FINNISH YOUNG ADULTS' VIEWS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITIES TO UTILIZE VIDEO GAMES IN ENGLISH LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

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Videopelien hyödyntäminen opetuskäytössä on yksi näkyvimmistä tuoreista tutkimusaiheista viime vuosina. Tämä tutkimus keskittyy videopelien mahdollisuuksiin englannin opetuksessa, painottaen motivaation ja autenttisen kielenkäytön eroja luokkahuoneessa ja videopeliympäristössä tapahtuvan oppimisen välillä. Keskeisenä ajatuksena on selvittää, voivatko nämä oppimiskontekstit täydentää toisiaan ja missä määrin videopelejä voitaisiin hyödyntää englannin oppimisessa luokkahuoneessa.

Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin käyttäen puolistrukturoitua haastattelua aineistonkeruumenetelmänä. Aineisto koostui yhteensä neljästä (4) haastattelusta, joiden yhteiskesto oli yhdeksänkymmentäkaksi (92) minuuttia. Analyysivaiheessa hyödynnettiin sisällönanalyysia tutkimusmetodina.

Tutkimuksesta ilmenee, että videopeleistä saavutettu hyöty keskittyy jokaisen haastateltavan kohdalla pääosin sanastoon. Videopelit koettiin myös motivoiviksi kielenoppimisalueiksi, vaikka luokkahuoneoppimisen tärkeyttä painotettiin sen selvien tavoitteiden vuoksi. Tutkimuksen pohjalta kumpikaan edeltävistä kielenoppimisalueista ei osoittautunut selkeästi toistaan motivoivammaksi.

Eriäviä mielipiteitä ilmeni liittyen luokkahuoneoppimisen tarjoamiin mahdollisuuksiin hyödyntää Englantia tosielämän tilanteissa. Lisäksi verrattaessa luokkahuoneoppimisen ja videopeliympäristössä tapahtuvan englannin oppimisen autenttisuutta ei löytynyt selvää yhdenmielisyyttä. Vaikka haastatteluista ilmeni, että englannin oppiminen koulukontekstissa ei välttämättä heijasta aitoja kielenkäyttötilanteita, kukaan haastateltavista ei löytänyt ongelmakohtia luokkahuoneoppimisesta.

Jokainen haastateltava koki videopelien tarjoavan kielenoppimismahdollisuuksia, vaikka luokkahuoneoppiminen koettiin tärkeäksi pohjaksi kielenoppimisen kannalta. Haastateltavat olivat yhtä mieltä, että videopelit voisivat täydentää luokkahuoneoppimista, etenkin sanastollisesti. Näin voidaan olettaa, että aiheesta tulisi tehdä laajamittaisempaa tutkimusta, jotta voitaisiin selvittää konkreettisia tapoja hyödyntää videopelejä englannin oppimisessa ja opetuksessa.

Asiasanat – Keywords video games, language learning, English teaching, motivation, authentic language, content analysis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In modern world a vast part of English learning occurs outside the classroom context. Finns hear English every day from different types of media, such as music, movies or video games. These are leisure activities made for entertainment purposes, and it is often seen that language learning from them is also motivating. The present study is interested in one of these areas of entertainment, i.e. video games. Especially the possibilities to utilize video games in English learning and education are in the essence of the study. The focus of the paper is on the aspects of authentic language use and motivation, which are regarded to be connected. It is considered that there is more motivation to language learning if it emphasizes language that learners can use in authentic situations (Aebersold and Field 1997: 176).

The present study aims to find out in which ways does learning from video games differ from classroom learning, and how they can complement each other. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I will examine different opinions and experiences that Finnish young adults have when it comes to playing video games and English learning, and how they think that video games could be utilized in the classroom context. My hypothesis is that language learning from video games provides a complementary learning ground to classroom learning, based on the assumption that such learning is highly voluntary and stems from a real need to learn English, for example merely to progress in a game or to be able to communicate with other players. I am very curious though to find out whether my hypothesis stands. It is possible that school learning can cover all the areas of English learning quite well, and thus there is not much to add to it. This can be true, especially considering that the aim of classroom teaching is often to help students to produce grammatically correct language, but also to pay attention to the communicative aspects of language learning.

In the video game -context mastering grammar is not necessarily an absolute requirement for intelligibility, meaning that interlocutors in online gaming contexts can understand each other. However, video games can be an important factor in English learning in many ways. They are not pure entertainment, as they are often considered to provide motivation in learning (e.g. Gee, 2003). Also, when speaking of multiplayer video games, the social and communicative aspects of language use are ever-present. Video games can take language learners closer to authentic language use than school teaching, which often focuses on communicative

situations that are not related to the way languages are used outside the classroom context (Thomas 2012: 14-15).

Lately there have been several studies and articles about video games and language learning through them (e.g. Filsecker and Bündgens-Kosten 2012, Thomas 2012, Mayer 2014) but as video games are a relatively new phenomenon, especially when it comes to interactive multiplayer games, there is a need for studying how they could be made use of in the classroom context. Also, the discussion of comparing video games to classroom learning is still in its infant stages, and there is possibly a chance to contribute to the field. If learning English from video games appears as beneficial as my hypothesis assumes, teachers could use this information in their teaching.

