Teaching Video Games:
Video Game Literacy in the Language Classroom

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract
Kiinnostus videopelien käyttöä kohtaan kieltenopetuksessa on viimeisten 20 vuoden aikana yleistynyt huomattavasti, ja moni tutkimus onkin osoittanut videopelien olevan potentiaalisesti erittäin hyödyllisiä opetustyökaluja. Ne antavat opettajille useita mahdollisuuksia joita, perinteiset opetusmenetelmät eivät pysty tarjoamaan.

Tästä huolimatta videopelien varsinainen käyttö kielten opetuksessa on jäänyt verrattain vähälle huomiolle. Syynä tälle on yleensä tietyt esteet kuten saatavilla oleva teknologia, käytettävissä olevan ajan vähyys, opettajien tiedon puute tai tarpeellisen ohjeistuksen puuttuminen. Nämä ja monet muut tekijät ovat toimineet merkittävinä esteinä videopelien käytölle monissa kouluissa ja luokissa.

Mahdollisesti vielä näitä suuremmassa asemassa ovat oppilaiden väliset pelilukutaitotason erot. Suurissa luokissa on todennäköistä, että osa oppilaista ei ole välttämättä koskaan pelannut videopelejä eikä näin ollen pysty tehokkaasti hyödyntämään niiden tarjoamia oppimismahdollisuuksia, vaikka opettaja haluaisikin niitä käyttää opetuksessaan.

Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on muuttaa tämä tilanne ja tarjota opettajille keinot opettaa pelilukutaidon perusteet kaikille oppilaille. Tämä mahdollistaa jatkossa videopelien käytön opetuksessa niin että kaikki oppilaat pystyvät osallistumaan opetukseen ja saamaan siitä mahdollisimman suuren hyödyn.

Materiaalipaketissa on huomioitu mahdollisimman monta erilaista videopelityylilajia sekä pyritty tarjoamaan useita erilaisia tehtävätyyppejä joista opettaja voi valita sopivimmat kullekin oppilasryhmälle. Lisäksi paketissa mukana olevien pelityylilajien sisällä on vähintään kaksi erilaista peliä jotta myös tyylilajien sisäiset erot nousisivat esille.

Lisäksi tehtävissä ja peleissä on otettu huomioon Englannin kielen opetus. Jokainen paketissa oleva peli ja tehtävä sisältää kielellistä materiaalia, joiden yhteydessä oppilaat vastaanottavat ja tuottavat kieltä sen eri muodoissa.

Asiasanat – Keywords Game literacy, video games, material package

Säilytyspaikka – Depository

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1. Introduction

In this thesis I will be discussing the use of video games in language learning and teaching and how they could better be implemented into language classrooms. One of the main reasons I am interested in studying video games as tools for learning and teaching is that although they seem to provide nearly unlimited possibilities for teachers and their educational value has long been acknowledged (Reinders 2012: 1, Fadel & Lemke 2006: 13), they are rarely if ever used in schools to any great extent. There already exists a wealth of information on the advantages of video game-based learning and at least some practical experiments have been conducted where video games have been used as tools in classroom teaching (Headington & Johll 2016, Pivec 2007, Reinhardt 2017). It may simply be a question of overcoming limiting factors for individual schools and teachers in order to spread the use of video games as teaching tools.

The topic of my thesis is game literacy, also known as ´gaming literacy´, and its implementation in language classrooms. In terms of this study, game literacy means the familiarity with the basics of video games that allows a person to play them, understand how they are played and the basic fundamentals of video game design. In this context the basics of video games mean elements such as the game's UI (User Interface) and other aspects meant to convey information to the player during gameplay. The purpose of this material package is to expand the understanding of game literacy and what its purpose in teaching English is, as well as providing clear instructions and tasks for its teaching in English language classrooms.

As such, the main goal here is to give everyone interested in using video games in their teaching the tools with which they can make sure that students are able to take full advantage of such teaching by teaching them game literacy, i.e. giving them the tools to actually use and play video games, as it is practically impossible or at the very least extremely difficult for a teacher to employ video games in teaching if the students do not have at least the most basic understanding of them and how they work. Additionally, in regards to English teaching and learning through video games, we can also consider the role of video games and media in general in students' life as a motivating factor in their use in language teaching. For example, Nielsen has reported that in 2013 players in the United States aged 13 and older spend an average of 6.3 hours a week playing video games on their free time (Nielsen 2014), while the average daily time a person spent consuming media in 2016 was stated as roughly 7.5 hours (Statista 2017). Additionally, while the average age of gamers is now over 30, almost a third of all players are still under the age of 18 (Entertainment Software

Association 2017). All this points to the fact that various forms of media, including video games, are a huge part of young peoples' lives today. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, in numerous studies video games have consistently been shown to have great potential for learning English (Peterson 2013, Lacasa 2013). As such, enabling the use of video games in English teaching can be seen as one of the main motivations behind this work, as this potential is still often overlooked in educational environments, despite the mounting evidence of their benefits in said environments.

Naturally, there is also the question of the initial investment required of the teachers to begin using video games in their teaching, as doing so will likely require a fairly significant amount of preparation beforehand. However, I believe that the effort required can be significantly reduced with the correct techniques and by employing the pedagogical approaches and goals of the traditional teaching subjects to facilitate the teaching of game literacy, instead of seeing them as an obstacle that needs to be overcome. Just as any other form of media, video games can easily coexist with traditional teaching methods if given the chance and used correctly with thought and care in how they are implemented (Fadel & Lemke 2006: 13). Many teachers simply lack the necessary experience to use them in such contexts even if they would wish to do so. Additionally, many schools are still unable to provide their students with the access to the technology that would allow the use of video games in teaching. This material package seeks to address this by giving teachers instructions on not only teaching game literacy, but also on how they can do so while still keeping the teaching of English at the center of the lessons.

A classic definition of literacy is simply the ability to read and write, however, the term literacy can also be applied to a number of different contexts to mean a person's knowledge of a specific field or subject, such as 'computer literacy' (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). By this logic, game literacy can be seen as one's knowledge of video games as a medium from various different points of view. These can include understanding the cultural and social contexts in which different video games exist and are created, the history of video games as a medium, as a form of art, and as an industry, as well as the actual ability to play them.

In a larger context game literacy as a topic of study has largely been overlooked. The use and the advantages of video games in learning and teaching have been studied fairly extensively over the last 15 years, but there is almost no prior research available on teaching game literacy in schools. Game literacy itself has generally only been covered as a term and what it means, but its actual

implementation in teaching, how and why it should be taught, and what advantages its understanding provides have not been covered in almost any way in prior research. There do exist numerous studies on using video games in teaching (Reinders 2012, Reinhard and Sykes 2012), as well as on game literacy as a term and in various different contexts (Buckingham 2007, Steinkuehler 2005), which will be discussed in more detail later, but there appears to be no prior research on specifically teaching game literacy at schools to students. There is a clear gap in this field of study, one that could potentially hinder the use of video games at schools for teachers who would be otherwise inclined to use the medium in their teaching, regardless of subject. There are clear benefits that can be seen in teaching game literacy to students regarding language learning, as while the benefits of video games to learning languages have been stated numerous times in past research, the ability of students to actually play video games is on a much more precarious position. Without this ability, it is nearly impossible to use video games in language teaching to any notable degree.

It is certainly quite likely that many teachers today are already well versed in playing video games themselves, especially as younger teachers gradually enter the job market. As such, I believe that many current and future teachers would be inclined to use video games in their teaching, regardless of topic if they simply had some basic guidelines to get them started and provide some help in getting started on using video games. One of the main issues that teachers are likely to face, in addition to possible technological limitations, is the students' game literacy, or lack thereof.

Over the last few decades video games have become an integral part of popular culture and is today a massive industry which was estimated as having a worldwide value of $78.61 billion in 2016 (Statista, 2016). In addition, in 2014 the estimated number of people actively playing video games was 1.78 billion, over a fifth of the population of the world at the time, a number that has been on a constant rise since the early 1980's. This would suggest that it is increasingly likely that a majority of students today and in the future play video games, and will have at least some level of familiarity with the medium. This gives credence to the idea of using video games as tools to help students learn in school, as they are likely to have already existing interest in them, which can be a significant motivating factor, especially as said motivation would come from the students themselves rather than being an external factor.

Because of this constant rise in relevance of video games in people's lives, they have taken a very similar role to that of film, books and music as far as how people spend their time is concerned. As

such, in present day school system in practically every level of education it is nearly impossible to avoid dealing with the medium in some way. They can be featured in modern school books, they may come up during classroom discussion or in a number of other situations. For this reason I believe it is important that teachers not only understand the possibilities of video games for teaching, but are also capable of using them in their own teaching.

I believe that this material package is one of the first to provide teachers with tasks they can use to teach game literacy in English language classes. This package is specifically aimed at upper secondary school students as many of the tasks require a level of language competency many younger students are unlikely to possess. The package is also meant to be used mainly as supplementary material for existing courses, although if the teacher wishes to adapt the package into an entire course that can be done as well. In addition, many of the tasks presented in the material package can be modified to be used with younger students, as a large number of the games found within are suitable for nearly all ages and the task requirements can be changed to suit the needs of a specific group of students. The benefits, potential, and the reasons for using video games in teaching have been discussed in numerous studies over the last 20+ years, and while some have also provided guidelines on what needs to be done in order to properly take advantage of the unique opportunities provided by video games in learning, none to my knowledge have given teachers concrete examples and instuctions on the type of games to use in different pedacogical situations. With this work I hope to address some of these areas of learning, by providing teachers with not only tasks that they can use in their own teaching, but also choices for games and types of games that work well with a given task.

2. Video games in language learning and teaching

Video games as a concept can include a wide variety of different forms of games and media. Merriam-Webster defines video games as electronic games played by means of images on a video screen and often emphasizing fast action. For the purposes of this study video games will be used as an umbrella term covering any type of game played on a display screen with any electronic device specifically made for playing video games, a computer, or mobile device.

The fields of study this material package is based on are computer assisted language learning (CALL) and digital game-based learning, both of which have video games and gaming as a key focus. CALL focuses on the use of computers in language learning, a large part of which is the

growing interest in video games in teaching and learning languages. CALL is defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning”(Levy, 1997). Digital game-based learning essentially means learning through the use of video/computer games (Prensky, 2007: 145**)**. The following chapters explore these two disciplines in more detail. Before this I will briefly look at the current Finnish upper secondary school and comprehensive school curriculum for the teaching of English in regards to how technology, computers and video games are taken into account within it. I will also discuss game literacy in greater detail, and end this chapter with a look at previous research surrounding the use of video games in language learning and teaching in general, and game literacy specifically.

2.1. Finnish upper secondary and comprehensive school curriculum

The general goals for language teaching given in the upper secondary school curriculum emphasize the use of the language in an increasingly globalized and diverse society and the students' development as users of the language in such varied contexts. The syllabus also stresses the importance of creative use of languages in different situations as well as that of language versatility and the possibilities such skills open up in working life for example (2015: 107-109). The role of technology and digitalization is also brought up in few of the courses as a topic of discussion, while the use of technology as a teaching tool is stressed as well. While video games are never explicitly mentioned, these relatively vague guidelines could be seen as a possibility for teachers to also bring up video games both as a topic of discussion and as a way to teach the language itself. When we consider the goals such as creative use of language in different situations or its position and use in an increasingly diverse society, video games could provide some of the most effective ways to encounter these different situations and people. They could also provide an excellent platform for discussions about different cultures and customs, or even societal and historical events and people.

The finnish curriculum for comprehensive school and upper secondary school does not specifically mention video games in any context, although there are a few instances of the word game that can be construed as referring to video games. Notably, in the upper secondary school syllabus for course one for health education (video)games are listed as one of the forms of addiction alongside drugs, tobacco and alcohol, showing a certain dismissive attitude towards them (Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2015: 205). However, games in general are mentioned several times throughout the curriculum together with other forms of media such as TV and movies as part of central content of various courses, which would lend credence to them possibly being a part of

classroom teaching in some form. So, while video games are not directly referenced, they can be understood as being part of the wider umbrella term of “games” in many of the instances they are referenced. Interestingly, games are not mentioned even once in relation to any of the English language courses. However, technology and digitalization do come up in them, which can also include computers and video games as one topic to cover and discuss (2015: 110-111). The curriculum for comprehensive schools has a very similar content in regards to technology and video games, the latter of which are never mentioned directly, although they can once again be seen as part of the more general term “games”, which is mentioned several times as an important part of the learning process.

The general language curriculum lists aspects such as multilingual competence, metalanguage skills, and the students' ability and desire to function in multilingual, multinational and multicultural situations among the key points of focus in language teaching in the upper secondary school level. It also stresses the use of diverse and student-centered teaching methods, which would presumably make use of each individual student's strengths (2015: 107). The importance of language as part of international societies and cultures is brought up numerous times, and is often the first or second point of focus brought up when the curriculum discusses any language specific syllabus. These mostly serve as a continuation of the topics introduced in the comprehensive school curriculum, expanding upon topics such as cultural understanding and international communication introduced in comprehensive school language teaching.

It is unfortunate that the curriculum does not even mention video games as a possible tool of teaching languages, as their inclusion could potentially encourage teachers to at least begin considering using them in their teaching. If these options had already been discussed more clearly on a national level, many teachers would likely be considerably more open to the possibilities video games can give them. This lack of easily available guidelines for using games in language teaching could even discourage some teachers from using them, as they have not been officially designated as suitable tools for teaching, especially in regards to commercially released video games. Creating a clear set of tasks and guidelines can open educators up to the possibilities of game-based (using games made for educational purposes) and game-enhanced (Using games created primarily for entertainment) teaching and learning, which speaks towards another one of the goals of the materials presented in this work. Creating a certain precedent upon which we can build upon is crucial in making more people understand the benefits these methods can bring to language teaching.

