that impression showing up in communicative competence that can actually be measured. A further qualification concerns genre: Peterson (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) argued that MMORPGs could offer greater opportunities for language production than single-player games, suggesting that game genre is a moderating variable that future research should control more rigorously.

The significant differences between programs in motivation and exposure patterns, as well as sex differences in these same dimensions, suggest that student profile influences the reported relationship with video games as a learning tool. Mutlu and Çimen (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**) cautioned that the relationship between video games and L2 motivation is not automatic and depends on variables such as gaming frequency, game genre, and prior English proficiency. The positive association between self-reported exposure to English through video games and motivation ($r=0.52$) is among the most notable findings of this study; however, given the cross-sectional correlational design, it is not possible to establish the causal direction of this relationship (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**).

A number of caveats bound what can be claimed from these findings. The cross-sectional design rules out causal statements about the variables studied, and the convenience sample, taken from a single campus of a single institution, does not support generalization to other Ecuadorian or Latin American universities. All the data are self-reported: no objective test of proficiency was administered, so there is no way of telling whether the perceived development of skills matches real gains in communicative competence. Nor was any pedagogical intervention carried out, which means the study can say that students regard video games as useful, not that video games teach English effectively.

The Likert agreement format, moreover, is a poor instrument for capturing how often something is done, and this weakens the exposure patterns dimension in particular. The analysis by genre was exploratory and covered only two categories, RPG and action/adventure, without controlling for cumulative exposure time in the target language or for the degree of interaction each title demands (**¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**, **¡Error! No se encuentra el origen de la referencia.**). Validation of the instrument went no further than expert judgment and Cronbach's alpha, leaving the proposed dimensional structure untested by factor analysis. Finally, several statistical tests were run without correction, which raises the probability of Type I error. Quasi-experimental designs with a controlled intervention, objective measures of competence,

confirmatory factor analysis, and larger, more varied samples drawn from institutions across different regions of Ecuador would all help to address these gaps.

CONCLUSIONES

Taken together, the responses of the 150 participants from three non-linguistic programs at ESPOCH Sede Morona Santiago warrant the conclusions set out below, bounded by the context and scope of this study. On the first specific objective, all five dimensions were rated favorably, with means between 3.42 and 4.01 out of 5. Motivation born of enjoyment headed the list, while exposure patterns closed it, with the deliberate search for games in English as its lowest-scoring item. Contact with the language through gaming, then, is for most of these students something that happens rather than something they plan.

Regarding the second specific objective, significant differences between programs were found in motivation and exposure patterns, with small effect sizes ($\eta^2=0.05$ and $\eta^2=0.07$ respectively). Environmental Engineering students reported the highest means, and Accounting and Auditing students the lowest in both dimensions. Significant sex differences were also observed in these same dimensions, with higher means among males.

On the third specific objective, exposure patterns correlated positively and significantly with every other dimension, and most strongly with motivation ($r=0.52$), though nothing in a correlation of this kind permits a causal reading. Students credit games with more value for vocabulary and listening comprehension than for oral production and writing, which is what one would expect given how receptive the linguistic exposure is in most genres. Taking games into the English curriculum would therefore mean planning deliberately: complementing that receptive exposure with tasks that call for production, and setting aside an initial familiarization phase so that students who do not normally play are not left behind.

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