

**THE EXPERIENCED EFFECTS OF NON-EDUCATIONAL DIGITAL
GAMES ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION**

Bachelor's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Pelien vaikutus kielten opettamisessa ja oppimisessa on kasvanut tutkimuskohteena nopeasti viime vuosina. Viihteellisen luonteensa vuoksi pelaaminen on kuitenkin usein leimattu oppimista haittaavana tekijänä, mutta pelien suuri potentiaali erityisesti kielten oppimisessa on onnistuttu todistamaan useiden tutkimusten avulla.</p> <p>Koulumaailmassa pelien käyttö on lisääntynyt, mutta opetuksessa käytettävät pelit ovat usein yksinomaan pedagogisiin tarkoituksiin kehitettyjä. Ei-opetuksellisten pelien mahdolliset positiiviset vaikutukset oppimiseen ja oppimismotivaatioon ovat olleet useiden tutkimusten kohteena viime vuosina, ja erilaisia tapoja käyttää ei-opetuksellisia digitaalisia pelejä opetuksessa on kehitetty. Monien pelien vuorovaikutteinen luonne on havaittu suurella todennäköisyydellä toimivaksi tavaksi kasvattaa oppimismotivaatiota sekä puhutun kielen vapaata tuottamista oppitunneilla ja niiden ulkopuolella.</p> <p>Tämän kandidaatintutkielman tavoitteena oli saada selville ja tuloksien kautta vahvistaa sitä ajatusta, että ei-opetuksellisilla peleillä on vahvat mahdollisuudet vaikuttaa oppijan opiskelu- ja oppimismotivaatioon positiivisesti ja että pelit voivat vaikuttaa myönteisesti oppijan asenteisiin englannin kieltä ja sen opiskelua kohtaan.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että ei-opetuksellisten pelien pelaaminen on positiivisesti vaikuttanut tutkimukseen osallistuneista oppilaista enemmistön englannin kielen opiskelumotivaatioon sekä asenteisiin itse kieltä sekä sen oppimista kohtaan. Myös pelien käyttöön englannin kielen opetuksessa suhtauduttiin myönteisesti.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Using digital games and game design in teaching has turned into a popular pedagogical phenomenon and new ways of utilizing games to enhance motivation and learning experiences are being developed one after another (Chen and Yang 2012: 129). Digital games and their impact on an individual's learning motivation has become a largely studied area of language acquisition and learning motivation (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 77). However, most games used in language teaching have been specifically developed for teaching purposes and the use of non-educational digital games as a part of language teaching has been relatively minimal even though digital games have been proven to be a proper source of learning motivation (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 225).

This study will address the issue of non-educational digital games' effects on a learner's English language learning motivation within a group of Finnish-speaking 6th and 7th grade pupils. This thesis will begin with a chapter concerning previous research on the topic of games and language learning motivation and the theoretical background of the phenomena of motivation and using games in language learning, teaching and acquisition. After the background chapter, the data and methods of this study will be introduced, followed by the analysis of the answers given in a questionnaire and the end results of the analysis. Following the results and analysis is a conclusion chapter containing the strengths and limitations as well as possible implications of this study. The results of this study will be compared to the results of previous research and suggestions for future research are introduced.

The aim of this study is to provide proof that non-educational digital games have a high chance of positively affecting a learner's language learning motivation and that digital games can be an effective part in language teaching e.g. through player communication and the production of spoken and written English. Unlike many studies conducted on digital games and language learning motivation, the results of this study will not be formed around one specific game or game type. Instead, the analysis and results are going to be based on answers given by respondents who play various types of games from different types of game genres. Attitudes towards a foreign language

are an important factor in learning motivation (Oroujlou and Vahedi 2011: 997) and that is why this study wants to clarify them as well in the process of data gathering in a questionnaire.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter entails the theoretical background of this study's research topic. The chapter discusses motivation, games and their role in language motivation, learning and teaching as well as some previous studies on digital games' effects on language learning and motivation.