The subjects covered in many of the courses in upper secondary school for example would serve as an excellent platform for the use of video games in language teaching. Courses that focus on cultural phenomena, technology, media, digitalization, interaction in different environments and many others could easily be taught with the aid of video games. Courses that focus on culture and cultural phenomenons for example could make use of a myriad of different games that have based their worlds and narratives on a specific real-world culture. Online video games would provide an excellent environment for the students to interact with people of different language and cultural backgrounds with relatively little cost and effort (Steinkuehler 2004, 2005). Naturally, the languages themselves could also be taught with video games, as today there are a massive number of games that feature options to use not just English, but a variety of other languages as well, which can easily be modified to suit the needs of individual students.

2.2. Computer assisted language learning

The origins of CALL can be traced back to the computer based introductory courses in the 1960s, which pioneered the use of computers as tools for learning in America. Following the emergence of cheaper computer technology in the 1980s they also found their way into schools and homes, which facilitated their increased use in language teaching as well (Gündüz, 2005: 198). Paterson (2013: 10-11) also separates the history of CALL into three distinct stages : behaviouristic, communicative, and integrative CALL. The earliest of these stages is the Behaviouristic CALL in the late 1960s and 1970s, influenced by the audio-lingual teaching method. As part of it, teachers would use various repetitive language drills such as translation and grammar tasks. The communicative stage took place in the 1980s. The focus during it was on learning through collaboration between students, rather than just what the students did with the computers. Finally, the 1990s saw the emergence of integrative CALL, which emphasized using languages in authentic social contexts, and taking advantage of computers on a more consistent basis rather than just having students use them once a week in computer lab for isolated excercises (Gündüz 2005: 198-199).

Other models of the history of CALL have also been proposed, however. Peterson (2013: 11) briefly discusses a model created by Stephen Bax, where he separated CALL into three different approaches: “Restricted CALL”, “Open CALL”, and “Integrated CALL”. The first of these covers a similar period to behaviouristic CALL, but includes some additional elements such as the actual software used at the time and the type of feedback given. Open CALL also emerged in the 1980's

similar to communicative CALL, but continues to this day. It is a continuation of the first period and its elements such as the interaction with computers, but includes some new elements such as the use of simulations. Integrated CALL is the hypothetical final stage of CALL development in the future, which assumes that technology will at some point become fully integrated and essentially invisible in everyday life, or “normalized” as Bax calls it (2003:23). However, it could be argued that with the prevalence of smart phones and other such, almost omnipresent devices in our everyday life we have already moved to this final stage of CALL. It is no longer just a hypothetical conclusion to CALL's development, but the reality of today's life in the modern society.

CALL also provides learners the tools to develop different language skills. These include reading, writing, listening and speaking skills, as well as grammar development (Gündüz 2005: 202-205). The tools for developing these skill are, for example, various programs commonly available on computers such as word processing softwares or other more specialized programs created specifically for the purpose of learning languages. The advantages and disadvantages of CALL have been discussed quite extensively in various different studies and articles (Higgins 1988, Kenning & Kenning 1983, Gündüz 2005). Gündüz (2005: 205-207) identifies several advantages to the increasing popularity of CALL. For example, language teachers are no longer bound to grammar practice as the main use of computers in language teaching, supporting the students' writing process with programs that can help students with their pre-writing process as well as aiding weaker students with their spelling thanks to most word-processors having built in spell checkers. He also states that pronunciation work has greatly benefited from CALL, as most pronunciation programs have recording and playback capabilities, letting students listen and compare their own speech with a model. Finally, he adds aspects such as computers as a motivating factor, multimodal practice, pair or group work in projects and the fun factor as notable advantages inherent in CALL. The increase in the students' computer literacy is also listed as an advantage, although that is related to computer use in general rather than to CALL specifically. In an article discussing the various barriers to the use of CALL by English teachers, Lee (2000) also adds some other reasons for using CALL. These include the motivational factor of computers, the experiental learning made possible by the use of online resources where the information is not presented linearly, which develops the students thinking skills as they must choose what to explore. In addition the relative ease by which authentic materials are available online, as well as the individualization of the learning experience are also listed among the compelling reasons to use CALL. Shy students especially can benefit greatly from student centered individual learning, allowing highly skilled students to use their skills to their fullest while still allowing other students to work at their own, slower pace.

However, there are also a number of notable disadvantages to CALL that can restrict its use and usefulness in language classrooms (Lee 2000). The general cost of computers and computer software can be a limiting factor, which means that once a computer lab has been established it will generally last a long time until the equipment is updated to the standards of the time, which can limit what teachers can do with them. The availability of hardware and software can also present problems, although this issue can be argued to have been diminishing with time, with more powerful hardware becoming cheaper and sofware development becoming easier as new tools have become available for it. Computers are also not good at teaching without guidance from the teacher, who has to take into account any possible shortcomings in the software. The teacher must also take the time to get familiar with the various programs used for teaching in order to use them effectively. Similarly, students are also required to internalize a lot of information to use computers and software before they can use them without difficulty. In general, while computers provide a great number of advantages for English language learning and teaching, they are also much more complicated to use than traditional textbooks, taking a much longer time to properly understand and use. Other disadvantages include the inflexibility of computers to adapt to unexpected occurrences in the classroom, their inability to deal with more open ended questions and dialogue, and working with them often leading to students learning in isolation rather than with each other (Gündüz 2005: 207-208). As such, without proper preparation, planning, and training for both students and teachers it is difficult or impossible to take full advantage of the possibilities computers provide for language learning. Organizations and educators also have a tendency to resist change, and many shun the use of new technologies that require a lot of preparation time (Lee 2000), though this may be another issue that will become less serious as new generations of teachers with more intimate knowledge of emerging technologies enter the job market.

Video games and CALL have been closely linked with one another since at least the 1980s, when attemps at breaking out of the drill-and-practice mold which had typified CALL for much of the decade began in earnest. Early examples of the use of video games in this manner include a Spanish game called *Juegos Communicativos* (1985), and a German language spy game called *Spion* (1995), both of which made use of simple semantic and syntactic parsers allowing users to input a certain amount of natural language into the game and to a certain degree be understood (Otto 2017: 15). Beginning in the mid-1980s the potential of commercial video games was also being realized, and numerous such games were used in language teaching. Otto (2017:17-18) lists *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego* (1985) and *Who is Oscar Lake?* (1995) as notable examples. However she also

states that while *Carmen Sandiego* proved to be very useful for ESL learners because it required the players to do a lot of reading and make use of a reference work that accompanied the software in order to play the game, *Oscar Lake* was not as beneficial for learners as the ratio of language use to gameplay was relatively poor. She also brings up a pair of text-based multiplayer mystery games developed specifically with post-secondary learners in mind. These were called *Meurtre à Cinet* (French) and *In Misterio en Toluca* (Spanish), which required the learners to read and write to solve a murder that had taken place in the towns of Cinet and Toluca. These games were designed to be played simultaneously by the whole class in a computer lab over multiple lessons. However, this required that the class curriculum was modified to accommodate the game, making their use in language teaching relatively challenging for most teachers.

Despite the long history between the two, dating back over 30 years, video games designed specifically for use in language teaching still account for a fairly small percentage of CALL materials. There is a clear growing interest in educational gaming, and new games designed for educational purposes are created on a constant basis. Examples of such games include *Mentira,* a Spanish language mobile murder mystery game set in Albuquerque, and *Trace Effects,* a time travel themed video game aiming to teach American English as a second language in a 3D environment. In addition, various language software programs often contain in-built language games such as hang-man, cross-word, and word-search puzzles (Otto 2017: 20).

Sadler (2017) discusses the role virtual worlds have had in language teaching since the 1970s, including video games such as the first text-based adventure games and modern MMORPGs. He states that virtual worlds have certain defining characteristics, most importantly having an online 3D environment, player created avatars representing them, real-time interactivity between the avatars and the world, and persistent world where the actions the players take are not deleted once they log out of the virtual world (Sadler 2017: 185). The origins of virtual worlds as they are today understood can be found in the first text-based adventure games, beginning with Will Crowther's *Colossal Cave Adventure* (1974-75). The game was based on the real life Mammoth Cave system in Kentucky, but added elements of fantasy into its world. However, games like this and the 1978 video game *Zork* cannot be fully classified as virtual worlds as they lacked the necessary online component. The actual inception of online environments for multiple concurrent users was the creation of multi-user dungeons (MUDs). The first of these was created by Roy Trubshaw in 1978, simply called *MUD.* It originally ran only on the Essex University network, but became more widely available in 1987 on ARPANET. It was the first game that added human-to-human text-

based interaction and competition, meaning that players were no longer just playing against a computer. This made *MUD* the first true multi-user online environment, and the predecessor to all modern virtual worlds and MMOGs (Sadler 2017: 186-187). The development of virtual worlds continued with the addition of a graphical interface in the 1986 game *Habitat,* and have since become complex online environments, often with their own cultures, societies and economies.

According to Sadler (2017: 191) nearly all virtual worlds have potential to be used for education, simply depending on the way they are used. However, there are differences in the underlying design between different virtual worlds. Some have been created specifically with education in mind, while in others the focus may be more on socialization or playing. For example, *Woogi World* is a virtual world with a clear focus on education, whereas in an MMORPG such as *World of Warcraft* the main goal is always the gameplay. Socialization is generally a part of any VW, some simply put more emphasis on it than others. In discussing research on virtual world Sadler notes various benefits and traits shared by VWs in regards to language learning. As they are inherently social environments numerous studies have noted their ability to enhance collaboration between learners and users of various language backgrounds. Some research has also noticed that virtual worlds can ease the feeling of anxiety in people. The use of an avatar as a sort of masked persona seemingly helped learners relax and lessen their anxiety over the use of language. One study also found that learners who used online environments for learning exhibited much less anxiety compared to students studying in a classroom setting. The same study also found that the use of online environments did not result in any significant technology-related anxiety, which had commonly been seen as one of the potential weaknesses of using them in education (cited in Sadler 2017: 197).

Several researchers also note that virtual worlds have the power to expose learners to the real world through the virtual environment. They are seen as having clear real world benefits, such as being able to use skills, engage in activities, and visit places they would otherwise not be able to. (Sadler 2017: 196-197). He also notes that teachers have shown both excitement and curiosity over the potential of virtual worlds in education. In general their outlook seems very positive about their use, and although they realize that teaching in a VW is different from teaching in real life, they are still in favour of social and collaborative learning activities VWs make possible (Sadler 2017: 198). In regards to language teaching one very exciting current development is the constant improvement of online simultaneous translation programs, which allow speakers of different languages to communicate more easily with one another. Some virtual worlds already offer simultaneous translation of text chat, although their accuracy still leaves a lot to be desired (2017: 199).

Reinhardt (2017) specifically talks about CALL as it relates to digital gaming in the present day. He notes that in recent years there has been a renewed interest in games as potential teaching and learning tools for second or foreign languages. He also considers the reasons behind this revived interest, positing that the early negative findings were based on anecdotal or in some ways limited research. However, the more likely reason would be the changes in technology, society and pedagogy in recent decades. New online and mobile technologies have made using video games in education much easier than before. Another reason behind this may be the rise of new types of games that have attracted a much broader, mainstream audiences than the much smaller, marginalized player base of past decades. Reinhardt also counters the argument that games are not suitable for teaching and learning because they do not appeal to all students by saying that the potential of novels and films as L2 resources is not diminished because some students do not like to read books or watch films as long as they are used appropriately (2017: 202-203). From a very early point educators and game developers realized that video games built intrinsic motivation in players to learn "highly complex rules and detailed narratives with seemingly little effort and high levels of engagement"(2017:203), which has often been reiterated by more recent works concerning educational gaming. Reinhardt also states that while some early educational games were highly successful, others failed, possibly because they were deemed what has been called "chocolate-covered broccoli". These games may have failed because their designers, when making games that would be convenient, authentic, suitable for everyone and fitting within existing curriculum, forgot that most people do not play games to learn, but to simply play the game. Player perception of a game is a key factor in whether that game can maintain its motivational aspect (Reinhardt 2017: 203-204).

In regards to the potentials of games for second-language teaching and learning Reinhardt discusses some common findings in recent studies on games in CALL. Games can offer learners a sheltered environment for exposure to the target language, where those who might otherwise be disinclined to interact with other people with that language in real life can gain confidence and willingness to do so in this digital environment. Many games also promote the idea of collaboration between players in order to succeed in their tasks. MMORPGs are a clear example of games designed with this goal in mind. In addition, non-educational games have been shown to function as implicit learning environments where students can learn a number of different skills informally (Reinhardt 2017: 206). Researchers have used various different approaches in examining specific game qualities as they relate to language learning and teaching. Most build their study around the existing attributes

of a specific game, while some have taken an existing game and modified it to suit the specific needs of their study. Finally, in some cases the researchers have designed a game to directly test the necessary qualities the study is looking to investigate. While this last approach can be used to focus on the exact topic of the study without any distracting elements of existing games interfering with the investigation, it can lead to loss of player investment if the game lacks authenticity and is not focused on play (Reinhardt 2017: 210-211).

In looking at research on games in CALL Reinhardt identifies three perspectives from which they are commonly looked at: from the perspective of the game, the player-learner, or pedagogy. Notably, he discusses the variables that need to be taken into account in regards to learners when they play a game for L2 learning. When doing so, they are essentially both players and learners, whose gender, age, L2 proficiency and game literacy can all impact their learning experience to a notable degree, which can vary wildly between students even within the same class (Reinhardt 2017: 211).

