

IS GAMING EVIL?

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In Bridge magazine, we looked at how playing computer games can be helpful for learning foreign languages. However, there are also more general concerns about gaming, especially the addictive qualities of games and their violent content.

Todd Bryant, the language program administrator at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania, who works in using technology to assist language learning, defends computer games. "Everything needs to be done in moderation¹, but the same criticism could be leveled at anything that's enjoyable," he said. One example he gave was TV, which in the past was criticized but today is a way many people learn English. "Media is often presented as dangerous when it's used by the young, then the fear fades as the older generations become adopters," he added.

To get another perspective, we contacted Professor Craig Anderson, the author of *Violent Video Games Effects on Children and Adolescents*. He was kind enough to answer a few of our questions.

Do you believe that computer games have any potential² as an educational tool?

Yes, well designed video games are excellent teaching tools. They can keep players motivated, **provide³** them with lots of practice, and increase the difficulty level of the language as players get better at the skills they are practicing.

Does this potential extend⁴ to so-called MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft*?

Yes, I believe that all games teach something. What a game teaches **depends on⁵** what skills, actions, and thoughts are practiced.

Many parents and teachers are concerned⁶ that games like



I am in my happy place...

***World of Warcraft* encourage⁷ violent behavior⁸ in children and adolescents. Is there a link between violent games and violent behavior?**

Definitely. The research literature clearly shows that playing violent video games increases aggressive thinking, feelings, and behavior. This does not mean that playing violent games will change a normal person into a violent criminal. Violent behaviors usually occur only when several known risk factors come together in the same person. But violent gaming is a known risk factor for aggressive and violent behavior.

Parents and teachers also worry that the games are addictive⁹. Again, does the research show that this is the case?

Yes, this also is a growing problem. Studies from several countries around the world show that about 8% of gamers show signs of video game addiction. This means that their **gaming habit¹⁰** is causing problems in other parts of their lives, such as poor school workplace performance, difficulties with

family members, or difficulties with friends, girlfriends or boyfriends.

Therefore, despite the potential for games as a tool within the language classroom, they are *not* a resource to be treated lightly. These games can provide a fun way to encourage students to

communicate, the implications concerning violent behavior or addiction must always be taken into account. So, while experts might not agree on the impact of games, it is perhaps best left to teachers to decide whether these games have a place in their classroom.

→ TASK

Match the statements according to what Professor Anderson said about gaming.

1 Well designed video game	A) provides lots of practice.
2 A motivating video game	B) are addicted to playing games.
3 A violent video game	C) causes problem in one's life.
4 8% of gamers	D) is a good tool for teaching.
5 Gaming habit	E) increases aggression.

Solution: 1D, 2A, 3E, 4B, 5C

VOCABULARY

- ¹ **in moderation** – s mírou
- ² **potential** [pə(ʊ)'tenʃ(ə)] – možnost, potenciál
- ³ **to provide** [prə'vaɪd] – poskytnout
- ⁴ **to extend** [ɪk'stend] – zahrnovat, vztahovat se

- ⁵ **to depend on** [dɪ'pend] – záviset na
- ⁶ **concerned** [kən'sɜ:n] – znepokojený
- ⁷ **to encourage** [ɪn'kʌrɪdʒ] – podporovat
- ⁸ **behavior** [bɪ'heɪvjə] – chování
- ⁹ **addictive** [ə'dɪktɪv] – návykový
- ¹⁰ **gaming habit** ['hæbɪt] – hrací návyk