2.1 Motivation and games

Digital games, whether their function is meant to be educational or non-educational, have become one of the most important aspects in language learning and teaching research (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 223). Whether games are used in class or not, many professionals have relied on gamification in the classroom. According to Deterding (2011: 1), gamification is the process of incorporating games into activities that are not traditionally considered game related. In other words, aspects of game design are used in contexts that are not game related and therefore can help with motivation and performance (Deterding 2011: 1). Hanson-Smith (2016: 230) states that gamification has become a rather popular element of language learning because many teachers see positive results in students with various levels of language efficiency when using games in teaching. The commitment that is required to succeed in a game is one of the reasons for increased motivation and engagement in game-infused language teaching (Hanson-Smith 2016: 230).

Motivation is a phenomenon where an individual is driven to accomplish something or conquer different obstacles or checkpoints in order to move towards a goal. In short, Gorman (2004: 1) describes motivation as the "why" of doing something or the "why" of an individual's behavior. Motivation can be targeted towards long- or short-term goals and targets and they do not necessarily shut each other out. Short-term goals help move closer to long-term goals and vice versa (Ushioda 2014: 31-32). Motivation is one of the main elements of learning and games provide an active source of motivation that can be used in language teaching and learning as well (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 77).

Games themselves are an effective source of motivation. One of the goals of game design is to make the game engaging and something the player wants to finish and gain the feeling of success throughout the game to feed the player's motivation to move forward (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 226). This, in addition to students feeling relaxed when playing the game, is why certain games are considered an efficient and helpful tool for learning inside as well as outside the classroom (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 226).

With gaming, the motivation in question is usually extrinsic, where a certain external prize drives the person to accomplish and gain something (Gorman 2004: 51) like experience points (XP), currency or different items. The exception in the source of motivation comes in the form of intrinsic motivation (Gorman 2004: 51), where the player is driven by personal goals rather than just a reward or a price. The communicational nature of gameplay, where co-operation is needed in order to succeed, makes games a beneficial source of various learning experiences as well as a passage for linguistic input and outlet.

One of the main reasons why games are used in language teaching is that they are generally seen as something "fun" to the learner (Sørensen and Meyer 2007: 561). Game-based learning helps create engaging and exciting learning experiences and games are versatile tools of language teaching in both informal and formal settings; games provide the teacher and learners an efficient way of engaging in authentic communication and when an activity is enjoyable and entertaining, motivation is likely to increase (Sørensen and Meyer 2007: 561). Since the will to play non-educational games generally stems from the individual's pure desire to do so, positive emotions are often connected to playing games. This is what Dörnyei, Muir and Ibrahim (2014: 9), state by introducing intense motivational pathways when talking about directed motivational currents or DMCs. Directed motivational currents are an intense motivational drive and because of its strength, it can stimulate and support long-term learning (Dörnyei et al. 2014: 9). This could be applied to gameplay as well: if the motivation to play a game remains strong enough, the player is likely to actively engage in the game and this can affect the player's motivation to learn the language used in the game.

2.2 Digital games in language learning and teaching

Raziyeh and Hossein (2017: 201) describe technology as something that can be used to encourage student interaction and that e.g. a computer is an efficient device to use when handling different types of information and combining them. Technology enables written and oral interaction between students and the teacher as well. Technology provides access to numerous dynamic and engaging learning materials and allows students to learn at their own pace through e.g. communicating with another student online without clinging onto traditional tools such as books (Raziyeh and Hossein 2017: 213).

Digital games, whether they are played online or on your own, are primarily meant for entertainment purposes. Some argue that the degree to which digital games assist with language learning motivation is so low that using them actively in teaching would not be beneficial. However, there have been results showing that the possibility of digital games being efficient in increasing language learning motivation is high and probable (Iaremenko 2017: 126). Playing digital games can e.g. help learn acquire new vocabulary, which again increases motivation and the will to learn more about a language (Chen and Yang 2012: 129). Since playing games usually happens through the player's own initiative and, in most cases involves a second or a foreign language, learning that language during the gaming experience is probable. This is due to the learner's own will to play and thus be in contact with a foreign language (Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012: 303).