Following the introduction, in the second chapter the theoretical background of the present study will be presented. This section of the study will introduce concepts of motivation and authentic language use, after which there will be a brief discussion about views and experiences concerning English learning from video games. Following the theoretical background, in the third chapter the research aim and questions, participants, method of data collection and method of analysis of the present study will be introduced. Chapter 4, successively, will focus on the analysis of the data, presenting the findings and, finally, chapter 5 will conclude the study and discuss the usefulness of the findings on a larger scale.

2 BACKGROUND

In this chapter the theoretical background and relevant concepts to the present study will be introduced. As the main interest of the study is to find out how video game-based English learning and classroom learning can complement each other, it is essential to discuss the qualities needed for one to learn a language in order to understand the learning process better. The qualities that will be discussed are authentic language use and the role of motivation in language learning.

The first section will discuss authentic real-life language use and compare social interaction in the classroom to that of video games. The second section will focus on the importance of motivation in language learning, introducing Ushioda's (2011) *person-in-context relational view* of motivation, and comparing classroom English learning to that of video games. In each of these sections, the question of how the present study situates in the field of study will be discussed more precisely. The third section will focus on the views and experiences concerning benefits of video games in language learning that have been reported in previous studies.

2.1 Authentic language use

Crystal (1997: 375, 378) sees individuals at the core of educational goals. He argues that different kinds of teaching techniques are required so that every learner can be encouraged to achieve their best possible results. Every learner with their personal aims should be taken into consideration by introducing a variety of teaching methods and focusing on the actual use of languages so that everyone would have the same possibilities to learn. Crystal (1997: 375) in addition argues that because learners' attitudes towards languages are relevant when it comes to language learning, it is necessary to take languages out of the classroom-context as well. One of the recently prominent areas of study are the possibilities of video games in education, as they can be useful in learning by bringing learning situations closer to real usages of languages. The concept of authentic language use refers to these real-life experiences of language (Gilmore 2007: 100).

School learning tends to focus on language use situations that are separate entities and lead by an authoritative teacher, disconnected from the real communicative nature of language

(Thomas 2012: 14-15). In addition, language introduction in schools emphasizes repetitive memorization, which does not match with interactive nature of language use, i.e. it does not have to do with authentic language use. This repetitive type of language learning has been proven to be difficult for intuitor-type learners, who prefer variety in teaching and are more imaginative and get bored by too much detail (Felder and Henriques 1995: 22-23). Felder and Henriques (1995: 22-23) also point out that because majority of people are not sensor-type learners, who learn through memorization, it is not a beneficial method to teach languages. Crystal (1997: 375-376) argues that the cognitive approach could be useful for many learners, as it has to do with using languages in a creative way. Video games represent this cognitive approach to learning, as they enable cognitive development (Blumberg and Shalom 2013: 2). Felder and Henriques (1995: 28) further underline that it is crucial that teachers can see each student as an individual with their own aspirations in life, instead of focusing on memorization.

Thomas (2012: 17) emphasizes that it is relevant to consider the fact that technology will play a considerable part in future classrooms. According to him, a change is needed in educational contexts for learners to reach their potential. Video games are one way to introduce the transition to more technological and modern learning. Using video games in language learning is also a good way to use real and authentic language, especially when it comes to developing learner's communicative skills (Thomas 2012: 26). Therefore, it must be studied further whether video games can be used in English teaching to complement classroom learning, and in which ways. For example, it could be possible that online-multiplayer video games could be used to improve students' communicative skills in addition to classroom conversations. The situations and the contexts differ greatly from each other, as to speak a foreign language in a classroom context can be frightening and stressful. Blake (2008: 4-5) argues that computer-mediated communication (CMC) makes it easier for learners to participate. Compared to oral exercises in regular classroom environments, CMC has proven to make the students engage more enthusiastically and freely. However, it differs from authentic communicative situations as it is text-based. The downside of CMC therefore is that it cannot help learners with their oral skills. Online-multiplayer video games, for instance, could be even more useful than CMC in education, as they can provide the possibilities to engage and use language freely, while improving the learners' oral skills as well.

Overall, it can be easier for learners to speak in a gaming context. Video game-based communication resembles a normal day-to-day interaction better than speaking in front of many people in a classroom, as it is a more relaxed context to use English language with fewer participating people. In addition, Filsecker and Bündgens-Kosten (2012: 60) stress that some video games can help learners subconsciously achieve formality in their speech. When playing a video game, the game world is also the player's world, and the linguistic choices they make in the game reflect their own speech. As players attempt to be as intelligible as possible to be able to act in the gaming world, they aim to choose certain level of formality in their speech.

2.2 Motivation and language learning

Motivation is one of the most important factors concerning language learning. It is the inner fire that enables one to learn new things, whether it is to learn a new hobby or a foreign language. The modern study of motivation often considers motivation as a theoretical concept, which does not to a great extent take individual learners into account, not to mention seeing learners' individual perceptions of motivation in the essence (Ryan and Deci 2000: 54-67). The most commonly used view in the field, the self-determination theory, divides motivation into categories, such as extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, based on what is the motivating factor.

Instead of seeing motivation as a theoretical concept, Ushioda (2011: 11-13) claims that the study of motivation should concentrate on individual people and their uniqueness. She argues that motivation should be considered a pivotal factor in autonomous learning, introducing a *person-in-context relational view* of motivation. She addresses the complex nature of motivation by arguing that it should be considered as an organic system that consists of the complex micro- and macro-contexts which form an individual person's unique background and identity with personal goals and motives (Ushioda 2011: 11-13). She questions the typical conceptualization to see motivation through shared characteristics of people, which does not reflect the educational interest to engage the motivation of specific learners.