2.3. Digital game-based and game-enhanced learning

Digital game-based and game-enhanced learning are among the rising methods of language teaching that have recently gained popularity among educators around the world. While both are relatively similar in scope and methods, there are some notable key differences between the two approaches (Reinhardt & Sykes 2014: 3; Reinhardt & Sykes 2012: 39). As mentioned earlier, game-based learning uses games created specifically for educational purposes, while game-enhanced learning employs games made primarily for entertainment. Crucially, game-based and game-enhanced learning complement each other, each providing important benefits to learning not found in the other, allowing researchers focusing on one to draw influence from the other. For example, research on educational games can be influenced by the design of commercial video games to provide more engaging experience when making use of game-based learning (Reinhardt & Sykes 2012: 39). Interestingly, the earliest use of games for CALL were game-enhanced, rather than game-based. Much of this is due to the lack of games designed specifically for CALL, with teachers supplementing the games with materials they designed (Reinhard 2017: 204). Commercial video games and game-enhanced learning should be used by researchers and teachers to inform the development of better and more engaging game-based learning methods as well as educational games in general. An important factor in this development would be that those researchers and educators interested in using video games should also play them extensively and attempt to learn

from the experience (Reinhardt & Sykes 2012: 46-47).

Still, in formal education video games are often seen as a frivolous activity, leaving the potential of video games in teaching and learning largely untapped (Pivec 2007). In many instances teachers have shown to be dismissive or fully unaware of any potential benefits of video games and video game-related activities for language learning (Reinhardt 2017: 208-209). Today, technology is an integral part of most students' lives, often since early childhood. Because of this, it is important for schools and teachers to provide these students with the support and opportunities to make use of this intimate familiarity with modern technology in their learning, as for them that can become a hugely motivating factor in their learning. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why video games have so much potential for learning. Video games are inherently an interactive medium that is designed to be engaging, where the ability to keep a player continually interested and motivated to play is one of the key elements prevalent in most successful video games. This attitude towards video games is often the opposite of what students have towards school (Prensky 2003). Hence, attempts at merging video games with the act of learning have become more popular and frequent in the last 15 to 20 years, as their motivational factor can be extremely valuable in engaging students to learn.

In discussing digital game-based learning we must take into account both the learners' and teachers' point of view. For learners using a video game for the purpose of learning can, and should be about more than just understanding the designated topic being taught. It can also mean having fun, taking on a specific challenge, experimenting within the game, and much more (Pivec 2007). From the teachers' perspective, choosing to use games in teaching comes from trying to reach students who have spent most of their lives playing video games, and as a way to motivate them even towards subjects they might not otherwise be as interested in. Using video games teachers can also define their own learning tasks to adapt a video game for use in different educational contexts (Pivec 2007). Unfortunately, educational games have a certain stigma attached to them, often justifiably, that they are not fun to play, whereas commercial games made with the purpose of entertaining players offer much greater engagement and therefore also leave a more lasting impact on them. Fortunately, many commercial video games have been proven to be highly useful for educational purposes as well. Games such as *Neverwinter Nights, Quake, Incredible Machine* and *Age of Empires* have all been used in teaching and learning related studies (Pivec 2007).

Video games used for language learning can be either single player or multiplayer games, with different types of games having different attributes to be considered when using them in teaching

and learning languages. The choice regarding the type of game to use depends on the goal the teacher has in mind, i.e. what he or she wants the students to learn. For example, skills such as problem solving and decision making are best improved with narrative-based games where chance is a factor, preferrably also real-time games where player choice plays an important role, whereas for factual knowledge various improvement features that provide feedback and assessment, as well as increasing difficulty is important. Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration when choosing games for learning purposes is the learning setting, its limitations and possibilities: what is the size of the student group, the skills of the students and teacher, licensing policy, etc (Pivec 2007).

The studies discussed in this section tie closely to the goals of this material package as well. Game-enhanced language learning is especially pertinent for the purposes of the work that has been done here. Game-based learning has a significantly longer history in both education and research, going back at least to the early 1970s, whereas game-enhanced learning is still a relatively new development that has very little history of actual use in teaching. This constitutes a clear deficiency in how we approach language learning and teaching through the use of games, as there exists a massive gap in the use of the available tools at our disposal. There are a myriad of different teaching and learning possibilities and options commercial video games have made available to us in the last 30 to 40 years, but which we are simply not using to any significant degree in almost any of our teaching. Attempts at doing so have become, and are becoming more frequent recently, but a consistent, wide-spread effort towards such use is still almost non-existent. Individual teachers can only do so much without aid and clear guidelines that could ease the workload the development of new teaching methods and techniques inevitably requires.

2.4. Video Games and Learning

Several books have been published over the last 15 years on the topic of using video games for teaching and learning, CALL, and digital game-based language learning. The works of James Paul Gee (2003, 2007) for example are some of most often cited in the field. He provides a wealth of insight into using them in teaching, and consequently for teaching game literacy. Numerous other studies have also been conducted on the use and benefits of video games in teaching and learning. While these are often not directly related to the topic of game literacy, they still provide a wealth of important information on using video games as tools for teaching. Some notable examples include a study by Mark Peterson (2013) focusing on the relationship between technological innovation and

language learning through video games. In the book he looks to discover whether participation in computer gaming is beneficial for language learners and discusses whether computer gaming present a paradigm shift for language education. He says that although there is great interest at present in using video games in language education and despite gaming continuing to expand globally, there is still a fairly limited amount of research on the subject compared to other areas.

Peterson goes on to conclude that past research has proven that computer games can serve as viable tools for CALL (2013: 129), and that participation in gaming appears beneficial for at least some aspects of language learning. He states that most research on the field has produced encouraging results concerning the benefits of CALL. However, he also stresses the possible limitations and obstacles in it. The technological requirements is the most obvious of these, but in addition he also mentions the need for practicing the playing of games, i.e. game literacy. He says that this is particularly important with complex games, and that novice learners can benefit greatly from such training. He also states the following concerning game literacy:

> Current research indicates that this should include not only guidance relating to technical features such as, for example, interface management, but also, in the case of social games, orientations that focus on the unique cultures and communication norms operating in different game communities. (Peterson, 2013: 130)

This shows that it is important to take into account more than just the technical aspects of video games when teaching game literacy. The cultural and social elements inherent in many games must also be considered, and students' understanding of them must be ensured. Peterson also says that the role of the individual teacher seems crucial in this process, for both game literacy and the general use of video games in language teaching.

Gündüz (2005) gives a general overview of CALL, discussing its history, its advantages and disadvantages, and its relationship with the Internet and multimedia. He states that because the computer can play so many different roles in and out of class it is seen as the most useful aid for language learning and teaching. However, he also cautions that without careful planning and preparation of materials, as well as teacher and student training the computer is useless (2005: 212).

Lacasa (2013) looks specifically at commercial video games and how they can be used in education, in contrast to games that have been designed with educational use in mind, and as such is particularly pertinent for this material package as well. The book explores how to use video games to make learning possible, using a wide variety of different types of video games to illustrate the

points brought up throughout the book. Each chapter in the book covers a different topic surrounding the use of video games in teaching, from tools for improving the students' skills at problem solving to games as a cultural and artistic phenomena that can be used to develop creativity. The book presents a number of different ways video games can improve the learning process for students of any age, as well as discussing the requirements and difficulties in making use of video games as learning tools. Furthermore, she discusses the various topics different video games can teach people. However, she begins by defining different aspects related to video games such as the genres of video games, which can be categorized in various different ways. One system lists genres such adventure, strategy, action and role play, each with their own distinct traits and examples (2013: 7-8), while another method lists genres such as abstract, evasion, and interactive cinema (Lacasa 2013: 11-13). She also discusses the role of artificial intelligence in video games, and the many different forms it can take in them, and covers the history of video games from their inception in the late 1950's and early 1960's with *Tennis for Two* (1958) and *SpaceWar* (1961) to present day, covering a number of landmark console and video game releases throughout the years, the trends and influences that changed the way we play, and the events that shaped the industry at different times. She states that “any element that may be intentionally used to learn and teach in a classroom or outside it has to be understood within its context”(2013: 28), and stresses that using one game is not the same as using another, which is why it is important to become familiar with a variety of video games in order to be able to choose the ones appropriate for specific needs and situations.

Lacasa also delves deeper into learning using tools designed primarily for entertainment. Regarding them, she states that what matters is not the specific tool (i.e. video game) being used, but rather the method that is applied with the tool (2013: 35), which would also suggest that any type of game can be used for educational purposes as long as the method with which it is used suits the game as well as the needs of the learners and teachers using the game. One example she brings up in chapter three of the book is *Portal* (2007), which is presented as an excellent platform for developing problem solving skills using simple mechanics to solve increasingly complex puzzles. She states that the teacher does not actually have to be able to physically play the game to introduce it into a classroom, only some background knowledge of the game is required to know whether it is suitable for the educational goals present at that time.

> Video games have their own hidden curriculum, revealed step-by-step, as one advances through their screens, which is why they continuously offer new learning contexts. (Lacasa 2013: 69)

In addition, Lacasa (2013: 85) mentions the fact that video games invite reflection as a notable reason why they can become useful learning tools. Video games often demand that the player constantly improves his or her skills to proceed in the game by becoming aware of the problems the game presents to the player and coming up with solutions to these problems through various means available to them. These problems in question can range from simply understanding how a specific element of gameplay works (to defeat an enemy Mario must jump on him), to figuring out the pattern of a set of moving platforms the player must cross to proceed, to any number of other situations a video game places the player in. She also goes on to show that video games can be used to foster creativity in the classroom (2013: 134). By bringing in games that encourage experimentation and different approaches to problem solving, teachers can push students to come up with unique solutions to the same problems. In addition, video games can be used as the foundation on which students create other content. The example Lacasa brings up is how students in one particular experiment created audiovisual presentations based on the game *Boom Blox* and its sequel after playing them in specialized workshops.

Lacasa brings up a number of other examples of how video games can be used as teaching tools in and outside the classroom. She discusses how the video game *Spore* (2008) was used to teach and discuss evolution, or how the *Harry Potter* video games use the differences between the same story told through different mediums (novels, film, video games) and how stories are told in different environments. She also covers a topic that has been discussed extensively and quite heatedly in the video games media, that of whether video games are art or not. The matter has inspired countless opinions from both side of the argument. Famously, the late film critic Roger Ebert stated that video games can never be art (Ebert 2010), while Time published an editorial in 2012 which states in no uncertain terms that video games are one of the most important forms of art in history (Melissinos, 2012), whereas Keith Stuart (2012) posited that this is not even an argument worth having, that the answer to such as question is not even needed. To him the more interesting question is, why is it so important to some people that games are not art. Using the Japanese role-playing game franchise *Final Fantasy* (1987-) as an example, Lacasa (2013: 135-159) discusses video games as a cultural and artistic phenomena, and the relationship between art and popular culture, positing that video games can be used to explore this relationship and develop creativity while doing so. This would then lead to the development of greater understanding and literacy of video gameas as a medium. “The aim is to develop intentionally new forms of literacy, via explicit awareness of the discourse contained in the new media” (Lacasa 2013: 159).

Digital game-based learning is another area of research that has seen a great increase in popularity in recent years. The article collection *Digital Games in Language Learning and Teaching* (Reinders 2012) looks at the benefits of using video games in language learning and teaching from a variety of perspectives, including focusing on language learner interactions in MMORPGs, analysing specific games and their applicability for language learning, and reporting on video games in different educational settings. Reinders says that research into game-based language learning is still in its infancy, but several common elements regarding the field have already emerged. Among them the understanding of gaming as a social practice and that there is a discrepancy between teachers' and students' perception of gaming and its usefulness for language learning. The articles in the collection do not directly address the topic of game literacy, but they do identify many of the issues related to CALL, and discuss the areas which require further research regarding video games in language learning and teaching. The collection also discusses the commonalities and themes that emerge upon researching the use of video games in language learning and teaching. These include the notion that games are a social activity in students' lives, the mismatch that exists between the way students and teachers perceive of gaming and its relation to language learning, and that the learning as it happens through digital games is not yet fully understood. Reinders notes that the potential of video games is clearly evident in each of the articles found in the collection, but also states that video games are only one aspect of learning and teaching, and that their use in such context must be informed by the principles and practice of second-language acquisition.

Marc Prensky (2001, 2003) has also studied digital game-based learning in great detail, first in his book and later in numerous articles. His book is described as the first comprehensive look at the growing field of game-based learning. In it he talks about the possibilities digital games can provide for learning, and also discusses the differences of today's learners compared to the previous generations of students as a result of them being immersed in and growing up with digital technology. He also discusses how the “digital native” children's brains have changed to accommodate these new technologies. Prensky says that he believes that the element that attracts children to video games is the learning they provide. He states that all people love to learn when it is not forced upon them, and that computer and video games provide such learning on a constant basis (2003: 2). As he states:

> But on deeper levels they learn infinitely more: to take in information from many sources and make decisions quickly; to deduce a game's rules from playing rather than by being told; to create strategies for overcoming obstacles; to understand complex systems through experimentation. And, increasingly, they

learn to collaborate with others.

Naturally, some of the aspects of video games and education, such as the school curriculum, are based on outdated information due to the writing having been published well over a decade ago. However, there are still aspects of his writing that definitely apply to today's education as well. Similar to Reinders (2012), he brings up the lack of connection between students and teachers regarding their experience and understanding of the digital world, which makes it difficult for teachers to design lessons that would engage the learners using their language and worldview as a catalyst to learning.

Maja Pivec (2007) discusses the potentials of game-based learning, as well as how, why and when digital games should be used in learning. She also states that one of the conclusions that has emerged from discussions concerning game-based learning is that it is essential to educate teachers by giving them the tools and methods necessary to implement games in the classroom. According to her there is a clear need and desire to change the current learning process and the learning environment, and the emergence of video games as one of the methods of applying technology for learning is one of the signs for this.