It is inevitable that using digital games in language learning and teaching is not the best solution for every single student or teacher. Difficulties in this arise from the way a student sees the game. For some, completing the game might be more important than the possible linguistic benefits the player is provided with (Chen and Yang 2012: 136). The learner's attitudes towards games, learning English and English as a language, are the main questions when debating whether games could have a positive effect on the learner. Luckily there are many games available for language learning and teaching, educational or non-educational, so one game failing to increase learning motivation and attitudes does not necessarily mean another game will not either. One way of influencing the way students view the game is to start using it in education first without external

prizes and letting the students' own internal motivation help them play the game and fully focus on it (Nurmi and Salmela-Aro 2005: 30).

The issue of gaming addiction arising especially from multiplayer online games where motivation changes into an obsession due to the competitive nature of the game is a threat with many non-educational games (Xu, Turel and Yuan 2012: 323). This is one of the reasons why many teachers shy away from using non-educational games as even a small part of teaching in general. They see them more as a threat to the phenomenon of learning and as a way to avoid schoolwork and focus too much on the fun of the gaming experience and the reward-driven motivation it can cause (Xu, Turel and Yuan 2012: 323). Therefore, it is important to evaluate how a game could be used as effectively as possible in order to assist teaching and learning without turning it into something harmful for the learner and their experience of learning (Yolageldili and Arikan 2011: 221-222).

There is some guidance for criteria on what kind of a game is optimal to use in language teaching. The game should provide students with different types of language input as well as a possibility to actively engage in the game (Chen and Yang 2012: 131). It should also be challenging enough to sustain motivation to complete tasks in order to move forward in the game. However, providing subtitles makes playing available for a larger number of people in a larger scale of language efficiency (Chen and Yang 2012: 131). Leaving subtitles out can also work as a motivational factor when playing the game because the player would need to pay extra attention to the language that is used.

Another important thing to consider when using a game in teaching, whether it was designed for educational purposes or not, is the students' level of language efficiency. The games used in English language teaching should either match or preferably be slightly above the learners' English language efficiency level (Chen and Yang 2012: 139). This way the game does not become overwhelming and the player does not lose interest in playing it (Chen and Yang 2012: 139).

There are multiple types of games or platforms with game-like features such as Kahoot or Duolingo (Iaremenko 2017: 128). They are specifically developed for pedagogical environments, but games do not necessarily have to be made for educational activities to help with language learning and

teaching. Unlike traditional classroom settings where a specific amount of time is reserved for a specific topic area, games provide a learning environment with unlimited retries. The player can pause the game and come back to it later (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 228). Games designed for educational purposes can also become boring to the learners if they are used too often in teaching and therefore using non-educational games and game design can provide a positive change to the learning experience in the classroom.

2.3 Example studies on digital games in language learning

Raziyeh and Hossein (2014: 201), describe technology as something that can be used to encourage student interaction and that e.g. a computer is an efficient device to use when handling different types of information and combining them. Technology enables written and oral interaction between students and the teacher as well. Raziyeh and Hossein (2014: 207) conducted a study on students' different attitudes towards the use and role of technology as a part of teaching and its impact on learning a foreign language. The results of their study indicated that technology lets students learn at their own pace and through communication (Raziyeh and Hossein 2014: 211). Results also showed that attitudes towards technology and learning English are generally positive, which is an important factor in increasing learning motivation (Raziyeh and Hossein 2014: 211).

A study was conducted in Taiwan where freshman year college students were the participants and they were asked to play an adventure type game in a computer laboratory, meaning that the player experience took place in their school environment (Chen and Yang 2012: 131). The aim of the study was, according to the research questions, to find out if playing an adventure video game would help with vocabulary acquisition and if the participants felt that video games could be efficient when learning other language skills as well (Chen and Yang 2012: 130).

The results were positive in terms of the game helping with language skill acquisition and showed that the students experienced increased vocabulary acquisition and part of it took place subconsciously (Chen and Yang 2012: 135). As hypothesized, the game had a positive influence on their attitudes towards game-based learning in terms of e.g. achievement-driven motivation (Chen and Yang 2012: 136). Attitudes have a great effect on motivation and that is why influencing

them is important when deciding whether non-educational games could be a positive way of teaching and learning a language.