Ushioda does not consider motivation through these means or terminology, and she even warns that the traditional way to see motivation as a concept reflects an abstract view which sees motivation controlled by the teacher (Ushioda 2011: 13). She claims that this way of

seeing motivation draws the teacher's focus to generalized types of learner behavior. These generalized models of motivation are not very useful in pedagogy because they merely make predictions about what kinds of motivation may result in certain types of learning behavior. For this reason, in the present study, I will concentrate on individual perceptions of motivation. I will not generalize the interviewees of this study into categories of motivation, for example by using the terms extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, but I aim to respect the learners' individuality and the complex nature of motivation.

It is also relevant to notice that learning often happens unconsciously via video games, no matter if one plays the game in attempt to achieve success or purely to have a good time. Also, when speaking of multiplayer video games, the social and communicative aspect of language is in a decisive role. Reaching understandable level of language use, so that interlocutors understand each other, requires motivation in order for the interlocutors to be able to communicate (Peterson 2013: 55-56).

Crystal (1997: 375) points out that one's perception of necessity concerning the matter to study is relevant when it comes to truly learning it. He emphasizes that if one thinks that the studied language will never be needed in one's life, it is probable that one will never aspire to learn it eagerly. Leppänen (2007: 157) adds to this by highlighting the need for language skills when playing video games. It is practically impossible to progress in a video game if one does not understand the language. Without adequate language skills one cannot understand dialogues, instructions nor plot of a game. Leppänen (2007: 154) also emphasizes the importance of video games with social interaction. They are very enjoyable to play because of the inborn need for humans to communicate. These games include joy as a motivator, whereby they serve to create interest in language learning.

In addition, Armstrong (1998: 14-15) implies that joy is one of the essential motivators, and playfully points out that "without joy, learning is like soda pop without the fizzle". Consequently, video games are not just mere entertainment, as they can provide motivation in learning. However, there are also different findings about the relationship between video games and motivation. Zusho, Anthony, Hashimoto and Robertson (2014: 69-83) reviewed a great amount of literature related to video games and motivation in order to find out whether the engaging nature of video games provides a link to motivation to learn, and despite the

general belief that leisure activities, such as video games, are motivating by design, they could not find empirical evidence of it.

2.3. Views and experiences concerning language learning from video games

The main interest of the present study is the views and experiences that Finnish young adults have when it comes to English learning from video games. Erkkilä (2017), by using a questionnaire as data collection method, found out in his Master's thesis that majority of Finnish high school students felt that video games have a significant role in the background of their English skills. However, he did not only focus on the attitudes towards the benefits of video games, but to the connection of video games and English learning in general. He did not to a large degree target the role of motivation in language learning, or whether learning from video games represents authentic language use more than classroom learning of English but aimed to find out more generally whether video games can be useful as a learning tool.

In addition, Mayer (2014) discovered in his study about the ways video games facilitate learning that second-language learning is one of the possible areas where video games could be utilized in education. The groups which used video games in learning performed better than those who were taught in traditional ways in four out of five studies. The age of the learners did not seem to affect the results, as the benefits of video game-based learning were visible from preschoolers to college students. Also, the benefits were visible in all areas of language learning from speaking and listening to reading and writing.

However, it must be taken into consideration that not all studies support the usefulness of video games in education. For instance, deHaan, Reed and Kuwada (2010) argue that actual video game players might not recall as much vocabulary as those who watch someone else play. If this is the case, using video games would not be a very valuable language learning method. If those who watch someone else play learn vocabulary better than the actual players, it might be that video games do not have great possibilities to be utilized in education. However, considering the numerous studies that show the positive effect of video games to language learning, (e.g. Mayer 2014, Erkkilä 2017), it is relevant to study the possibilities of video-game based learning further.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter, I will present the research aim and questions, as well as the method of data collection. In tandem with the method I will introduce the participants of the present study. Towards the end of the chapter I will also explain the research method.

3.1 Research aim and questions

The aim of the study is to find out what video games can offer to English learning that classroom learning does not and therefore how they could complement each other. If video game-based language learning proves significant, it could be implemented in teaching as well. I find it important to remark that I do not attempt to find out whether video games provide a better learning ground than classroom learning, but rather if they should be used alongside classroom teaching.

In order to find out the answer to these goals, I have broken the research down into the following research questions:

1) How do Finnish young adults experience that English learning in classroom represents authentic language use compared to video game-based English learning?
2) How do Finnish young adults experience that video games motivate them to learn English compared to classroom interaction and exercises?

3.2 Data and participants

I used interviewing as a data collection method, because I wanted to get as rich responses as possible and leave the interviewees space to answer. I chose the semi-structured interview as the data collection instrument, which is a type of interview that allows to ask probing questions beyond the prepared open-ended questions (Bernstein & Lysniak 2018). The reason for the choice was that I could be able to clarify ambiguous or obscure replies. Even though the questions in the present study were asked in a set order (see Appendix), there was a possibility to produce additional questions that would lead the discussion to unplanned directions. By using a semi-structured interview, I could also make the interview more

conversational, and to make it easier for the interviewees to relax. However, I aimed to be objective and to ensure that my additional questions would not lead the replies to any predetermined direction, but merely allowed the interviewees to further explain their views.