Finally, there are many studies that have looked specifically at English language learning and teaching through video games. Both Peterson (2013) and Reinders (2012) discuss the role of video games in language learning and teaching. For example, Peterson (2013: 124) points out that students playing an English language MMORPG video game in one particular study increased both their motivation and confidence to learn and use English, and that learning the language in this manner was more interesting than doing so in a normal language classroom. He states that playing the game elicited the production of target language output, and that during gameplay learners engaged in collaborative interaction done almost entirely in English. Furthermore, most of the learners themselves felt that playing the game provided a useful way to further develop their English skills, claiming that both their reading and writing skills were improved by playing the game (Peterson 2013: 126). He does, however, note that the lower level students taking part in the study had much greater difficulties using the video game to learn, gaining notably less from the play sessions compared to more advanced students. Peterson goes on to conclude that video games appear to provide a useful tool for CALL, and that simply participating in the act of playing video games is beneficial for certain aspects of language development (2013: 129). The exposure to the target language and new vocabulary through video games has been proven beneficial in numerous

studies, and the opportunities they present to develop various language skills, such as reading and writing, have proven to have positive effects on the learners. Video games have also consistently elicited highly positive feedback among intermediate and high level learners, although the research also points out the role of the teacher as an important catalyst for positive learning results. The use of video games in language learning also clearly requires careful preparation, and more analysis on their use is still required (Peterson 2013: 130).

With these studies we can see that video games have become a tool to be taken seriously for teaching and learning, but that there is a clear discrepancy in how different people perceive them, making their actual use in educational contexts difficult. These studies bring up countless different ways a variety of different types of video games can be used to teach, the benefits they could offer, and the clear desire that exists to find effective ways to use them, but often also point out that students and teachers commonly have a very different understanding of video games and digital media in general. This has made implementing video games into classrooms very difficult, as even when the desire to use them is present, teachers lack the tools and skills to do so. One of the main objectives of this work is to find and provide at least some answers to these problems, to give teachers the option to begin using video games as effective teaching tools without having to create everything themselves from nothing.

3. Game literacy

A material package focusing on teaching game literacy is an interesting prospect as the topic of game literacy has gained an increasing amount of coverage in various studies and articles over the last several years (Gee 2007, Buckingham 2007 & 2008, Mustikkamäki 2010). The level of game literacy a learner has can strongly impact their experience of playing a game, the less proficient they are in playing a game the more likely it is that their learning experience will also be less than optimal (Reinhard 2017: 211). However, while its importance has been discussed fairly extensively, there are few, if any actual guidelines on how game literacy should or could be taught in schools. Considering the increasing relevance of video games in today's popular culture, understanding how they work is quite important for both teachers and students.

3.1. Previous research on game literacy

Game literacy has been studied to some degree in the past, as illustrated by Peterson (2013), but

there is still a clear lack of research on the subject in comparison to other areas concerning CALL. There have been some limited studies and coverage of the topic, such as the article by Mustikkamäki (2010) that discusses game literacy as an emerging concept and examines how game literacy is understood from different perspectives both in the Finnish and international context. He discusses it from the point of view of media literacy, game design and socioculture. However, the article does not discuss it from the point of view of learning and teaching.

Steinkuehler (2004, 2005) has covered numerous topics related to learning and video games, often relating to massively multiplayer online games. She states that:

> If we care to understand the current and potential capacities of technology for cognition, learning, literacy, and education, then, we must look to contexts *outside* our current formal educational system rather than those within. (2005: 3)

She follows this up by saying that video games are an excellent starting point. They are places that make possible complex problem solving, group and individual learning across various multimedia, and rich meaning making, among other things (Steinkuehler 2005: 4) .

Lacasa (2013) also touches on the topic of game literacy, discussing how players learn to interpret the audiovisual language of video games, and consequently learn game literacy by playing a video game. Lacasa brings up three main points of learning game literacy. (1) Video games present ways of understanding the world expressed through certain codes that are yet to be deciphered, (2) which requires developing new skills related to literacy, and (3) understanding the world through video games must be combined with the cultural contexts the individual is a part of (2013: 72). Video games present a discourse between the player and the game, which must be considered within the context of the sociocultural situation the player inhabits in the real world. The messages video games convey can then be interpreted and analyzed by the player in the context in which they are presented to him or her both within the game and the real world, each of which can influence the person's view of what the game was trying to convey. On the surface level, these messages can simply be related to the video game's gameplay elements, where the game asks the player to understand what the different audiovisual elements presented in the screen mean in regards to the physical act of playing the game. However, on a deeper level the player may be asked to analyze and understand various aspects of the game's story or characters. The example Lacasa uses is *New Super Mario Bros.* (2006), and how it uses its audiovisual elements to convey the game's goals to the player (2013: 76-77). According to her, this new literacy of video games is understood by *"following people's comprehension of video game discourses, organized through rules, images,*

sounds, and written texts."(2013: 80). By developing these new literacies the player can learn to interpret the messages video games are trying to convey through gameplay, visuals, music, and text. As we become more experienced with a certain game we slowly develop a deeper understanding of its internal set of rules, allowing us to complete increasingly complex tasks as the game progresses.

Other articles covering the topic of game literacy include ones written by Eric Zimmerman (2007) and Kurt D. Squire (2007), which discuss and look at the topic from different perspectives. Both emphasize the importance of game literacy in the present day, both in understanding modern culture and younger generations. Zimmerman talks about the need for new types of literacy as a result of the growing use of computers, namely gaming literacy, as he calls it. He describes game literacy as a way of looking at how games can affect the world around them, in contrast to the classic idea of the magic circle that treats games as existing within a limited space and time with self-contained meanings. Zimmerman defines game literacy as the ability to understand games and create specific meanings from them. He concludes by stating that games have much to offer in the real world, and by playing games we can develop as individuals in that world. Squire (2008: 663) adds that as video games become more culturally prevalent in daily life, using them in education may be changing "from an opportunity to an imperative", so as to properly prepare students for life in a modern society. There has also been some discussion on the topic of game literacy in teaching by people working in the video game industry (Extra Credits 2016, 2017).

3.2. Defining Game Literacy

Game literacy as a concept is defined by Zagal (2010) in three ways: (1) Having the ability to play games, (2) having the ability to understand meanings with respect to games, and (3) having the ability to make games. He adds that one must also take into account the fact that the ability to play games can mean more than just understanding the rules, goals and interface of a game. It may also include the ability to participate in social and communicational practices of play inherent in some games. For the purpose of this study it is the first two definitions that I will be focusing on, with the most weight put on the first, as the ability to create games requires an additional set of skills unnecessary for learning through the use of video games. While it is important to understand the meanings presented by video games in various contexts, including games as part of culture as well as in relation to other games, for example in comparison to other games and genres of games, the most important aspect of this definition is the understanding of the basics of video games and how they are played. Naturally this also depends on what the teacher wants to teach through video

games, but to understand the meanings presented in video games a person must also be able to play them to come across said meanings.

Additionally, we must also make a clear distinction between basic and advanced game literacy, as the differences between the two are quite significant. Zagal (2009:1) proposes the following as the requirements for a person to be game literate:

> *having the ability to explain, discuss, describe, frame, situate, interpret, and/or position games (1) in the context of human culture (games as a cultural artifacts), (2) in the context of other games, (3) in the context of the technological platform on which they are executed, (4) and by deconstructing them and understanding their components, how they interact, and how they facilitate certain experiences in players.*

However, this definition would include only a small fraction of people as game litarate, not taking into account the fact that just as with written literacy, there are different levels of game literacy. For example, not everyone who can technically read will be able to understand all the texts they read, and yet the fact that they can read clearly categorizes them as a literate person. In addition, many books can simply be harder to read, not just in terms of understanding that book, but on a purely mechanical level. This also applies to video games. A person who can play certain video games and has a basic grasp of how to use controllers to play is to some extent game literate, but may still not be able to play or understand more complex video games. This is why we must make a distinction between basic and advanced game literacy, to define what it actually means to be literate in terms of video games. It is not in any way feasible to teach school-aged children game literacy if we take Zagal's definition as the baseline for it, as the requirements for that level of proficiency are far too great for underage students to be expected to reach. However, before we define basic and game literacy we must discuss what it means to be game literate, i.e. what it means for someone to have the ability to “read” in the medium of video games.

The difficulty with defining what it means to be video game literate is on how you measure such literacy. For example, does being able to just play a specific type of game make one literate at least within that genre, or does game literacy mean being able to complete those video games? This is a problem that may have to be addressed on a case by case basis. There are games that do not necessarily require one to actually finish them in order for a person to understand them or be considered literate in relation to those games, but on the other hand there is a large number of games that may take dozens of hours before some of their more complex narrative or gameplay elements are even revealed. So, to be video game literate may largely depend on the type of game

one plays. To use an example, the original *Super Mario Bros.* from 1985 is a fairly simple and straightforward game by today's standards, so for a player to be able to play, understand, and perhaps even have a discussion about the game may only require for him or her to complete one or two of the game's early levels. After that they are likely to have a very good grasp of what the game is like and what it is about. To put it as simply as possible: run from left to right to complete each level, save the princess at the end of the game. However, other games such as *Dark Souls* (2011) or *Bioshock* (2007) will likely require a much greater investment of time and effort from the player due to their significantly more complex narratives and gameplay that take much longer to fully reveal themselves.

In the online video series Extra Credits, game designer and consultant James Portnow and animator Daniel Floyd defined basic and advanced game literacy in detail, and discussed the role of different groups of people in improving people's general game literacy skills and the benefits of doing so (Extra Credits, 2017). I have used their definitions as the basis for the following discussion on basic and advanced game literacy, and expanded upon it within the context of this material package.

Basic game literacy is best understood as just the ability to play a given game at least on a basic level, without necessarily needing to have the skills or understanding to delve into the deeper meanings found within the games themeselves. Basic game literacy is more about the mechanical skills required to use a controller, the ability to discern the information regarding gameplay shown on screen while playing, and being able to adapt to the mechanical requirements of different video game genres with little to no outside help. This is the game literacy that first needs to be taught to students when one wishes to use video games as tools for learning. However, even this basic level of game literacy is not something one simply does or does not possess. Instead, it is a scale. Some genres and games are always going to be more difficult to play and fully understand than others. It is a very different thing to ask a person to play a sports game like *Fifa*, than asking them to play a strategy game like *Europa Universalis IV.* So then we have to consider if all types of games and genres would be included within basic game literacy, even when playing them at the most fundamental level would require a great deal of effort from the players. However, for the sake of clarity, basic game literacy as it relates to this material package means the ability to play most types of video games at even a novice level.

Advanced game literacy on the other hand means the ability to analyze, explain, study and interpret the content of video games in relation to other games, the platform they are on (PC, consoles, etc.)

and culture in general. Advanced game literacy can be seen as part of media literacy, meaning the ability to evaluate media content through a critical lens. Just as students are taught to be critical in how they consume and view other forms of media, from film and television to news and literature, and not simply accept the ideas and opinions expressed in them without any scrutiny, video games should also be given the same status. Video games as a form of media and entertainment are no less impactful in conveying messages through their stories, characters and themes than films or books, and in some ways they may be even more powerful because video games are an interactive medium where people are often directly connected and influencing the events that are unfolding in the game. Countless games, especially in the last 20 years, have proven that the power of video games to discuss ideas and influence those who play them should not be dismissed. Many games have shown that video games can tackle a wide variety of very difficult subjects and do it in an intelligent and mature manner. *Bioshock,* for example, discussed themes such as the illusion of control given to an individual and inspired the creation of numerous articles and discussions on the themes and ideas presented in the game, whereas *Xenogears* covered subjects such as Jungian psychology and religious symbolism in its story. In fact, video games have been addressing various highly complex themes and issues since at least the early-to-mid 1990s, with games such *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* featuring numerous characters dealing with different issues of identity, guilt, and fear.

Advanced game literacy is a skill that is actually quite uncommon even among professional game developers working and creating games within the industry itself, which can be seen in the rarity of games that go beyond the surface level with their intellectual content (Extra Credits, 2017). Most games do not try to challenge or ask questions from the player beyond possibly their increasing mechanical difficulty. However, this does not mean that games like that do not exist, but their relative rarity does indicate that advanced game literacy, or the ability to deconstruct games in a meaningful manner and use that knowledge to build better, more intelligent games, is fairly uncommon even among people who have played games their whole lives. The focus of most games generally appears to be on surface level details (graphical quality, user interface, basic gameplay), while deeper elements concerning the games' themes or narrative are often left underdeveloped. Therefore, we can surmise that there are at least three different groups of people that are integral to the development of advanced game literacy: game developers, players, and academia/educators. Also, unlike with basic game literacy, the educators' role is the least important out of the three, at least at the moment.

The most important group are the game developers, as they are the ones who make the games to be

analyzed and discussed. If the games lack the elements that facilitate such discussion, it is difficult to actually develop these skills. Just by exposing people to more games with deeper themes and narratives we can raise the level of literacy among the gaming community as a whole. As the video game industry is right now, games that genuinely challenge players to analyze the meanings behind their content are few and far between. This would also require more game developers to develop greater game literacy skills so they can then use those skills to develop video games that contain these deeper, more nuanced meanings that can challenge players to think and consider what they might mean. This is followed by the role of the audience in developing advanced game literacy. The consumer who plays video games must be willing and interested in examining the games they play, otherwise any effort developers put into the games and their deeper meaning would be wasted. However, a key element in this are game reviews and criticism, which must develop beyond looking at only the surface level details of games, and actually analyze the underlining meanings found within a given game. Professional video game reviews need to become more than just lists of games' surface level details and content. They need to discuss and analyze the video games in addition to discussing their technical aspects. In addition, players in general need to be more open to critical analysis of the medium of video games. Fortunately, much of this would happen simply through being exposed to games with deeper underlying meanings (Extra Credits 2017).