A similar study was conducted by Wichadee and Pattanapichet in 2013. In this study, the game-based platform used was Kahoot, which was specifically developed for language learning and teaching (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 77). Half of the students revised with Kahoot while the other half revised in traditional way such as small tests (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 82). Kahoot has been detected having an impact on students in the sense that it creates a competition-like atmosphere and helps students try and catch as many points as possible. This is an efficient way of boosting extrinsic motivation and engagement in learning (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 79). Increasing extrinsic motivation is a fast way of helping the students concentrate and can also sometimes lead to increase in internal motivation as well.

Results of the study showed that the performance of students in the group revising with Kahoot received higher scores in performance compared to the group revising with traditional methods (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 84). Questionnaires showed that most students saw using games in learning a fun way to practice and felt that the competition created in the game helped increase motivation and sense of achievement (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 86). Therefore, gamification was a success in regards of scoring higher points.

Due to a substantial amount of results from various studies, game-based learning and digital games have the potential to considerably increase learner motivation (Wichadee and Pattanapichet 2018: 85) as well as attitudes (Chen and Yang 2012: 136). Studies previously explored prove that whether a game used in teaching was designed for educational purposes or not, they both can increase a learner's motivation and help achieve higher scores both externally and internally. The effectiveness of the game relies on the learner through attitudes and readiness to engage in e.g. student to student communication while playing. The teacher has an important role both with how the game is embedded into teaching and how it is used with language acquisition inside the classroom.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research aim and questions

The aim of this study is to find out if the pupils taking part in the study think that digital/video games have affected their motivation and attitudes towards learning English inside and outside a typical classroom setting as well as attitudes towards the language itself. This study also wanted to find out how the pupils filling out the questionnaire see video games in relation to English language learning and teaching at school. Below are the research questions of this study:

Have digital/video games affected the pupils' motivation to learn English?

Have digital/video games affected the pupils' attitudes towards English learning?

Do the pupils think digital/video games have affected their English language skills in any way?

Do the pupils think games should be more included in the English language classroom?

3.2 Data and methods

Data gathering happened through a questionnaire that the pupils taking part in the study filled out in early October 2019. In total, 35 pupils took part in this study and the pupils were from both 6th and 7th grade teaching groups, 21 pupils from 7th grade and 14 from 6th grade. The questionnaire was created with Webropol and it consisted of 12 questions and the pupils filled out the questionnaire in the beginning of an English language lesson. The first two questions were about the pupil's age, teaching group and gender. The first questions concerning games wanted to know about different game genres and examples of games played by the pupils. The rest of the questions concerned preferred language choices between English and Finnish, motivation and learning English, attitudes, and lastly opinions on games being a part of English language teaching at school. A link to the questionnaire was sent to the English language teacher of the groups and the teacher then shared the link to the pupils in Google Classroom. Pupils who stated they did not play games were given an English language related task by the teacher while the others filled out the questionnaire.

The collected data was then formed into charts in order to make analyzing the answers more efficient. After this, there was a search for possible repetitive answers or explanations given by the recipients. These repetitions helped forming the results and were then compared to the hypotheses presented in the beginning of the thesis. One important aspect was if the answers and the repetitive themes found from them in fact answered the research questions. This present study followed some of the main elements of qualitative research: forming hypotheses, involving previous research results in the analysis and referring to them throughout the study, choosing the group to have the possibility to take part in the study instead of having a large group of people from e.g. various age groups filling in the questionnaire (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 140). Elements of quantitative research were also a part of forming the end results since they were partly constructed based on the analysis of percentages presented in the charts, as well as referring to previous research and theories (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 140) on games, game-based learning and motivation.

3.3 Expected outcomes

Since the pupils were estimated to represent a versatile group of English language learners with widely divergent levels of language skills, a dispersion of opinions concerning e.g. language choices and preferences were also expected.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Game types and examples of games played by the pupils

The first questions of the questionnaire focused on the types of games the pupils play, as well as concrete examples of those games. The most popular game genres among the pupils were action, strategy, war and battle games as well as story-based games. Some genres mentioned by just a couple of pupils were rhythmic games and simulation games.