I interviewed people who play video games to some extent in their spare time, because I assumed that they therefore have experienced whether video games have been beneficial in English learning. The interviewees consisted of four young adults who had volunteered to take part in the study and had studied English since third grade until the last year of high school. It is relevant to remark that all the four interviewees ended up being Finnish men, even though it was not a desired decision. This most likely has an influence on the findings of the study as interviewing also females could have provided more diverse opinions and viewpoints.

Before attending the interview, the participants signed a written consent in which they confirmed that they had read the privacy statement, accepted their information to be used in the study, and confirmed that they knew they can withdraw their consent at any time. The participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity and to maintain their anonymity. This way the study is also more fluent to read, and the reader can see the interviewees as persons instead of solely impersonal number codes or abstract characters. The pseudonyms that were given to the participants are Elmo, Iivari, Kalle and Timo.

The length of the interviews varied between seventeen and thirty minutes. With Kalle and Timo the interviews lasted seventeen minutes, with Iivari twenty-eight minutes, and with Elmo it lasted thirty minutes. Thus, there was approximately ninety-two minutes of interview data in total. The interviews took place in my apartment, as it is a tranquil location in which there are no considerable external distractions or disturbances.

It is relevant to remark that in the present study I could not diminish the role of the background variables, such as the learners' individual learning histories and personal experiences. However, by interviewing people with as identical English learning history in the school context as possible, I aimed to reduce the effect of these variables.

3.3 Method of analysis

After the data collection I transcribed and translated the interview data, and analyzed it across codes and themes, which in the present study were motivation and authentic real-life language use. As described in chapter 2, authentic language use in the premise of the present study also includes social interaction between the language users. I analyzed each theme in depth, focusing on aspects that regard the interviewees' experiences of English learning. In addition, I combined the interviewees' answers to the theoretical standpoints presented in chapter 2. This way I aimed to find a conclusion of the importance of video games in English learning.

The interview questions were classified in three categories, which were: the possibilities to utilize video games in English learning, school related situations, and the qualities of language use and motivation. By comparing the interview answers to previous study of these qualities' relation to learning, I aimed to figure out in which ways video games provide them, and therefore could complement classroom learning. The results therefore were interpretative and based on content analysis as a research method. Content analysis refers to categorizing data into specific categories that occur consistently in it (Julien 2012: 121-122). By using this method, I could reduce the data and therefore uncover the essential points related to the research questions.

4 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the analysis of the interviews is presented. It follows the themes of the semi-structured interview (see Appendix). First, chapter 4.1 focuses on the gaming habits of the interviewees, and their attitudes and experiences when it comes to English learning from video games. Second, chapter 4.2 examines the participants' views regarding English learning in a school context. Finally, chapter 4.3 concentrates on their motivation and preferences to study English. Also, their views about the possibilities to utilize video games in a school context is briefly discussed in chapter 4.3.

4.1 The possibilities to utilize video games in English learning

Each of the interviewees had played video games to some extent, but there were no enthusiastic gamers who had devoted a large proportion of their life to video games. The video games they preferred were mainly mobile games. For three of the interviewees, Pokémon Go was one of the most preferred games, while Kalle played merely sports and war related console games. Timo was the only participant who had played interactive video games, namely Fortnite, where there is a possibility to interact with other players.

All the four participants played video games for fun, without any purpose to get some benefit from playing them. Nevertheless, Elmo mentioned that if one can develop English skills while playing video games, it is a positive tie-in (see Example 1).

> Example 1.
> Elmo: Sen on ehkä niinku sitten jälkeenpäin hoksannut, että ahaa tämä voisi kyllä hyödyntää että, juuri niinku spesifejä sanastoja englanniksi oppimalla että, se on ehkä enemmän sellainen seuraussuhde.
> *Elmo: I have like later on realized that aha, this could be utilized, just like by learning specific vocabulary in English, that it is maybe more like a cause-effect relationship.*

Elmo stressed that video games could be utilized as means to develop specific vocabulary. In the excerpt above Elmo also summed up the thoughts of all the interviewees: vocabulary was the area that they experienced had developed the most when playing video games. Timo had to some extent learned communicative skills, but he also felt that vocabulary was the main area of development. Iivari and Kalle further highlighted that learning of vocabulary was

closely related to the themes of the games, i.e. the vocabulary learned was highly subject specific (see examples 2 and 3).

> Example 2.
> Iivari: Sanaston laajuus kasvaa [sanaston osaaminen laajenee]. Se myös kasvaa tietysti niinku täälleen niinku aiheittain että riippuu myös että mitä pelaa, että mikä kasvaa, mutta sanasto on niinku ehdottomasti se mikä eniten on kasvanut.
> *Iivari: The scope of the vocabulary increases [vocabulary skills increase]. It also like increases by theme, that it depends on what you're playing what increases, but vocabulary is like definitely what has improved the most.*
>
> Example 3.
> Kalle: Ehkä jossain peleissä oppii jotain lisää niinku aihealueen sanastoon, niinku jossain tota noin, tommosissa sotapeleissä oppii tietenki kaikkien niinku vaikka mikä on englanniks jotai sotatarvikkeita tai tollasii.
> *Kalle: Maybe in some games one learns like something more to theme related vocabulary, like in some, well, in war games one learns of course like what some munitions or those are in English.*

Also, Elmo thought that video games provide multiform stimulus, which could be utilized in acquisition of video game related vocabulary. He stressed that in gaming language one can encounter words that are not mundane, and therefore they expand vocabulary, for example mentioning words related to commerce and war.

