Gender Differences in Playing Digital Game-Based Electronic Books

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This paper develops a broader understanding of whether gender differences encapsulated in cultural values constrain the game type preferences of young Taiwanese adults’ playing a digital game-based English electronic book. Ultimately, digital game-based English e-book play is a valuable component for establishing new ways of thinking.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Nowadays, digital device ownership is rapidly growing. The Foresening Innovative New DigiServices study highlighted that Taiwanese tablet ownership was 7.7% in 2011 and is experiencing great potential growth (FIND, 2012). The top three uses of tablets in Taiwan are browsing web pages (41.7%), playing games (28.1%), and checking email (16%). Importantly, young adults value technology – particularly digital technology – for both education and entertainment. For example, games through a digital device help users employ a target language (e.g., English) in a real-life context where they learn by doing (Lee, 2000). It enhances all their language skills, as users are read, write, listen, and communicate in the target language. Historically, females prefer non-mental rotation games, whereas males prefer mental rotation games. It has been assumed that males are better than females when using their brains and skills for game play. However, digital devices offering many services can enhance the game-based learning experience and open new types of game play to attract and engage young adults in meaningful ways. The main objective of the research, therefore, aims to develop a broader understanding of whether gender differences already encapsulated in cultural values/social norms also constrain young Taiwanese adults’ game type preferences when they play digital game-based English electronic books.

This article proceeds with a conceptual framework that reviews and draws on the literature that discusses play and gender and game type preferences. Previous studies showed that play is essential to human evolution and the ability of humans to adapt to new environments. However, play can be difficult concept to define, as it is a culturally socially specific concept. It has been argued that gender continues to exert a powerful structuring force on the distinctiveness of play and game culture. On the other hand, the number of female players has increased significantly, and a study conducted in Taiwan indicated that women’s experience and actual motivation to participate in digital games differs (Liou & Gao, 2011). These prior efforts leave the present research to want to focus on gender differences, exploring what types of digital game-based English electronic books are likely to be played by young Taiwanese adults, particularly females, for cultural value/social norm reasons.

Many types of play are available in digital media. Yee (2007) categorized three game types: Achievement, which included advance, mechanics, and competition games; social, which included socializing, relationship, and teamwork games; and immersion, which included discovery, role-playing, customization, and escapism. The results indicated that male players scored significantly higher than female players on all the achievement components, while female players scored significantly higher than male players on the social components. Lucas and Sherry (2004) further identified three game types: Traditional, which included card/dice, classic board games, quiz/trivia, puzzle, and arcade games; physical enactment, which included fighter, shooter, sports, and racing/speed games; and imagination, which included fantasy/role-playing, action/adventure, strategy, and simulation. Based on their concepts and terms, traditional games typically do not require mental rotation compared to the physical and imagination games that often require mental rotation tasks for effective play. Lucas and Sherry (2004) claimed that traditional games were preferred by females, as they are “non-mental rotation games” while physical enactment and imagination games were preferred by males, as these games are “mental rotation games.” Thus males appeared to be better than females when using their brains and skills for game play. However, the more traditional cultural values/social norms considered as acceptable gender play behavior in digital game play are being challenged today. It is worth investigating in what ways this field has moved ahead to an application of digital game-based English electronic books on gender difference issues in a natural setting.

In methodology, qualitative data collection was the main method used in this study, namely, in-depth interviews. In total, fifty young Taiwanese informants were recruited in this research. The informants were instructed to freely play each type of digital game-based English e-books created by the research team for more than three months and then undergo intensive individual interviews. The game types for this research were identified by consulting previous research (e.g., ESA, 2014; Greenberg et al., 2010), digital game magazines, and popular gaming Websites. There are main five type games to be labeled as follows: traditional, achievement/physical, imagination, social, and simulation in this research. The data reported in this article were collected from June 2011 to May 2013. These interview transcripts were analyzed iteratively, initially examining them to draw out themes.

In findings and conclusions, it shows that both male and female young Taiwanese adults today have a greater opportunity to be exposed to a wider variety of digital game-based devices, options, and experiences. Play is something that they do because it is fun. The data indicate that young Taiwanese male and female game type preferences appear to differ, but young female views are on the move. They confess that digital game-based zones of freedom allow them to feel no threat or penalty for developing their brains and have fun while guiding active movement to new environments. Profoundly, the results of this research show that digital game-based English e-book playing contributes to decrease gender differences and is also a component for establishing new ways of thinking.

REFERENCES


The most fundamental individual difference of all is that of gender, yet surprisingly it is often the most overlooked. In this article, it is argued that if we are to develop more usable interfaces then individual differences such as gender are not factors that may be considered in the design process, but factors that must be considered. The issue of navigation in virtual and information spaces will be used as a vehicle for this discussion. Online games, virtual worlds, MMORPG, gender differences, men, women. Introduction. Played by over a billion people globally, digital games are challenging, engaging and fun (Liu et al. 2013). Online games, the most popular of digital games, are enabled by modern information and communication technologies and played on an Internet-based platform. These games transport users to a virtual environment and are played individually or together with other online gamers. After careful review of the articles, we identified six areas where significant gender differences in gaming context have been reported: (1) adoption, (2) motivation, (3) social interaction, (4) self-presentation, (5) skills and performance, and (6) play. Figure 1 summarizes these themes.