Actual examples of games played by the pupils were e.g. *CS: GO (Counter Strike: Global Offensive)*, *Minecraft*, *Fortnite*, *The Hunter: Call of the Wild*, *Overwatch* and *Just Dance*. Most of the games mentioned by the pupils are either strategy, action, story or battle games. Games

representing those genres have a lot of elements that require linguistic efficiency. Especially games that are played around a specific storyline expect the player to know the language used in the game in order to know what to do and where to go next. Instructions and character dialogues are presented in a specific language and it is crucial to understand the language in the games' quests to move forward.

Games that are played online or that require spoken or written communication with other players could affect the player's motivation to use the target language since moving forward in the game requires co-operation between players. For example, CS: GO is a shooter strategy game where a team usually consisting of five people must beat the other team within a given time limit – which in this game's case is two minutes – and this is where communication between team members become extremely important. Players come from all over the world and a language everyone knows on some level is most likely English. Therefore, Finnish is not enough when playing in a team with people from foreign countries. Using the language as understandably as possible is the key to success when it comes to strategy games like CS: GO.

4.2 Choices between Finnish and English

This subsection analyses the answers given by the pupils to the questions about choosing between languages when playing games. Many digital games give the player a possibility to use subtitles and change the language e.g. spoken in the game. Therefore, it was important to know if the pupils prefer their mother tongue – if choosing Finnish was possible – over English while playing.

In Figure 1, of the 35 pupils, 6% (2 pupils) said that English is not used in the games they play. The rest of the pupils (94% being 33 pupils) were asked to describe the ways in which English is used in the games they play. Almost all the answers were extremely similar, and most pupils answered by listing the same elements; the instructions, characters, online-chat, menus etc. are in English and some simply stated that the whole game is in English.

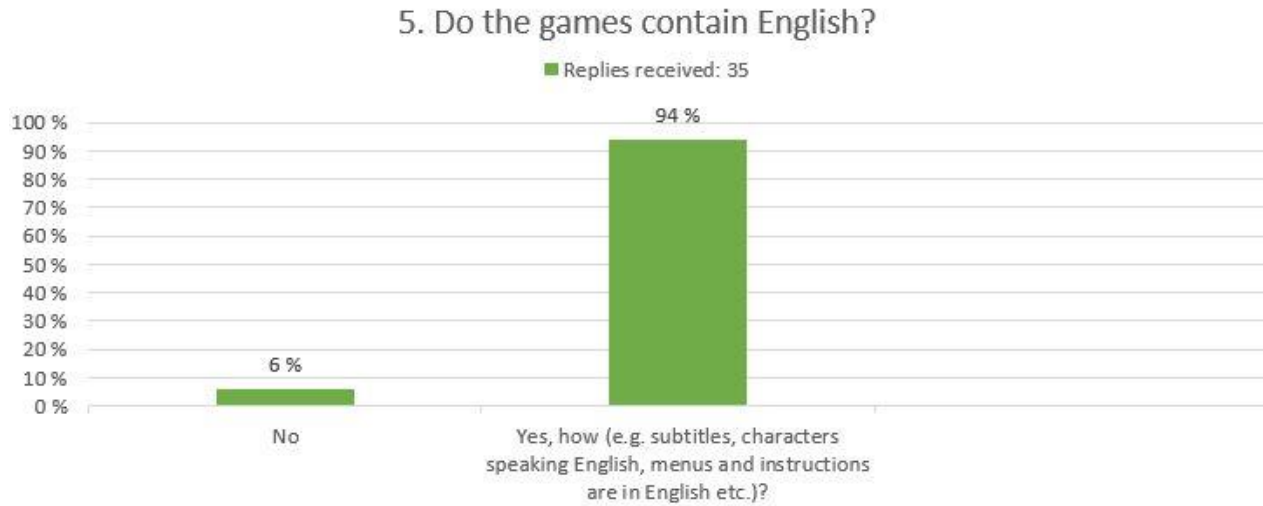


Figure 1. Distribution of answers to the question if games played by the pupils contain English.