Despite this increased vocabulary, none of the interviewees felt that their grammar had improved through video games. Contrary to Mayer's (2014) findings which showed that video game-based language learning was beneficial in each area of language learning, vocabulary seems to be the only area which had significantly improved by playing video games for the interviewees. Of course, it is relevant to notice that the present study focuses merely on the experiences of the participants, and not on their actual knowledge or statistical improvement by playing video games. The experiences may differ from the reality.

When thinking about language learning possibilities from video games, all but one of the participants thought that they could undoubtedly be utilized in English learning. Only Kalle mentioned that if one has studied English for several years, video games are not necessarily of great worth. He emphasized that there are several video games, such as FIFA games, which do not need any understanding of English to play them. Iivari, on the contrary, thought that modern video games provide so much information in English that language learning from them is inevitable.

Although most of the interviewees felt that video games provide language learning opportunities, each of the participants thought that English learning from video games had been an unconscious process for them. The unanimous opinion is echoed in Timo's statement:

> Example 4.
> Timo: En oo lähteny niinko et silleen vaan varta vasten opetelemaan, vaan se [kielenoppiminen] on tullut niinku itestään.
> *Timo: I haven't like aimed to learn on purpose, but it [language learning] has come by itself.*

Although language learning from video games was considered an unconscious process by the interviewees, each of them used to translate unfamiliar words and expressions. Three of the four participants said that translations occurred especially, if there was an unknown word in a crucial part of a game in terms of problem solving or progressing in a game. This view corresponds with Leppänen's (2007) observation about the necessity of language skills when playing video games. As mentioned in chapter 2, she highlights the fact that one cannot make progress in a video game without a certain level of linguistic knowledge.

4.2 School related situations

In a comprehensive school or high school level, three of the four interviewees had never played a video game as a school assignment or in a situation that would have had to do with school life. Elmo stated that when he was in comprehensive school, the teaching methods were more conservative. Video games were seen as a pointless waste of time, which would take time away from matters more important. Iivari had played some competitive learning games in the university of applied sciences, but he stressed that these games were not exactly video games by nature. Only Timo had played a video game related to a school assignment, as shown in example 5.

> Example 5.
> Timo: Varmaan oon varmasti pelannut liittyen koulutehtävään. ... Se oli varmaan joku tämmönen, tämmönen tota, joku sanastoon liittyvä peli, joka, sit niinku, siinä jotenkin edettiin ja sit tuli semmosii, et tavallaan puhekuplia, ja sit täyty niinku valita oikea niistä.
> *Timo: Probably I have surely played related to a school assignment. ... It probably was some, well, some vocabulary related game which, then like, in which one somehow progresses and then there were these kind of speech bubbles, and one had to choose the right one.*

Kalle had in his free time played a vocabulary learning game which represented conscious learning and had clear goals and learning aims. According to him, these criteria are needed when it comes to language learning from video games. He thought that merely playing for fun is not enough in order to learn a language. Elmo added to this view by stating that video games should be taken seriously from the point of view of language learning. He saw it relevant that there should be a hidden agenda behind gaming that one could learn languages, for example by reading the texts in a game carefully. He experienced video games as reliable language learning fields, because he thought that one can be sure that grammar and sentence structures are correct in them.

All but one of the interviewees felt that English lessons have left them prepared to use English in various possible situations in real life, at least to some extent. For instance, Elmo felt that English lessons in comprehensive school had created the foundation for all his English knowledge, especially considering that English teaching focuses on all areas of linguistic knowledge.

> Example 6.
> Elmo: Peruskoulun toi kielenopetus niin antanu sellasen vankan pohjan ja ehkä niinkun sillä tapaa kriittisen pohjan, että on mietitty niinkun kielioppiasioita ja tällasia, kun taas mitä nyt ei muutoin tulisi niin tarkkaan mietittyä. … Luonu pohjaa, ja sen jälkeen saanut erilaisista ärsykkeistä ympäriltä niinkun täytettä sille omalle oppimiselle, oli se sitten peleistä, tv-ohjelmista, lukemastani muista koulumateriaaleista tai muista.
> *Elmo: Language teaching in comprehensive school has given this strong foundation and maybe that way a critical foundation, that grammar things and these have been reflected, which otherwise wouldn't have been contemplated so carefully. ... It has created foundation, and afterwards I have gotten like content for own learning from different kinds of impulses around, whether it is from games, tv-programs, from other school materials I have read or something else.*

However, the question about the correlation between authentic English and English used in a classroom divided the opinions of the interviewees. For instance, Iivari saw that in classroom one can practice situations where one would meet a real person. Timo, on the other hand, stressed that based on his experiences English taught in comprehensive school and high school is different from the English he had come across in everyday life, especially when it comes to vocabulary. He in fact considered video games to prepare him to use English in real life better. He stated that speaking in a video game context is a similar communicative situation as speaking in a possible real-life situation, for example when visiting other

countries. This view harmonizes with Thomas's (2012) argument that school learning tends to be disconnected from the way languages are used in real life.

