Videogame: A New Trend for Fostering Automaticity

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Abstracts
By the twenty-first century, a fresh orientation has been proposed that entices scholars to allocate their main thrust of inquires upon a more complex view of language rather than being obsessed about generic methods. Accordingly, scholars' concentration shift into 'pedagogy' rather than 'method'. One of the harbingers of post-method era is language teaching principles; the most eminent of which is enumerated by Brown (1994a.)[1]; these principles are deemed as the very first bedrock of successful teaching within classroom; hence teachers should imbue their classrooms with these worthwhile principles. Automaticity is one of these principles that most language teachers are at odd with the way it should be operationalized within classrooms. Indeed, it turns into a deadlock that cannot be easily broken via language teachers. Current studies on videogame indicate that this issue can be settled more easily through videogame. For example, videogame can provide an easy to difficult task that can promote students' automaticity step by step. Also, in the instruction phase the most basic ingredients of success is provided, that illuminates the exact goal players should perceive at each level. Players gradually gain a better self-confidence and skills that are required for next phases. So as to gather data for this study, 5 Iranian EFL learners who were tremendously acquainted with videogame as well as traditional classroom were interviewed. The results display that videogame can have a profound impact upon students' automaticity. Also, students believe that other language principles exist in videogame namely, anticipation of rewards, intrinsic as well as extrinsic one and self-confidence.

1. Introduction
Automaticity in Wikipedia is defined as "the ability to do things without occupying the mind with the low-level details required, allowing it to become an automatic response pattern or habit. It is usually the result of learning, repetition, and practice".
Automaticity can be applied to language teaching as well as the spheres of language learning. In aforementioned fields, more engagement and participation can bring about far greater automaticity. For language learning, Segalowitz (2003)[9] characterized automaticity as a yardstick through which the performance , stability and efficiency of learners can substantially be augmented.
The best way to promote automaticity is to get students to practice using pedagogical instruments and using them as tools for the most comprehensive language acquisition and learning process. Some educational software, like videogames, incorporates the concept of automaticity. Recently, computer based video games' presence and popularity have been flourished, and as a result videogame experts and scholars have started to investigate video games' impact on students' cognitive learning (Squire, 2003; Vaupel, 2002)[10,11]. By measuring the consistency of processing speed and by measuring the accuracy of students' performance, the most basic skills can become automatic. Consequently, students may find more time to allocate for cognitive skills to attain the higher-order comprehension rules.
What is more, if the student is an automatic reader, multiple tasks are being performed at the same time, namely, deciphering vocabularies, finding out the instructions of the game, relating the information of the new phase of the game to the prior knowledge of the previous phase, making inferences, and evaluating the information's usefulness to the game he or she is playing. It is essential to understand automaticity and how it improves a student's performance.

2. Literature Review
According to Fabricatore (2000, pages 3–4) [4], there are two key elements which distinguish video games (although this distinction is not exclusive). These are: "Videogames always include an interactive virtual playing environment' and 'In videogames the player always has to struggle against some kind of opposition".

In recent years, researchers have come to this concept that automaticity plays an inevitable role in second language learning. Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) [5, 9] believe that "automatic processing consumes fewer attentive resources than does controlled processing. Therefore, the more automatic the performance becomes, the more attentive resources can be kept for other issues". Levelt (1989) [6] claims "automatic processing is usually quick, even reflex like; the structure of the process is "wired-in, either genetically or by learning (or both). To put it more simply, automatic processes are efficient and unchangeable. Consequently, the various benefits of automaticity in second language skill development derive from the fact that automatic processes are performed without attention or conscious awareness. Many researchers are in favor of this concept that automaticity plays a crucial role in second language skill development".

Dekeyser (2001) [3] believes that "explicitly learned knowledge can be used automatically which embraces steady pace and has relatively no controversy with any sort of cognitive task and has low error rate". Likewise, Mclaughlin (cited in Mitchell and Myles, 2004) [7] confirms "automaticity involves a shift from controlled toward automatic processing. Learners first rely on controlled processing in which requires a lot of attentive control and it is restricted by the limitations of short-term memory".

Many questions may arise from this fact that how automaticity can have drastic impacts on development of skills in language learning. According to Levelt (1989) [6], "a quicker and far more consistent performance latencies can stem from practicing. In the literature, one guideline for understanding how practice improves performance is found on the distinction between automatic and controlled operation of the processes underlying a given cognitive activity".

A number of authors in recent years have done great research on the role of automatic processes in the acquisition of grammatical rules. Undoubtedly, early methodologists benefitted vastly from the concept of automaticity (e.g. River, 1964, & Chastin, 1971) [8, 2]. These authors believe that automaticity could be achieved by overlearning "stimulus-reaction chains or through teaching accompanied by extensive drill practices". The issue of automatization of grammar rules through practice in production and comprehension was surveyed by Dekeyser in 1997. Actually, he was in favor of extensive roles of automaticity on grammar acquisition. This study is another effort in exploring the impact of automaticity on the teaching of English grammar rules in second language learning process.