Finally, the role of academia in spreading advanced game literacy would only come after this. Once developers are creating games with greater depth and audiences are at least to some degree looking for those meanings in games, academia needs to study those meanings further and give people the interpretations and explanations for those meanings. This would not only validate the developers who made those games, but also provide players with new and interesting ways to look at them beneath their surface. Eventually, this would likely lead to a constantly increasing level of game literacy among people. Naturally, advanced game literacy is a skill that can only be built upon already existing knowledge, i.e. basic game literacy.

To take full advantage of the possibilities that video games present for teaching and learning languages the teacher must also make sure that the students have the ability to understand their relationship and role in culture in general. As Zagal (2009: 3) puts it, any game is an artifact that occupies a position in a broader cultural context that can and will include artifacts other than games, for example films, books, music, etc. However, for students to understand these contexts and their implications they must first have the ability to use the tools with which to encounter them. This is why this study will look at the issue of game literacy from the teachers' point of view, as they are

the ones who must ensure that students have access to the skills necessary to make use of and understand video games before any actual learning through them can be achieved.

Teaching game literacy is a task that most teachers will likely be unfamiliar with, as even if they are familiar with video games as a medium and wish to make use of them in their teaching, it is unlikely that many have even considered having to first teach the students the skills required to actually play video games. Essentially, before game literacy can be taught to students, the teacher must first have an intimate understanding of the topic. Only once the teacher has the knowledge required to effectively teach game literacy, is it possible to begin building the necessary understanding in students as well.

However, despite the numerous difficulties both teachers and students must face when teaching game literacy, I strongly believe that doing so is worth the effort. Naturally it allows for teachers to take much greater advantage of video games in their teaching as a result, but even more importantly, whenever a certain medium has become normalized to the point that a majority of people have attained at least a basic universal literacy, it has generally led to an influx of creativity within that medium as new voices that in the past may not have been able to take part in creating new content within that medium. This is true in traditional literature, music and film for example. This led to the creation of new genres and new seminal works in each of these forms of entertainment. Jazz, rock or rap music came about once people who before had not necessarily been musically “literate” were able to participate in the medium and bring new voices into them. The same could potentially happen with video games as well. Creating a situation where universal game literacy is a reality, or at least a distinct possibility has benefits not only for learning and teaching in classrooms, but also for the medium of video games in general. Facilitating the acquisition of advanced game literacy through teaching basic game literacy opens up the possibility for us to understand, discuss, analyze and interpret video games on a much deeper level, which would also lead to a greater number of games being developed that have meanings beyond just the surface level. However, without basic game literacy, achieving this is nearly impossible.

4. Goals and framework

The main target group of the materials are intermediate and advanced language students, roughly seventh grade and higher, although by the teachers' discretion the tasks can also be used with younger learners. This package is primarily intented to work as a supplement to any existing course,

although it is possible to use the materials or parts of them as basis for an entire course. The materials function as an introduction to various types of video games, from which the teacher can transition towards more advanced games. As such, the main purpose of these materials is to provide the foundation for game-based and game-enhanced language learning.

The aim of this material package is to provide teachers the best ways to teach game literacy to students in order to then make use of video games in the actual teaching of languages at school, specifically in the teaching of English. The idea behind this is that although using video games in a language classroom as tools for teaching has been shown to be beneficial to learning in a variety of studies (Gee 2003, 2007), there is no guarantee that the students, regardless of age or school level, actually know how to play those video games. It is perfectly possible, and even likely that some of the students have never played any video games in their life and as a result have no understanding of even the basics of how video games work. Alternatively, the students may only be familiar with a certain types of games, for example mobile games played with a touch screen device, and lack the knowledge and skills to play games on consoles or PC.

At the same time, it is equally likely that some of the students will be very experienced at playing video games and could possibly have an even deeper understanding of the medium than the teacher. This is an issue that every teacher who wishes to use video games in their teaching must solve before they can teach game literacy and use video games as part of their teaching. The teacher must be able to take into account both the inexperienced and those already familiar with video games so as to not needlessly exclude one group. Of course, what will be taught with this material package is basic game literacy, as it is not possible to teach advanced game literacy to large groups of people within the limitations of a language classroom. Naturally, with more experienced students and older learners it is possible to include more complex elements of game literacy, including the discussion of themes and other narrative and mechanical elements found within the games used in teaching game literacy. This essentially comes down to the choices made by the teacher based on each individual group of learners. However, this is not the main goal of the tasks presented in this package.

Consequently, this package seeks to provide teachers with a way to teach game literacy without neglecting the teaching of English. Essentially, game literacy needs to be taught in conjunction with English instead of as a separate subject and therefore support the learning of the subject instead of distracting from it. Additionally this material package will attempt to acknowledge all the possible

limitations related to the teaching of game literacy and answer how those limitations can be overcome as effectively as possible. In addition, even beyond just teaching English and basic game literacy, the goal of this material package is to promote universal game literacy. The goal of achieving greater levels of advanced game literacy among a wider group of people than what is currently the situation is one of the main reasons why game literacy should be taught in schools. To achieve this we must first give students the basic level tools upon which they can then build on either through continued use of video games in schools as learning tools, or on their own outside of school.

If students lack game literacy skills it will be exceedingly difficult to teach anything using video games, as they would not have the ability to play them in the first place. With the help of the tasks found within this material package one can ensure that every student can play the games that teachers wish to use in their teaching. Additionally, with each task the students will also be taught at least one aspect of the target language, such as writing skills, or reading and listening comprehension. Some of the games listed also provide multiple different language options for the teacher to make use of in their English language teaching. This allows even multilingual classrooms to make use of some of these tasks without any great difficulty of implementation.

Each game within the material package will come with suggestions for tasks to use in conjunction with it, providing an easy foundation from which the teacher can begin putting the lesson together. Some of the games found within will be available for free online, generally as downloadable demos, ensuring that the costs for the teacher or school will be as minimal as possible. The free demos available for download can also be used as the basis for many of the tasks and lessons, as they do not necessarily require the complete game. Before every task there will be a brief description of the game and its goals, detailing the game's genre, gameplay elements, and other aspects relevant to their use in teaching. Following this there will be a summary of the possible game literacy and language learning topics that the game can be used to teach.

Finally, the games in the package are ordered based on their genre first (e.g. platformers, RPGs, etc.), and how difficult the games used in the task are second, from easiest to most difficult. This ensures a natural progression for the students who have no prior experience with video games, and enables the teacher to adapt to the skill level of the students who might already have a degree of knowledge and skill in playing video games by ignoring some of the easier games in the package.

5. Discussion

When work on this thesis first began the initial plan was to create a study looking at attitudes of new and future language teachers in Finland towards the use of video games in their teaching, and what they perceived as the biggest obstacles to using them. Specifically, I wanted to find out how well teachers understood the significance of game literacy as a facilitator in making use of video games in the language classroom. However, as I looked into this topic further and read up on previous research on the the use of video games as language teaching tools, the focus of my thesis began to shift. I realized that while there are already numerous studies on them, and quite a few studies on game literacy and its importance on language teaching in particular, instructions on how it could actually be taught at schools to students who would need it do no exist. With that in mind I decided to work on creating a material package focusing on teaching game literacy to students instead of conducting a study on the topic.

The process for putting the material package together began with mapping out potential video games to be used in the material package. In deciding which games could be used in it, I had to take into account a number of different variables. The most important of these was making sure that the games I would choose could be used to teach both game literacy and English. This meant that many older video games that may have been suitable and useful in the teaching of game literacy but which had little to no actual written or spoken language present could not be used. As a result, games like the original *Super Mario Bros.,* which would certainly be an excellent game in teaching the basics of 2D platforming, would have to be left out as it and most other games from the same time period have almost no language material in them. Another important factor was choosing a wide variety of different types of games in order to cover provide an introduction to as many video game genres as possible within the limitation of the material package.

I believe I succeeded in creating a material package with a wide variety of different types of games and tasks, both in terms of the genres represented in the package, as well as within each individual genre. Naturally not every video game genre is present in the package due to the sheer number of existing genres, but I feel that it does cover most of the more popular ones and provides a thorough introduction for students to these different types of video games. Additionally, once students have acquired a basic level of game literacy it allows teachers to expand upon this with other video games.

For further developments in this particular area I can see two important avenues. Expanding the scope of the genres and types of video games covered in a material package like this one would be the next logical step, providing students with access to basic game literacy skills in as wide as selection of genres as possible. In addition, with advanced level students who already possess a certain level of game literacy it could be possible to at least some extent begin extending the teaching of game literacy into advanced level topics. This would mean covering not just the basic gameplay mechanics and surface level elements in different types of video games, but also discussing the deeper meanings found within the narratives in video games, as well as considering the changing cultural and social role of video games over the last several decades. Hopefully in the future we see more teachers taking the initiative and finding new ways to incorporate video games into language speaking classrooms.

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7. Material Package

For the teacher

This material package is intended for use by teachers who wish to use video games in their language teaching. The goal of this package is to provide students with the skills required to play video games while simultaneously teaching them the target language. With the tasks found here you can ensure that your students have the necessary skills and knowledge to make use of video games in meaningful way, and that they possess the skills to play the video games you wish to use in your teaching. Within this package you will find various tasks with which you can teach students how to play different types of video games and how they can read the information video games provide them as they play. This skill is known as game literacy, which essentially means the ability to understand the basics of video games that allows a person to play them and know how they are played. If students lack this particular skill it will be exceedingly difficult to teach anything using video games, as they would not have the ability to play them in the first place. With the help of the tasks found within this material package you can ensure that everyone of your students can play the games that you wish to use in your teaching. Additionally, with each task the students will also be taught at least one aspect of the target language, such as writing skills, or reading and listening comprehension. Some of the games listed also provide multiple different language options for the teacher to make use of in their English language teaching. When this is the case, the languages the game supports will be clearly listed as well. This allows even multilingual classrooms to make use of some of these tasks without any great difficulty of implementation.

Each game will come with suggestions for tasks to use in conjunction with it, providing an easy foundation from which the teacher can begin putting the lesson together. Some of the games found within will be available for free online, generally as downloadable demos, ensuring that the costs for the teacher or school will be as minimal as possible. However, in the cases that a game is not free the price of those games at the time of writing of this package will be clearly shown by the game's name. The free demos available for download can also be used as the basis for many of the tasks and lessons, as they do not necessarily require the complete game. When such a demo exists it will be noted by the full game's price. Note that many of these games can often be found on discount. In addition, a link to the sites and stores from which the games can be acquired will be provided in order to make finding them as easy as possible. Before every task you will find a description of the game and its goals, detailing the games genre, gameplay, and other aspects

relevant to their use in teaching. Following this there will be a summary of the possible game literacy and language learning topics that the game can be used to teach.

You should also note that the games suggested for the tasks are not the only ones that can be used with them. For example, using games you may already own or are otherwise familiar with is strongly encouraged if you find them suitable for any of the tasks, as that can greatly aid in passing on the necessary information regarding the game to your students. In these cases it is paramount that you keep in mind the goal of this material package, giving students the tools to play as wide a variety of the most common types of video games. With this in mind, it is not recommended to choose games that could be considered very niche, at least until much later once the basics of the various genres have been covered. It is understandable that there may be games you feel very strongly about and have some great ideas on how they could be applied to language teaching, but you must first ensure that all students are able to accomplish the tasks you would have in mind for them. **The most crucial detail to remember when choosing the games to use in your teaching are the needs and interests of your students.** This is imperative to any choice you make regarding the kind of games you use.

Finally, the games in the package are ordered based on their genre first (e.g. platformers, RPGs, etc.), and how difficult the games used in the task are second, from easiest to most difficult. This ensures a natural progression for the students who have no prior experience with video games, and enables the teacher to adapt to the skill level of the students who might already have a degree of knowledge and skill in playing video games by ignoring some of the easier games in the package. **The difficulty rating of each game relates to how difficult to game is to pick up and play, and not to the actual difficulty level of the game. For example, a game with a difficulty rating of ★ is very easy for almost anyone to understand and play as there are few, if any, complex gameplay mechanics to be found, but completing the game might still be quite difficult.**

A short note concerning the general suitability of the game for learners of different ages can be found in the description of each game. The difficulty of the tasks related to each game will also closely correlate with the game's own difficulty level. Additionally, if you look at the games listed under a single genre, many of them will cover a lot of the same elements regarding game literacy. With this in mind, you can easily choose just one game that best fits your students in terms of difficulty and the language skills they cover. You can find the games, their genres and their order within the package listed below. At the start of each section you will also find a short description of

the genre and its origins. Finally, keep in mind that the tasks and activies given in this package are just an example of what can be done with each game, and you encouraged to come up with your own, especially if you are familiar with the game in question. You can also use some of the tasks with any of the games listed in the material package. A notable example of this would be to ask the students to review the game they just played.

LIST OF GAMES

2D PLATFORMERS:

As a genre, 2D platformers are among the oldest in the history of video games, tracing their origins all the way back to the 1970's. However, their true defining moment came with the release of *Super Mario Bros*. for the NES in 1985, which exemplifies the basics of the 2D platformer gameplay even today. While the genre has gone through a lot of changes and experiments, the central core has remained largely intact for over 30 years. The manner in which the player traverses the various levels in most 2D platformers is for the most part still about running and jumping, with games often just adding a spin to the established formula, such as focusing more on action or puzzles than platforming.