Elmo in turn had experienced that English learning in a school context is to some level detached from authentic language use, but he did not see it as problematic. He thought that everyone must put effort into studying, because learning in a school context is only a part of language learning. He added that video games can offer a great possibility to complement classroom learning, which he saw is the central learning ground.

Kalle added to Elmo's statement by pointing out that video games made specifically for language learning represent authentic language use, but not all video games do it. He stated that for example video games which take place in Middle Ages can include outdated English, which does not help in English learning nowadays. This is an important remark: one must be careful and critical when studying English, whether it is from video games or text books.

4.3 Language use and motivation

English is the lingua franca of modern society, and therefore the situations where English would be needed can vary greatly. Elmo, Timo and Kalle thought that they would need English in the future, working life, studies and travelling being the central themes. Therefore, they also had motivation to study English. They thought, however, that English they had learned in the classroom was not enough to prepare them to use English in these situations. Kalle, for instance, thought that one can learn vocabulary better from video games, because text-books do not include vocabulary of all kinds of subject areas. Elmo complemented Kalle's ideas by saying that the vocabulary taught in school is not enough if one wants to lead an interesting life, and therefore video game-based learning can help to complement English learning and enrich conversations (see example 7).

> Example 7.
> Elmo: Peruskoulu/lukio-opetus on antanut sille [oppimiselle] pohjan, ja sitten mikäli toi keskustelut lähtevät ihan niinku semmoisesta pienestä small talk-tyylisestä hieman luovempiin ja suurempiin mittapuihin niin sitten, toi, videopelit tuovat keskusteluihin rikkautta. … Ja kyllähän se tarvittee, niinku mielenkiintonen elämä ja muutenkin, niinku hiukan sellaista hehkeyttä mihinkä ei niinku pelkästään toi jokapäivän koulumaailman sanasto riitä.
> *Elmo: Comprehensive school/high school teaching has given the foundation to it [learning], and then whether conversations start from small talk-style conversations to*

*slightly more creative and larger scale conversations, then video games enrich them. ...
And it does need, like interesting life and otherwise, some ardor, to which the everyday
school world vocabulary isn't enough.*

Iivari, by contrast, could not specify to which extent his English knowledge had come from
school or video games. However, he also felt that using a language in practice can prepare one
differently from the isolated studying in a classroom environment. Still he stressed the
importance of classroom language learning, as he saw that in acute situations it could get very
close to a real language-use situation. I interpret that acute situations, as Iivari stated, refer to
situations where a learner must gain linguistic knowledge urgently, due to critical personal
needs during the lesson.

The motivation towards English learning was highly based on the interviewees' perceptions
of their future needs, which thus resulted in differing opinions. Because Iivari did not consider
that he would need English in his life, he stated that he is not motivated to study English.
However, he felt that classroom learning is a more motivating language learning field than
video games for him, because video games cannot produce the feeling of success, or provide a
possibility to show one's progress in learning. Similarly, Elmo felt that the experiences of
proficiency have motivated him to study, but he did not emphasize as one being more
motivating over the other. Instead, he thought that the best outcome derives from their
combination.

Timo, on the other hand, felt that video games are a more motivating language learning field
for him. He described video game-based English learning as the more sensible option,
because it does not feel like studying as learning comes by itself via them. It is possible that
his differing opinion was because he was the only participant who had played interactive
multiplayer video games. In addition, Timo emphasized that learning this way is not as boring
as when using the traditional methods of teaching. Timo appeared to be an intuitor-type
learner, who according to Felder and Henriques (1995) appreciate varying imaginative
methods and get bored with the usual teaching methods which place a high value on repetitive
memorization. As for Kalle, he felt that classroom learning is more motivating, because it has
clear outcomes and goals. Nonetheless, he thought that video games could be an interesting
way to learn as well, if one could get the same result that way.

However, for Iivari the pressure to achieve results that classroom learning demands was really frightening. Interestingly, he was the only participant who introduced this issue. He regarded fear as the biggest motivator for him and emphasized that video games cannot produce this state of fear.

> Example 8.
> Iivari: Niinko pelko on niinko suuri kannustin ja vaatimus on niinku se seuraava vaihe, ja sitten tulee niinku tarpeen asiat. … Kun puhutaan vierasta kieltä ja sitten muillakin opinnoilla Suomessa niin pystytään niin pelottamaan kuitenkin opiskelijoita sille, että nyt täytyy niinku tietää jotakin, osata tehdä jotakin niin se, se on sitä pelon kautta kannustamista.
> *Iivari: Like fear is like a great motivator and demand is like the next step, and then like come the necessities. ... When a foreign language is spoken and in other studies as well in Finland, the students can be intimidated into thinking that they must know something, to know how to do something, that is encouragement by using fear.*

Each of the interviewees would prefer to speak English in a video game environment, even though none of the interviewees had anything against classroom learning. They felt that this way of speaking could be more natural. Elmo, for instance, stressed that this is because each participant is speaking voluntarily and sharing the same interests. However, he thought that it is not enough, but it is also important to develop courage and performance skills. For this reason, he regarded classroom learning as an important language learning field as well.