3. Methodology

The participants of this study were 5 Iranian EFL language learners who had a tremendous experience of videogame. Their proficiency level was ranged from elementary to intermediate based upon Oxford placement test (2007). They were all male and their age ranged from 17 to 23. They all had the experience of different videogames in different genres for at least 3 years. They were all interviewed regarding the impact of videogame upon their automaticity skill.

4. Data analysis

The paramount role of language learning and teaching principles in post-method era is not covert to anybody. One of the most language learning and teaching principles, most teachers have numerous problems with, is automaticity. In addition, one of the most current solutions for enhancing automaticity among students is videogame. In this phase, researchers interviewed 5 students who had a considerable experience of learning language via videogame.

Reza:" In my opinion, videogame can help language learners to influentially boost their automaticity, since videogames provide an interesting atmosphere where language learners are persuaded to engage as much as possible."

Based upon what mentioned by Reza, it can be concluded that videogame and its atmosphere can entice students to engage and participate as much as possible. In fact, according to follow theory videogame caters an optimal situation which sustains students between two walls of boredom and enthusiasm. The aforementioned situation is deemed as an optimal situation for the maximum participation and the engagement for learning. Hence, the process of automaticity is facilitated within language learners.

Sadegh:" I believe that videogame is a suitable vehicle for nurturing automaticity among language learners. The reason is that the essence of videogame is offering a gradual learning where language learners can move from the very basic skills to the most difficult ones. In other words, the skill that

language learners obtain in a given level should be used in the next phase or stage. However, without obtaining a certain skill it is impossible to move forward."
From what Sadegh mentioned above, it can be understood that the underlying mechanism of videogame is gradual. By the same token, this is a superior trend for fostering automaticity among language learners. In other words, the best avenue for enhancing language learners' power of automaticity is teaching them a particular skill. Then in precedent stage a task or objective, benefiting from the combination of previously learned skills, is required.
Ali:" As far as I know, videogame can aid language learners to promote their automaticity. For instance, videogame persuades students to engage in and after failing or losing at a certain stage, offers several feedbacks for language learners to improve their performance. These feedbacks step by step allow language learner to improve his performance and therefore, learns the new skill that is required for next stages."
According to above-mentioned sentences by Ali, it can be understood that one of the unique aspects of videogame is offering numerous feedbacks in a particular level. What is more, videogames through their feedbacks are in attempt to make language learners understand, in which specific aspects of a task or objectives they make a mistake and how they can improve their performance. These feedbacks are mostly immediate which can encourage language learners abundantly not to succumb to a particular task and try again.
Navid:" I believe that videogame can help language learners' promote their automaticity. One of the unique aspects of videogame is the privacy and stress-free atmosphere it provides. In other words, it is not like classrooms where students do not find enough room to improve themselves or there is no blame or ridicule that can enormously discourage language learners and avoid them to try harder for learning a particular skill. On the contrary, language learners can find unlimited room for trial and error of a particular task and there is no issue such as discouragement."
From what Navid mentioned above, it can be inferred that videogames and its stress-free as well as private atmosphere can greatly help language learners. There are not any kinds of discouragement for language learners and they can find abundant opportunities to grab and simultaneously improve their performance. Additionally, another benefit of videogames that is worth mentioning would be catering an environment where language learners will be able to learn a given skill, by taking advantages of trial and error, could drastically help them in their first language learning."
Hadi:" In my opinion, videogame can be an excelled tool for nurturing not only automaticity but also creativity, motivation, self-confidence, and cultural differences among language learners. I believe that videogame can also provide a place where students can learn language implicitly."
Pivoted around Hadi' utterances, it can be extracted that videogame can be considered as an apt aid in teachers' kit; owing to the fact that it is considered a better tool for augmenting language learners' automaticity as well as other language learning principles namely, creativity, motivation, self-confidence and implicit learning.

5. Conclusion

In the post method era, numerous investigations have been conducted on language teaching and learning principles. One of the most considerable classifications was given by Brown (2001). He studies automaticity as one of the most crucial principles that a successful classroom should be imbued with. Nonetheless, investigations indicate that enhancing students' automaticity turns into a deadlock for a group of language teachers. Some scholars have proposed videogame as fresh tool for augmenting automaticity within language learners. The findings of this study uncovered the fact that videogame can be considered as a suitable tool in teachers' kit for enhancing automaticity among language learners. That is due to the fact that videogame entices language learners to engage in learning language as much as possible by benefiting from a private and stress-free atmosphere. What is more, videogame caters numerous rooms for language learners to learn from trial and error. Additionally, it provides feedbacks through videogame. Moreover, in students' perspectives, some other language learning and teaching principles can be fostered among language learners named as, creativity, self-confidence, risk-taking and motivation. Finally, the mechanism of videogame provides a gradual learning of different tasks from the easiest to the most difficult ones and as a result language learners step by step gain a better automaticity, through accomplishing each task.

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