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
Leo's Fortune	★	42
Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)	★★	43
Trine	★★★	45

3D PLATFORMERS

A more recent genre that was born out of the 2D platformer. While attempts at creating 3D platformers had been made earlier, most people tend to agree that the genre got its true start in 1996 with the release of *Super Mario 64* and *Crash Bandicoot.* Initially the genre was mostly just a translation of the established 2D running and jumping gameplay into a 3D environment, but later games have added combat and various other elements into the mix as well.

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
A Hat in Time	★★	47
Psychonauts	★★★	48
Ratchet & Clank	★★★	50

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

Role-playing games (RPGs) are another very old genre of video game, going back to the mid-1970s mainframe computers. The earliest RPGs were largely inspired by pen-and-paper RPGs, fantasy literature and various other sources. RPGs are often characterized by the existence of a leveling system through which the characters gain strength. They are usually also among the most story-focused video games, featuring vast worlds and long, character driven stories. The combat in them can vary from turn-based to real time. Today the genre can be encountered in countless different forms, and elements from RPGs can often be found in nearly every other video game genre as well. This category also includes MMORPGs like *World of Warcraf* and *Final Fantasy XIV.*

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
Child of Light	★★	52
Cthulhu Saves the World	★★★	53
Final Fantasy XIV	★★★★	55

FIRST-PERSON GAMES

First-person games are not necessarily a genre unto themselves, but can instead encompass a variety of different types of games, from action to horror and from RPGs to puzzle games. However, many of them share certain traits that make placing them into this single category valid. Most notably, the way the majority of first-person video games are controlled has become near universally the same, depending only on whether one plays them on consoles or PC. The most common type is the first-person shooter (FPS), but nearly every genre is represented in this category.

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
Spooky's Jumpscare Mansion	★★	57
Portal/Portal 2	★★★	58

ADVENTURE GAMES

One of the oldest video game genres, adventure games began as text-based games where the player would control the main character's actions using simple phrases such as “turn east” or “pick up key”. Graphic adventure games became the norm during the 1980's as computers became more powerful, allowing them to show actual images on screen. This was soon followed by the text-based interface being replaced with a point-and-click style system using a mouse to control the action. Games in the genre are commonly story-driven, focusing heavily on exploration and puzzle solving with a lot of dialogue and text present in most games in the genre.

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
To the Moon	★	60

Syberia	★★	61
The Secret of Monkey Island	★★	62

OTHER GAMES

There are many games that do not clearly fall within any specific genre, and such classifying them with general terms and traits is difficult. They often mix elements from various different genres, or are wholly unique in how they approach the subject of gameplay and storytelling in video games. For example, one of the games listed below (*Her Story)* is told entirely through short video clips of a woman recounting a specific event to the watcher, and the player is tasked with finding the truth behind the story by using key words to search for the correct video clips within the game. A game like that could perhaps be called a mystery, or a puzzle game, but doesn't exactly fit into any one specific genre or type.

GAME	DIFFICULTY OF PLAY	PAGE
Reigns	★	64
Her Story	★	65
Facade	★★	67

2D PLATFORMING GAMES

1. LEO'S FORTUNE (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIWENvAnRlk

***The game is suitable for students of all ages**, as the controls are not very complex or difficult to learn and the game's levels remain relatively easy throughout its duration. The language in the game is also kept quite simple and easy to understand for the most part.*

Available on: PC, Mobile **Price:** 6.99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/355630/Leos_Fortune__HD_Edition/

Genre: 2D Platformer

Difficulty: ★

Languages: English, French, Italian, German (Audio only in English)

Description and Goal:

The title character is a mustachioed ball of fluff called Leopold, who speaks with a thick Eastern European accent. At the beginning of the game Leopold comes home to discover that his treasure has been stolen by a mysterious thief. He sets out on an adventure to reclaim his fortune and find out the culprit behind the crime.

The player guides Leopold through a variety of 2 dimensional levels using a simple set of controls to move him forward and backward, jump, and float through the air. Each level contains a number of gold coins the player can collect while progressing through the game.

Take a look at the trailer linked above to see the game in action.

Game literacy skills:

- Movement and interaction in 2D levels
- Basics of platforming gameplay
- Puzzle-solving

Language skills:

- Listening comprehension
- Introduction to accents
- Language comprehension and production (written and spoken)

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. After each storyline-cutscene (found between levels), discuss with the class what was said and what happened. Effectively ensure that everyone knows what is happening and understands what they heard. This can be done in groups or with the whole class.
2. Discuss the game with the class in English, ask what they thought of the game and why, have them give reasons to why they liked or disliked the game.
3. Use the game to introduce students to different English accents, starting with the Eastern European accent of the game's main character. For example, have the students listen to various different accents and ask them to write down what accents they believe it to be. You can also discuss the distinct characteristics of various English accents, and what makes them different from one another.
4. Ask the students to write a short review of the game. In doing so they should describe the gameplay, story, and characters, as well as at least some of the main character's abilities, and talk about their own experience in playing the game. They should also summarize their overall opinion of the game at the end of the review, i.e. did they like it or not, and why. What was good or bad about it, did the story interest the students, was the game fun to play, what were the most memorable aspects of the game, did the game look good in their opinion, etc.? **(Note that this task can easily be used in conjunction with any of the games presented in the package)**

2. NEVER ALONE (Kisima Ingitchuna) (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsriRZkdIJ4

*This game is recommended mostly for slightly older students (**Ages 12 and up**), as the language used can be somewhat challenging at times, and the game's story constains some very dark themes and moments (a death of a character for example).*

Available on: PC, PS4, PS3, Wii U, Xbox One, Linux, iOS **Price:** 14,99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/295790/Never_Alone_Kisima_Ingitchuna/

Genre: 2D platformer

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English, Finnish, French, German, Italian (Audio always in Inupiat)

Description and goal:

Players take control of a young Iñupiaq girl and her arctic fox companion in a tale that revolves around the tales and mythology of the Alaskan native people. The game is based on a Iñupiaq folk tale, "Kunuuksaayuka", following the girl as she attempts to find the source of a blizzard that has ravaged her home village, and restoring balance to nature. Throughout the game the player unlocks

“cultural insights” as they encounter new creatures, places and elements of the game, detailing various aspects of the Iñupiaq culture through short videos.

The player can swap between the girl and the fox at will, using their unique abilities to progress through the puzzles and platforming sections. Both characters are necessary in order to move forward in the game. The fox can climb up much higher walls, interact with spirits and is faster than the girl, whereas she can move heavy objects and use a weapon called Bola to open new passages.

See the trailer linked above for an example of what the game looks like.

Game literacy skills:

- 2D Platforming
- Puzzle solving
- Using multiple characters with varying playstyles at the same time

Language skills:

- Reading comprehension
- Introduction to cultures and unfamiliar languages (Iñupiaq)

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. *Never Alone* provides an excellent platform for discussions on indigenous cultures and their differences. By exposing students to the culture and tales of a people they are likely not familiar with, the teacher can facilitate tasks and discussions on not just the Iñupiaq, but on cultures around the world in general.
2. Ask the students to look into the Iñupiaq culture in books or online and have them prepare a presentation in English on one aspect of it. The elements and concepts introduced in the game can be used as a basis for these presentations. Alternatively, the students can give a presentation on other indigenous cultures found around the world, or even ones that do not exist anymore.
3. Create a video review of the game. Have the students write short reviews of the game in English and then using whatever equipment available to you record them reading their reviews and combine them with footage from the game with editing software. The reviews should ideally be 3 – 5 minutes long. If possible, the students can also do the editing themselves, as an added part of the task. With younger younger students the teacher will

likely have to take care of most of the editing process. **(Note that this task can easily be used in conjunction with any of the games presented in the package)**

3. TRINE (2009) **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4sMJdAP2-4**

Trine is generally suitable for students of all ages, provided a certain level of competence in English. The puzzles and platforming can be relatively challenging at times, but never in a way that would prevent most students from playing the game. The language in the game requires some level of competence to follow the story and dialogue. ***Recommended for ages 10 and older.***

Available on: PC, PS3, PS4, Wii U **Price:** 12,99 euro (Steam), demo available for free

Store page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/35700/Trine_Enchanted_Edition/

Genre: 2D platformer

Difficulty: ★★★

Languages: English, German, French, Italian, Spanish

Description and goal:

Trine is a 2D puzzle-platformer where the player(s) take control of three distinct characters, a wizard, a knight, and a thief, each with their own unique skills that must be used to progress in the game. The wizard can create and levitate objects, the knight can fight enemies and break objects with his weapons, and the thief can use a hookshot to reach difficult locations and use a bow to shoot enemies and objects.

The game can also be played alone with the player swapping between the characters at will or with up to three players each controlling one character. The goal of the game is to restore peace into a fantasy kingdom that is being ravaged by an undead army. The story has a storybook like atmosphere, with a narrator describing the events as they unfold and filling the plot details between levels.

An example of the gameplay can be seen in the trailer above. A free demo can also be downloaded from the Steam store linked above.

Game literacy skills:

- 2D platforming
- Physics based puzzle-solving
- Multiplayer gameplay with up to three people at once.

Language skills:

- Listening and reading comprehension
- Oral skills
- Group work and collaboration when playing in co-op.

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. If possible, have the students play the game in groups of three. Completing the various puzzles and levels requires interaction and cooperation, which the students should perform in English, developing both their oral skills and teamwork. You can also pair students of different skill levels together, which allows the weaker students to learn from the more skilled ones naturally during gameplay. This applies to both language and gaming skills.
2. *Trine* features a very traditional western fantasy setting. The teacher can use this as a platform to have the students discuss and write about the tropes and elements commonly found in different genres or literature/film. The best way to start would be to start discussing the characters and story of the game, and use that as a segue to discussing the traits they share with other stories and characters found in the fantasy genre. This can also transition into discussions about genres in general.
3. Student presentations on various literary/film genres, their traits and common elements. This can be done individually or in groups. The presentations can include examples of important works within the genre, people who are famous for their work on the genre, etc. Alternatively, focus on a specific genre such as fantasy, and have the students give presentations on a specific work of that genre, such as a book, film, or a video game.

3D PLATFORMING GAMES

4. A HAT IN TIME (2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2redw7Pl3LI

Relatively easy to play, both mechanically and in terms of difficulty level. The language used in the game is also quite easy to understand. The game is also quite new, so the graphical quality and visual style will likely appeal to many younger students especially. The one limiting factor for classroom use might be the game's comparatively high asking price, as the game does not unfortunately have a free demo available. ***Suitable for most student's above the age of seven.***

Available on: PC, PS4, Xbox One **Price:** 27,99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/253230/A_Hat_in_Time/

Genre: 3D platformer

Difficulty:★★

Languages: English

Description and goal:

A Hat in Time is a 3D platformer where the player controls a young girl who must restore her space ships fuel reserves. The girl can run, jump and use various other ways to traverse the game's 3D environments. By collecting magical yarn across the game's many worlds the player can stitch together new hats that give the girl new abilities to play with.

The gameplay consists of various common elements found in many 3D platformers, including jumping, climbing, finding various collectables, and using the different special abilities such as creating explosives or peeking into other dimensions.

An example of the different types gameplay in *A Hat in Time* can be seen in the trailer linked above.

Game literacy skills:

- Platforming and movement in a large 3D environment
- Simple puzzle solving and stealth gameplay

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension
- Vocabulary development

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Discuss the differences between 2D and 3D platformers. What is it that makes them different from one another besides the obvious added dimension in the latter? What specific elements are unique, or at least more common in each type of game? The students can also discuss their preferences between the two, and why they prefer one over the other.
2. In small groups (3 to 4 people), the students need to design a new world/level for the game. They need to consider the general theme of their new world, what goals the player needs to reach in that world, and design the world's look based on the theme (i.e. a horror themed world could include classic horror iconography). They should also create a rough plan for the world's overall appearance, ideally by drawing it on paper or on a computer. The image linked below can be used as an example of a world in a 3D platforming game. The design should also include descriptions of the enemies and other characters found in the level. [IMAGE]
3. Creating a let's play video with commentary in English by the students over the gameplay. A Let's Play video is essentially a recording of a person playing a game and commentating on the game as they do so. This can be done in one of two ways. Either record the students playing the game and commentating on the game as they play, or record the commentary track afterwards and edit them together. **(Note that this task can easily be used in conjunction with any of the games presented in the package)**

5. PSYCHONAUTS (2005) **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axw8rTXoKUo**

A very good, cheaper alternative for A Hat in Time, featuring much of the same style of gameplay and generally appropriate for the same audience, skewing perhaps towards slightly older children. Many of the same tasks can be used in conjunction with either game. The game's language is more advanced and the gameplay somewhat more complex than in A Hat in Time. ***Recommended for students aged 12 and older.***

Available on: PC, PlayStation 2, Xbox, PlayStation 4 **Price:** 9,99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/3830/Psychonauts/

Genre: 3D platformer

Difficulty: ★★★

Languages: English

Description and goal:

In *Psychonauts* the player takes control of a young psychic called Razputin, who breaks into a psychic summer camp in order to join an elite group psychic secret agents called the Psychonauts. Soon, in order to solve a crime where someone is kidnapping the other campers and stealing their

brains, Razputing must use his ability to project himself into other people's minds and use his many psychic skills while in there.

Psychonauts is a fairly traditional 3D platformer, consisting of traversing various environments by running, jumping and climbing. However, the game adds another element to the gameplay through the various psychic abilities the player can learn, such as levitation, invisibility and others.

An example of the gameplay can be seen in the video linked above.