Iivari, on the other hand, felt strongly that the video game environment is an easier context to speak English, because he gets nervous when he has to do things in which he is not very good at. Iivari's experiences correspond with Blake's (2008) notion of the advantages of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Blake discovered that it is easier to participate in an online environment, compared to communicative situations in a classroom. Therefore, Iivari could benefit from these new virtual possibilities. As Crystal (1997) argues, different kinds of teaching methods are needed to elicit the best results in each individual person. In other words, the focus in language teaching should always be on the individuals and their personal goals.

Finally, the last interview question concerning the interviewees' perceptions about the possibilities to utilize video games in a school context divided opinions. Kalle, Elmo and Timo thought that video games could be utilized to some extent. Timo, however, saw that it would be challenging to find a video game which could teach everything needed, as example 9 demonstrates.

Example 9.
Timo: Varmasti haasteitahan siinä on, että löytyis niinkun sopiva videopeli, ja siitä olis niinku hyötyä silleen niinku jos ajatellais, just tota noin opintosuunnitelmana, et siinä tulis ilmi ne asiat että mitä tota halutaan, että oppilas oppii.
Timo: For sure there are challenges to find like an appropriate video game, and it could be useful like when thinking about just the curriculum, that it would include all the things that are wanted in order for a student to learn.

Also, Elmo thought that there is a lot of effort in making such games, which would include relatively extensive vocabulary and dialogues. He thought that these games could also be tied to listening tasks, speech output and pronunciation. Kalle, on the other hand, was not sure how video games could be utilized for learning other things than vocabulary. He stated that for example some phone application could be used to teach vocabulary, but in a more extensive scale video games would not necessarily be that useful.

Example 10.
Kalle: Mietin että ainakin tämmöses niinku sanaston hallinnassa ja opiskelussa se [videopelit] vois olla aika hyvä. … Vaikee sitä on ehkä sit niinku juuri sanoja laajemmaks, tai laajemmista kokonaisuuksista niinku lauseisiin tai ihan niinku kunnon testeihin asti tota laajentaa.
Kalle: I was thinking that in like this kind of vocabulary mastery and studying it [video games] could be quite useful. … It is maybe difficult to like get the words more extensive, or to expand to more extensive totalities, to like sentences and maybe even like real tests.

Iivari did not think that video games could be useful in language teaching, at least not in a curriculum. However, he thought that whether the gaming was purposeful, including clear goals and aims, video games could be useful in teaching. Still he stated that this way one might lose the external motivator fear, which he thought could encourage students to achieve great results. He felt that fear emerges in learning situations, in which one must communicate while facing critique.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study has examined Finnish young adults' views about the possibilities to utilize video games in English learning, and whether they thought that video game-based learning could complement classroom learning of English. The essential interest of the study was to find out their experiences regarding motivation and authentic language use, and how do these aspects differ between classroom and video game environment. The data collection method chosen was semi-structured interview, which allowed the posing of additional questions to clarify ambiguous points.

The results of the present study differed greatly from Mayer's (2014) realization that video game-based language learning could be utilized in all areas of learning, i.e. in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Each of the interviewees thought that vocabulary was the principal area of improvement through video games, mainly because video games introduce vocabulary that is not mundane. The other areas had not improved significantly for the interviewees. It is relevant to consider that a reason for this can be that only one of them had played interactive multiplayer video games. If each of the interviewees had experiences from various kinds of video games, the answers and opinions could have been different. Also, the present study focuses merely on the experiences instead of actual learning outcomes and performances.

My hypothesis that language learning from video games could provide a complementary learning ground to classroom learning seems to be correct. It appears that video games should be utilized merely as a complementary resource, as classroom learning was considered the foundation for English learning, and none of the interviewees saw problems in classroom learning. Also, the interviewees had expectations that one learns particular things at school that cannot be learned from video games. Even though it was mentioned that video games likely are reliable in terms of correct grammar, none of the interviewees thought that their grammar had improved through video games. However, these results may be explained to some extent by the fact that only one of the interviewees had played interactive multiplayer video games, and therefore they had not experienced that video games could cover all areas of English learning, including communicational skills.

The first research question about authenticity divided the opinions of the interviewees. Their views about the capability of classroom learning of English to prepare them to use English in real life differed considerably. Even though it was stated that English taught in comprehensive school does not necessarily reflect the way English is used in real life, classroom English learning was regarded as important by each of the interviewees. They felt that classroom learning had left them prepared to use English in situations that they would come across in everyday life, but classroom learning alone is not enough according to three of the interviewees. Therefore, it was seen that video games can offer a great possibility to complement classroom learning. For instance, the possibility to use English in practice was considered an important asset that video games have.

Also, the second research question about motivation divided the opinions. While some thought that video games are a more motivating language learning field than classroom learning, some stressed the importance of clear goals and outcomes that classroom learning provides, and the motivation that follows. Thus, it can be deduced that the best outcome derives from their combination, as Elmo stated. Video games should, therefore, include clear aims and goals in order to function in an educational sense. Even though video games were seen possibly beneficial by each of the interviewees, the difficulties in finding suitable video games which would include all areas of linguistic knowledge were addressed.

The present study aims to benefit both English teachers and learners. The BA thesis is a very limited study due to the restrictions of the depth of analysis and the length of it, but I aimed to find out whether there are reasons for teachers to include video-game based teaching in the school curriculum. Due to its limitations, the present study could only scratch the surface of the topic, but my aim was that it would arouse the interest of other researchers in the future.

To compare the competence in English between video gamers and those who do not play video games was not in the essence of the present study, and it would require further study. Also, due to the limit of the length of the study I was not able to make a study about the interviewees' actual knowledge of English rules or linguistic abilities, but rather to find out their language learning experiences.

It is relevant to remark that I did not compare experiences between men and women, or between adults and younger learners. Zusho et al. (2014: 81) view this as problematic,

because of the complex nature of motivation. They argue, for instance, that it is impossible to compare adult learners to younger learners with precision. Therefore, it would be essential to study younger learners' views and experiences as well, because it is difficult to apply the findings to real teaching contexts without focusing on the experiences of children as well (Zusho et al. 2014: 81).

Because each of the interviewees thought that video games provide opportunities to learn languages, the idea of video game-based English learning should be taken seriously. Moreover, as video games showed significance in learning English, there is a need for further study about the different ways video games could be used in teaching and learning. It is possible, for instance, that measuring actual linguistic development could offer different results as focusing merely on opinions and experiences of learners.

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APPENDIX

The interview

EVERYDAY SITUATIONS / ARKIELÄMÄN TILANTEET

Do you play video games? What kinds of games?
> *Pelaatko videopelejä? Millaisia pelejä?*

Do you generally play video games just for fun or do you experience that you get some benefit/use from playing them?
> *Pelaatko yleensä pelkästään huviksesi vai koetko saavasi jotain hyötyä videopelien pelaamisesta?*

Do you think that video games offer language learning possibilities?
> *Tarjoavatko videopelit mielestäsi kielenoppimismahdollisuuksia?*

What have you learned from video games? (e.g. grammar, vocabulary, communicational skills…)
> *Mitä itse olet oppinut videopeleistä (esim. liittyen kielioppiin, sanastoon, kommunikatiivisiin taitoihin…)*

If you have learnt English from video games, has the learning been an unconscious process? Do you use to translate unfamiliar expressions when you come across one?
> *Jos olet oppinut englantia videopeleistä, onko oppiminen ollut tiedostamaton prosessi? Onko sinulla tapana kääntää vieraat ilmaukset kun kohtaat sellaisen pelissä?*

Do you think that playing video games helped you to get closer to native speaker level of English?
> *Uskotko että videopelien pelaaminen on auttanut sinua pääsemään lähemmäs englantia äidinkielenään puhuvan tasoa?*

Where and in what kinds of situations do you think you will need English in your life?
> *Missä ja millaisissa tilanteissa uskot tarvitsevasi Englantia elämässäsi?*

SCHOOL RELATED SITUATIONS / KOULUTILANTEET

Have you ever played a video game because it was an assignment or had to do with school life? Does this kind of gaming differ from other gaming? If so, how?
> *Oletko ikinä pelannut videopeliä koska se oli koulutehtävänä tai muuten liittyi kouluelämään? Eroaako tällainen pelaaminen mielestäsi muusta pelaamisesta? Jos näin on, miten?*

Do you feel that English lessons leave you prepared to use English in various possible situations in real life?

Uskotko että englannin oppitunnit antavat sinulle valmiudet käyttää englantia erilaisissa mahdollisissa tosielämän tilanteissa?

Do you think that school teaching of English has to do with language use that you might come across in everyday life? [and therefore represents authentic language use]

Tuntuuko sinusta, että englannin oppiminen koulukontekstissa liittyy kielenkäyttöön, jota saattaisit kohdata normaalissa arkipäiväisessä elämässä? [ja siten edustaa autenttista kielenkäyttöä]

LANGUAGE USE AND MOTIVATION / KIELENKÄYTTÖ JA MOTIVAATIO

Compared to school context, do you feel that the language you have learned from video games has helped you to be able to speak English when you have gotten in a situation where English skills are needed/necessary?

Verrattuna koulukontekstiin, tuntuuko sinusta että englanti jota olet oppinut videopeleistä on auttanut sinua omaamaan valmiudet käyttää englantia tilanteissa, joissa englannin taitoja tarvitaan tai ne ovat välttämättömiä?

Would you rather speak (learn to speak) English in a classroom or in a video game environment, such as online-multiplayer game? Why?

Puhuisitko mieluummin englantia (oppisitko puhumaan) luokkahuonekontekstissa vai videopeliympäristössä, kuten esimerkiksi online-multiplayer pelissä? Miksi?

Are you motivated to study English? How does the motivation occur? Where is it based on?

Onko sinulla motivaatiota englannin kielen opiskeluun? Miten motivaatio ilmenee? Mihin se perustuu?

Are video games more motivating language learning field than school learning for you? Or is the opposite? Why?

Ovatko videopelit mielestäsi motivoivampi kielenoppimisalusta kuin kouluoppiminen? Vai onko asia päinvastoin? Miksi?

In which ways could video games be helpful to your language learning? Do you think that video games could be utilized in classroom (as well as part of curriculum)? Would you like it if it was the case? Why?

Millä tavoin videopelit voisivat mielestäsi olla avuksi kielenoppimisessa? Ajatteletko että videopelejä voitaisiin hyödyntää luokkahuoneessa (osana opintosuunnitelmaa)? Tykkäisitkö jos näin olisi? Miksi?