Game literacy skills:

- Platforming and movement in a 3D environment
- Puzzle solving

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension
- Vocabulary development
- Recognizing different tones and styles of written and spoken text (Use of humour in conjunction with dramatic scenes)

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Discuss the differences between 2D and 3D platformers. What is it that makes them different from one another besides the obvious added dimension in the latter? What specific elements are unique, or at least more common in each type of game? The students can also discuss their preferences between the two, and why they prefer one over the other.
2. For more advanced students, discuss the shifts in tone found within the game. Did they recognize the use of humour in the game? Ask them to describe the game's tone in as much detail as they can. If possible, they can use examples taken directly from the game to illustrate their points. Other games with similarly humorous style can also be used as examples, which the teacher can bring up if necessary (*The Monkey Island*-series for instance).
3. In small groups (3 to 4 people), the students need to design a new world/level for the game. They need to consider the general theme of their new world, what goals the player needs to reach in that world, and design the world's look based on the theme (i.e. a horror themed world could include classic horror iconography). They should also create a rough plan for

the world's overall appearance, ideally by drawing it on paper or on a computer. The image linked below can be used as an example of a world in a 3D platforming game. The design should also include descriptions of the enemies and other characters found in the level. [IMAGE]

6. RATCHET & CLANK **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INWTbpXhckA**

Fairly easy game to play and understand. The one complicating element is the sheer number of possible weapons that become available for use as the player progresses in the game. Very cartoony in style and tone. Some of the language used can be difficult to understand for less advanced students. Only available on the PlayStation 4, which does make its use in teaching slightly ore difficult unless the teacher already owns the console and game. However, any of the other games in the series can also be used for the tasks below. ***Suitable for ages 7 and up, but recommended for slightly older students.***

Available on: PS4 (Earlier games available on the PS2 and PS3) **Price:** 34,95 euro (PS Store)

Store Page: https://store.playstation.com/fi-fi/product/EP9000-CUSA01073_00-RCPS400000000000

Genre: 3D platformer / Action

Difficulty: ★★★

Languages: 14 language options, including English, Finnish, Spanish, French and Italian

Description and goal:

An action oriented 3D platforming game, where the focus is more on destroying opponents and obstacles rather than pure platforming. The player gains access to numerous weapons and gadgets throughout the game, providing them with a wealth of options and variety in how to deal with the various problems and puzzles the game places in front of the player.

Rathcet & Clank is very humorous in tone, and the writing is often highly imaginative and engaging. This makes it a very good game to use with students of almost any age with at least some language proficiency.

An example of the game's writing and gameplay can be seen in the trailer linked above.

Game literacy skills:

- Advanced movement and platforming in a 3D environment.
- Third-person action gameplay basics, including aiming, dodging and melee combat.

Language skills:

- Listening and reading comprehension.
- Recognizing different tones and styles in written and spoken text

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Design a new weapon or gadget for the game. This should include a detailed drawing of what the weapon/gadget looks like, a clear description of what it does, and what its name is. The students can do this either by hand or computer, depending on their preference and the options available at the time. Provide the students with a few examples of the weapons available in the game to give them an idea of the style they can use for this task. [WEAPON] [GADGET]
2. Discuss the use of humour in video games. Start by discussing the humour in *Ratchet & Clank* with the class. Did the students recognize the use of humour in the first place? Did the students find the game to be funny? Can they think of other games with an intentionally humorous tone? What aspects of the game did they find funny, if any? For example, the writing, character designs, enemies, weapons, or something else. This task is generally better suited for older, more advanced students, and can also be used in conjunction with other games that have a clearly humorous tone.
3. Either discuss in groups or ask the students to write about the differences in the use of humour in static forms of media such as films or books and interactive media like video games. How can video games create humour through player actions in contrast to other forms of media where the person is just passively watching or reading the comedy unfold?

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

7. CHILD OF LIGHT (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYOfW-ae5sk

Child of Light can be used with students of nearly all skill levels. However, the language in the game does require a certain level of competence, so it is recommended that students' already possess at least some knowledge of English before playing the game. ***Recommended for students ages 7 and up.***

Available on: PC, PS4, Wii U, Xbox One **Price:** 14,99 euro (Steam), demo for free

Store page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/256290/Child_of_Light/

Genre: Role-playing

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese, Portuguese-Brazil, Russian

Description and goal:

Child of Light is a 2D role-playing game featuring a traditional turn-based combat system combined with elements from side-scrolling platformers. The characters gain levels by participating in battles, and explore the various locations in the world by moving in vast 2D environments.

The game's story is told through spoken dialogue, cutscenes and written text. In it, the main character Aurora is sent to a fantasy land of Lemuria, which she must save in order to return to her home. What makes *Child of Light* interesting is that every spoken and written line in the game are in the form of simple poems. As such, the game can serve as an excellent introduction to poems in a genuinely interactive form. As the entire story of the game is told in the form of poems, the players are naturally exposed to them by simply playing the game, instead of having to read books to achieve the same.

See the trailer linked above for a brief clip on the game's story and gameplay. A free demo of the game is also easily available for PC from Steam. It can be found from the link above leading to the game's store page on the Steam store.

Game literacy skills:

- Turn-based combat systems
- RPG leveling systems

Language skills:

- Written and listening comprehension
- Simple poetic forms

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Introduce the students to different forms of poetry, perhaps by using examples taken from the game itself where applicable. *Child of Light* uses relatively simple poems to tell its story, but it can be used as a foundation the teacher can use to build upon and provide the students with information and examples of many other types of poems.
2. Ask the students to write their own poems based on the game's story. They can use the styles found within the game as templates for their own writing, or look at other forms of poetry either online or in books and use those styles instead.
3. Ask the students to write a short story set in the game's world, using either the characters from the game or their own creations. The tone and genre of the stories can be whatever the students/teacher decides on, though a fantasy story is likely the easiest option considering the game's setting and style. This also gives the students a large degree of freedom in writing their stories.

8. CTHULHU SAVES THE WORLD (2010)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YlLNoLrwks

Cthulhu Saves the World is an RPG inspired by many classic Japanese titles in the genre from the early 1990s. Relatively simple in terms of gameplay, but the language requires somewhat higher level proficiency in English to properly understand. Includes many wordplays, puns, parodies of common RPG cliches, and references to films, books and anime among other things that may be too difficult or obscure for younger students to grasp. ***Recommended for ages 12 and up.***

Available on: PC **Price:** 1,99 Euro (Steam)

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/107310/Cthulhu_Saves_the_World/

Genre: Role-playing

Difficulty: ★★★

Languages: English

Description and goal:

Playing as Cthulhu, the goal of the game is to reclaim the powers he lost when a mysterious wizard sealed them away, and the only way to do so is to become a hero and save the world. The game plays around and parodies a lot of the tropes and cliches of the RPG genre, and in general is very humorous and often sarcastic in tone.

The gameplay consists of classic turn-based RPG combat and wandering the world from town to town completing quests and speaking to other characters you come across during the game. The game's look and style is strongly influenced by older games in series such as *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest.*

The trailer linked above provides an example of the gameplay.

Game literacy skills:

- Turn-based combat basics
- Basic RPG gameplay

Language skills:

- Reading comprehension
- Written allusions and references to outside sources
- Wordplays, puns, and other forms of language use

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. *Cthulhu Saves the World* is an excellent way to introduce students to intertextual references and allusions. Besides the obvious connection to H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, the game contains numerous examples of intertextuality to various different sources, including films, books, other video games, and more. This can then be expanded with examples of other video games, films, books, music, etc. that contain intertextual references.

   The teacher can use examples he or she is already familiar with, or look for them online. However, it's best to use examples the students are likely to understand and be at least somewhat familiar with. For example, many Disney/Pixar films contain references to other films made by the two studios, which are likely very easy to understand for students of nearly any age.
2. With older students, discuss the purpose behind intertextual references and allusions, i.e. why are they used in different works of art and popular culture in general? Present them with examples in at least a few different sources (film, book, piece of music), and discuss why and how they were used in those specific examples. For example, the book *Ulysses* by James Joyce is a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* set in Dublin, with numerous parallels

between the two works and the experiences of the characters in them. Other examples of intertextual references include songs such as *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* by Pink Floyd or *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Iron Maiden, and films such as *The Lion King.* In addition, the students can look for examples of intertextuality by themselves and give brief presentations on them in English.

3. Ask the students to write a story containing allusions and references to at least one outside source. This can take the form of a retelling of an existing story in a new context and new characters, or an original story that references other texts within its own text. Before they write their own stories, give the students examples of how other written texts have handled allusions and references in the past. This gives them some foundation to build upon in regards to how they can refer to other texts within their own story.

9. FINAL FANTASY XIV (2013)

While Final Fantasy XIV has a monthly fee that is technically required to play the game, it also features a free trial period with no time limit up to Level 35, making it a great choice for classroom teaching. The overall level of language used in the game and the themes found within make this better suited for advanced students. ***Recommended for students aged 16 and up.*** *Note that the teacher can also choose any other MMO for use with the following suggested tasks and activities if he or she feels they are better suited for their students or if the teacher is already familiar with another game(s) in the genre.*

Available on: PC, PS4 **Price:** Free trial period up to level 35

Store Page: https://freetrial.finalfantasyxiv.com/fi/

Genre: Role-playing (online)

Difficulty: ★★★★

Languages: English, French, German, Japanese

Description and goal:

Fantasy XIV is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) with a heavy focus on storytelling. The game encourages co-operation and interaction between players, providing an excellent platform for students to encounter and use English in an authentic environment populated by people from all over the world.

In the game the player can explore the world, fight various monsters, complete quests, and work together with other players in a fully realized 3D world. See trailer linked above for an example of this.

Game literacy skills:

- Online RPG gameplay
- Co-operation with other players

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension
- Interaction with other people in an authentic environment in the target language

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Before the students begin playing the game have them write down their expectations and experience about learning languages in an online environment. Do they expect it to be a useful tool for language learning? Why? Why not? Do they expect their language skills to develop by playing the game and interacting with other people from different parts of the world? How do they feel about using english with people they do not know? This should also include whether they have prior experience in playing MMORPGs.
2. After each play session have a brief discussion with the students about their experience playing the game and using English with other people. They should also keep a journal about their experience playing the game. This should include things like what they did during the session, how much and in what way they interacted with other people using English, and whether or not they encountered any new or unfamiliar words or phrases during the session.
3. After the final play session the students should write an essay on their overall experience in playing the game. Did their initial expectations come true? Was playing the game useful to them in regards to language learning? Do they feel more confident in using English after this? Was the overall experience fun for them? Would they like to do something similar with other games (online or otherwise) in the future?

FIRST PERSON GAMES

10. SPOOKY'S JUMP SCARE MANSION (2015)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2IYN2WlaPY

Spooky's Jump Scare Mansion is a first-person horror game featuring relatively simple gameplay and language that slowly increases in difficulty and complexity over the course of the game. In general the game is easy to play and understand, but due to its horror elements especially in later parts of the game it can be somewhat scary and disturbing for younger students. ***Recommended for ages 14 and up.***

Available on: PC **Price:** Free

Store Page: http://store.steampowered.com/app/356670/Spookys_Jump_Scare_Mansion/

Genre: First-person (horror)

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English

Description and goal:

In *Spooky's Jumpscare Mansion* the player is tasked with traversing through a mansion consisting of 1000 rooms. Within the mansion the player will encounter various different monsters trying to stop or kill the player. In addition, the game contains written and spoken language through which it tells its story.

The goal of the game is to simply make your way to the end of the mansion, while the challenge and horror elements slowly ramp up over time. This is especially effective in demonstrating the importance of building atmosphere in a story. The game takes a while before any real horror elements appear, as for most of its early part the only attempts at scaring the player are intentionally tame. However, the students will likely notice that these exact same attempts will suddenly become effective later in the game once a number of genuinely effective horror elements have been introduced.

Game literacy skills:

- First-person gameplay
- Puzzle solving

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Ask the students to write down their experience while playing the game. For example, every 50 or 100 rooms they should take a moment to note down their current feelings about the game. What have they encountered so far? Has the game managed to scare them? Are the horror elements in the game effective at that particular point in the game?
2. Once they have finished the game have them write another short piece reflecting on the overall experience they had with the game. They should think about how the game succeeds or fails at building its atmosphere and incorporating its horror elements. Why was the game's horror effective? Or if it was not, why did it fail in their opinion?
3. Discuss the traits of various different genres and what makes them different from one another. What elements are unique to horror, fantasy, sci-fi, and other genres? How have various genres been mixed together in different media, such as film and literature? What examples of this can the students come up with? For example, the film *Alien* combined science fiction with horror. The students can also look at a specific example of this in greater detail and discuss what elements it takes from which genre it uses, and whether it does so successfully or not? This task is generally better suited for older and more advanced students who possess a greater level of knowledge of various genres and examples of those genres.

11. PORTAL/PORTAL 2 (2007/2011)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZD17pQSqUU

Portal and Portal 2 are first person puzzle games requiring problem solving skills, spacial awareness and quick thinking among other skills. Both games are easy to simply pick up and play, but the story of both games is perhaps a bit too dark for younger children. ***Recommended for ages 12 and up.*** *The first game is generally the better option for classroom use due to its short length, though both games are otherwise equally good.*

Available on: PC, PS3, Xbox 360 **Price:** 8,19 / 16,79 euro (Steam)

Store Page: https://store.steampowered.com/app/400/Portal/ (*Portal)*

Genre: First-person (puzzle)

Difficulty: ★★★

Languages: 17 different languages, including English, Spanish, Finnish, German and French

Description and goal:

In both *Portal* games the player is tasked with solving a series of increasingly difficult puzzles under the guise of experiments created by an artificial intelligence called GlaDOS. The player uses

a device called Portal Gun to create portals through which they can traverse and solve the game's various environmental puzzles.

The games are played from a first-person perspective and controlled with either a mouse and keyboard or a gamepad. Check the trailer above for an example of the gameplay from *Portal 2.*

Game literacy skills:

- Puzzle solving
- Spatial awareness
- Verticality in video games
- Aiming and movement in first person

Language skills:

- Listening and reading comprehension

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. In small groups the students must design a puzzle room in the style found in the two games. They should draw the room in detail either on paper or digitally. They do not need to be very complex, though that is always an option should the students wish to spend a lot of time designing the puzzle. Present the finished puzzles to the class. This can alse be turned into a competition, or a vote where the students can decide which puzzle they think is the best. Naturally the puzzle must be possible to solve using the game's logic.
2. Create a series of Let's Play-videos with the students, where they play the game and record themselves doing so. If you are using *Portal 2* your class can also do this in pairs as the game has a co-operative mode. Alternatively, you can have the students record their own voice-overs to their gameplay videos afterwards, where they can talk about what they were doing in the game, and how they were able to solve the various puzzles.
3. The students write a walkthrough for the game, containing solutions to the puzzles. These can make use of images and video clips linked into the text. This might perhaps be best done as a collaboration by the entire class, with everyone writing a portion of the walkthrough. For example, the first *Portal* is split into 20 test chambers, so each student can write the guide for one or more chamber depending on how many students there are in the class. The walkthrough should also contain information about the basic gameplay elements, the game's controls, and possibly a brief summary of the game's plot and setting. Dividing the walkthrough into sections is the best option, with each student writing a specific section. You can also look at examples online on what walkthroughs generally contain.

ADVENTURE GAMES

12. TO THE MOON (2011)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqkJuSV-23U

To the Moon is generally best suited for older students due to the game's relatively heavy subject matters that deal with themes such as death, regret and mental illness among other topics. So while the game is very easy to play, its language and themes are much better suited for more advanced students. ***Recommended for ages 14 and up.***

Available on: PC, mobile, linux **Price:** 7,99 euro (Steam)

Store page: https://store.steampowered.com/app/206440/To_the_Moon/

Genre: Adventure

Difficulty: ★

Description and goal:

To the Moon is a story-driven adventure game where the player controls two doctors as they work to solve the mystery of a dying man's mind. The doctors are working for a company that specializes in creating artificial memories for people in their death beds as their last wishes. The two doctors, Eva and Neil, have been tasked with fulfilling the lifelong dream of a man who wants to go to the moon, but doesn't remember why. Eva and Neil dive into his memories to create such a memory, and in doing so discover his life's story.

In gameplay terms *To the Moon* is a very simple game, mostly consisting of just leading the two main characters through the various areas of the game and solving some fairly easy puzzles.

Game literacy skills:

- Puzzle solving
- Basic gameplay mechanics (movement, interaction with objects and characters)

Language skills:

- Reading comprehension
- Grammar

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Write a short story about exploring a person's memories. The person and the subject of the memories are entirely up to the writer. In general the students should be given considerable freedom in how they approach this topic. They can use the game's central concept as the

basis for their story, or look at it from a completely different point of view.

2. The subject matter and themes of *To the Moon* lend themselves to discussions on various topics. Discuss the morality of the game's central narrative element of changing people's memories at their request, and as such fundamentally altering their personality and how they perceive their own past. If given the option, would the students be willing to let that be done to them? Would they be willing to change their own memories for a better, but artificial past? Why, or why not?

13. SYBERIA (2002)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2jOdWNUDzQ

Syberia is aimed more towards more mature audiences than most other point-and-click adventure games. It's tone and graphical style is generally more realistic than the other two games of its genre on this package, though it does include some fantastical elements as well. This combined with the fairly advanced level of language and quite difficult puzzles makes it ***best suited for students aged 14 and up.***

Available on: PC, Xbox 360, PS3, Switch **Price:** 8,09 euro (Good old games)

Store Page: https://www.gog.com/game/syberia

Genre: Adventure

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese, Italian, Polish and Russian

Description and goal:

Syberia is a cyberpunk inspired point-and-click adventure about a young lawyer called Kate Walker who during a routine business trip is drawn into a mystery surrounding the history of a family who own the factory whose sale she was supposed to oversee. This eventually takes her on a trip through Central and Eastern Europe as she attempts to uncover the truth behind the Voralberg family's past.

The gameplay in *Syberia* is a mix of puzzles, searching through the various environments and talking to people to find out clues about your current goal. Check the video above for a brief example.

Game literacy skills:

- 3D adventure game basics
- Puzzle solving

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension
- Introduction to sub-genres fiction

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. The game presents the players with numerous different fictional versions of real-life cultures and countries across Europe. Have the students discuss the differences between the various locations found in the game, and what makes them unique. They can also discuss how accurate they believe these locations to be compared to real-life.
2. *Syberia* takes a lot of inspiration for its various locations and machines from a sub-genre of cyberpunk called clockpunk. Use this as the basis for an introduction to various sub-genres that exist within more well-known genres such as sci-fi and fantasy. For example, you can talk about the differences between different fantasy sub-genres such as high fantasy, dark fantasy, epic fantasy and low fantasy.
3. Choose/have the students choose one major genre of literature for the entire class that they are interested in (sci-fi, fantasy, horror), and have them write a short story within one of that genres sub-genres. The main genre should be the same for the whole class, but the students should then be allowed to write the story for the sub-genre they are most interested in. Once the main genre has been chosen, go over the traits of the various sub-genres so the students have at least a basic knowledge about the type of world and text they are expected to create. **Alternatively:** Have the entire class write a collaborative story where each student writes a single chapter for the story. Again, choose a genre you wish to use, and agree upon certain basic details for the story such as the main character(s), where is it set, and so on. Otherwise the students should be allowed to take the story to any direction they wish, with certain limitations in place naturally.

14. THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND (1990)

The vibrant and cartoony graphical style and humorous tone make The Secret of Monkey Island a well suited game for use in a classroom setting even with younger students. However, the language used in the game can be somewhat challenging for less advanced students, so some discretion is required. Generally the game is ***best suited for students aged 12 and up.***

Available on: PC, PS3, Xbox 360 **Price:** 8,19 euro (Steam)

Store Page:

https://store.steampowered.com/app/32360/The_Secret_of_Monkey_Island_Special_Edition/

Genre: Adventure

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish

Description and goal:

The Secret of Monkey Island is a classic point-and-click adventure game where the players take control of an aspiring pirate called Guybrysh Threepwood who must complete a set of tasks in order to achieve his dream. In doing so he becomes entangled in a love triangle between himself, the governor of Mêlée Island Eleanor Marley, and the Ghost Pirate LeChuck.

The game is known for its clever use of language, through which it creates much of its humour. This provides an excellent platform for developing students' language skills, as the game's dialogue and language in general is very well written, colourful and highly varied. In addition, *Secret of Monkey Island* is also well regarded for its puzzles which often require some lateral thinking, while still adhering to a clearly understandable logic.

Game literacy skills:

- Puzzle solving
- Lateral thinking (i.e. solving problems through an indirect approach)

Language skills:

- Reading and listening comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Word plays and other forms of humour through language

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Throughout the game the students are likely to encounter numerous words and phrases they are unfamiliar with. Ask them to keep track of these words and use dictionaries and other resources to find out their meanings. After playing the game the students should compare their lists and see which words came up most often in them.
2. *The Secret of Monkey Island* often asks the players to solve puzzles by employing lateral thinking, rather than the usual step-by-step, or vertical, logic. Provide the students with a set of lateral thinking puzzles, which they can solve as a group by asking simple yes/no questions.

   An example of a lateral thinking puzzle you can give them would be *"A man walks into a bar and asks the barman for a glass of water. The barman pulls out a gun and points it at*

the man. The man says 'Thank you' and walks out. Why? The answer to this is that the man had hiccups. Another, perhaps much easier one is *"Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on the lawn. Nobody put them on the lawn but there is a perfectly logical reason why they should be there. What is it?"* The answer to this is, naturally, it was a snowman that has since melted. You can find many more examples of lateral thinking puzzles to use online.

OTHER GAMES

15. REIGNS (2016)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2HnvpXqII4

An exceptionally simple and easy to play game where players must make choices as a rules of a kingdom and try to balance the church, the army, the people, and the budget in a way that none of them get too strong or too weak. However, while the game is simple to play the language and the subject matter are not suited for younger students. As such, the game is ***recommended for ages 14 and up.***

Available on: PC, mobile, Switch **Price:** 2,99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: https://store.steampowered.com/app/474750/Reigns/

Genre: Strategy

Difficulty: ★

Languages: 12 languages, including English, French, German and Spanish

Description and goal:

The player takes on the role of a medieval monarch ruling over a kingdom and must make choices to balance various different factors to ensure he stays on the throne for as long as possible. The choices are presented as cards which the player must then swipe either left or right. This decision then affects some aspect of the kingdom, such as how powerful the church or the army is. If any of them become too strong or too weak, the monarch is deposed, and the next one takes his place.

For an example of the gameplay check the trailer linked above.

Game literacy skills:

- Problem solving
- Dealing with long-term effects

Language skills:

- Reading comprehension
- Vocabulary

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. This can be made into a collaborative gameplay experience with the entire class. The game is essentially split into a series of reigns that last anywhere from one to over 100 years. Play the game in class and swap players every 2 or 3 reigns so every student gets a chance to play the game. Additionally, show the game being played on screen in front of the class so everyone can participate in the game at all times. This also allows the entire class to have a say in the choices and learn throughout the experience.
2. Have the students give presentations on medieval Europe. Thanks to its setting of a medieval European kingdom that presents aspects such as culture, religion, superstitions, politics of the era and many other elements as part of its core gameplay and background *Reigns* is a useful way to introduce students to traits of medieval culture. These presentations can be about a wide variety of subjects, but the game alone presents such possibilities as the Crusades, role of the church in medieval Europe, and scientific development. The presentations can naturally cover a wide variety of subjects, from specific events to important social and cultural institutions of the era. This task could also be used as part of a CLIL history course, or as a collaboration between English and history courses.

16. FACADE (2005)

Facade is an experimantal social simulator video game that allows the player to take on various roles in a set fictional situation and input their own dialogue freely to achieve a variety of different results. The game requires a relatively high level of language competence, and as such is ***best suited for students aged 14 and older.***

Available on: PC **Price:** Free

Store Page: http://www.interactivestory.net/

Genre: Social simulator

Difficulty: ★

Languages: English

Description and goal:

In *Facade* the player takes on the role of a friend of Trip and Grace, a couple living in New York who invited the player for a coctail party. In the game its readily apparent that Trip and Grace are having problems in their relationship, and by using the game's language processing software the

player can input dialogue to interact with the couple.

The player can freely choose how to approach the situation, and can for example try to help the couple repair their relationship, drive them further apart, or get thrown out of the apartment entirely.

Game literacy skills:

- Moral choice systems
- Contextual interaction

Language skills:

- Text production
- Reacting to dialogue

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. Create a collaborative communication exercise, where each student is given a specific role and a goal they need to achieve by the end of the exercise. This is essentially live-action role playing. **This task requires a fair amount of preparation as you need to have separate roles and goals for every single student.** However, it can also be exceptionally rewarding as it allows the students to improvise and use their language skills in a way they likely have never done before.

   Basic examples for a few roles: (1) By the end of the exercise convince as many of the other people as possible that another player is a wanted criminal. You also know the real criminal, but need to ensure he/she doesn't get caught. (2) A detective who must discover who committed the crime and make an arrest at the end of the game. (3) A spy who has critical information in a letter he/she needs to deliver, but you're unsure who your contact is and need to find out the right person to deliver the letter to. You can naturally expand upon roles like these, make groups that need to work together to achieve their separate goals, and come up with your own roles and scenarios, etc.
2. After the above task the entire class should have a discussion on their goals during the game, what they found out during it (or think they found out), and what the roles each of them played were. They can discuss their findings and their logic regarding how they came to these conclusions.

17. HER STORY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaHw97l7-Lc

Her Story is an interactive story video game that uses video clips of a real-life actress to tell its story. The game is best suited for advanced level students as the player is required to understand fairly complex language to progress in the game and solve its mystery. ***Best suited for students aged 14 and up.***

Available on: PC, Mobile **Price:** 5,99 euro (Steam)

Store Page: https://store.steampowered.com/app/368370/Her_Story/

Genre: Interactive story

Difficulty: ★★

Languages: English, Japanese (Spoken dialogue only in English)

Description and goal:

In *Her Story* the player takes the role of an initially unknown person looking through video clips of an old interrogation regarding an apparent murder. In the clips a woman is seen answering questions and talking about the apparent murder. In order to navigate through the nearly 300 video clips and find out what really happened they must write specific words into the game's search engine. By doing this the game brings up video clips related to that particular word.

The players must discover the words they need to use by listening to the woman's stories and answers, many of which contain key words that help the players discover the truth behind the game's mystery. Check the trailer above for an example of this.

Game literacy skills:

- Deductive reasoning
- Problem solving

Language skills:

- Listening comprehension
- Grammar and vocabulary

Suggested tasks and activities:

1. The students should keep a journal while they play the game. In it they should include any unfamiliar words they come across in the video clips, and keep notes on what they think really happened. Who do they think is the murderer, who is the woman in the videos, who is the person watching the videos, etc. They can also include things such as how they came to each particular conclusion as the game progressed, and if they changed their minds at any

point about some aspect of the mystery, what made them do it, etc.

2. Create a communication exercise based on the game's basic concept of interrogating a person about a crime. In pairs or groups the students should improvise an interrogation based on some basic guidelines. One student should be the person being interrogated, while the others are the interrogators. Both sides should be given certain pieces of information the other does not necessarily know about the crime. For example, the person being interrogated may play the role of the criminal who wants to fool the interrogators into thinking he/she is innocent, or they can be someone who is trying to cover somebody else's tracks from the interrogators. In these instances the interrogators need to catch them lying based on information they have been given about the crime.

   This is an exercise that will require a fairly large amount of preparation, as you need to create the roles for the students in advance, so take this into account if you wish to use this activity with your class.