When asked to choose between English and Finnish subtitles in the games they play – if this option was available – as seen in Figure 2, 49% (17) would choose English subtitles over Finnish subtitles (51%, 18 pupils). Answers given to explain the choices were somewhat similar; those preferring Finnish subtitles over English ones stated that they understand the directions and tasks in the game better through subtitles. Some had written that by seeing the Finnish translation to something a character says in English, they most likely end up learning new words through gameplay.

Some of those preferring English subtitles stated that hearing and seeing English helps them learn and even though they might not understand everything, progress in learning is still taking place through deduction. Some pupils brought out that not having the subtitles in Finnish and the game being in English makes the gaming experience linguistically challenging in a good way because the player needs to pay even more attention to understanding the games' progress.

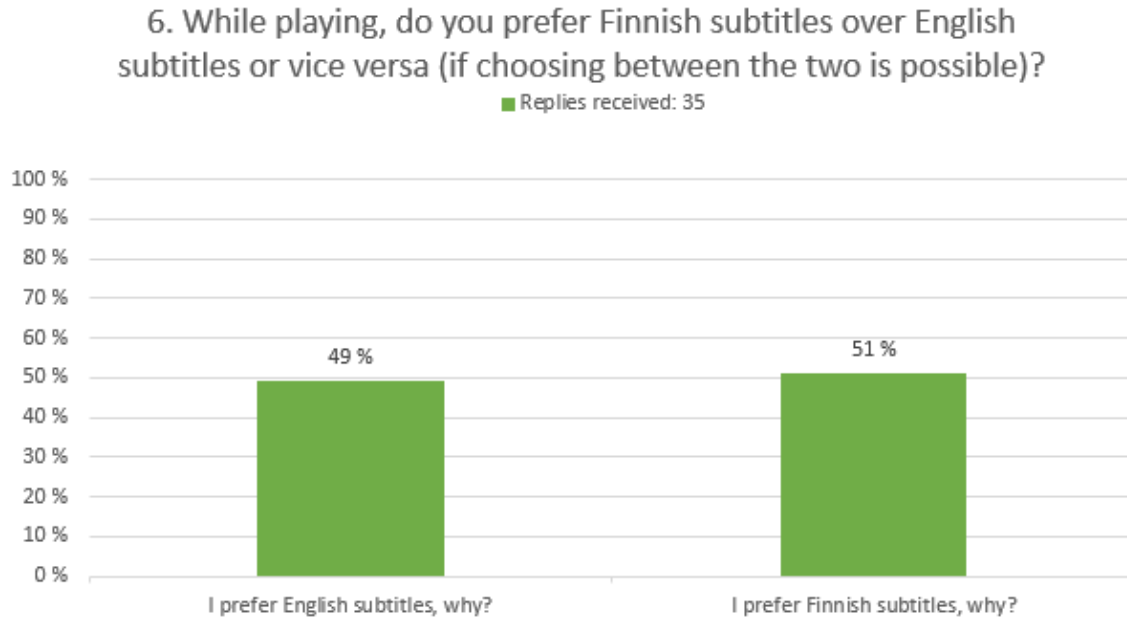


Figure 2. The percentages on answers about preferring English or Finnish subtitles.

A similar question was about whether the pupils would choose Finnish or English as the spoken language in the games they play. In Figure 3, 22 of the 35 pupils picked English over Finnish and in this case, the reasons for the choice differed from the choice when picking subtitles. Those who would pick English over Finnish stated that the original voice acting sounds better in the games, the audio has a higher quality in English and that learning and understanding English becomes much quicker when the characters and voice-overs are in English. Listening to Finnish as the spoken language would not suit the games and it would sound strange hearing the characters speak Finnish. This is because the player has probably already gotten used to the idea of them speaking English.

Almost every pupil preferring Finnish to English as a spoken language in games wrote that the game would simply become more understandable and clearer when the spoken language is the mother tongue of the player. Answers like this can indicate that the pupil's language efficiency level might not be high enough to understand the game's language in order to make progress at the pace they would prefer.

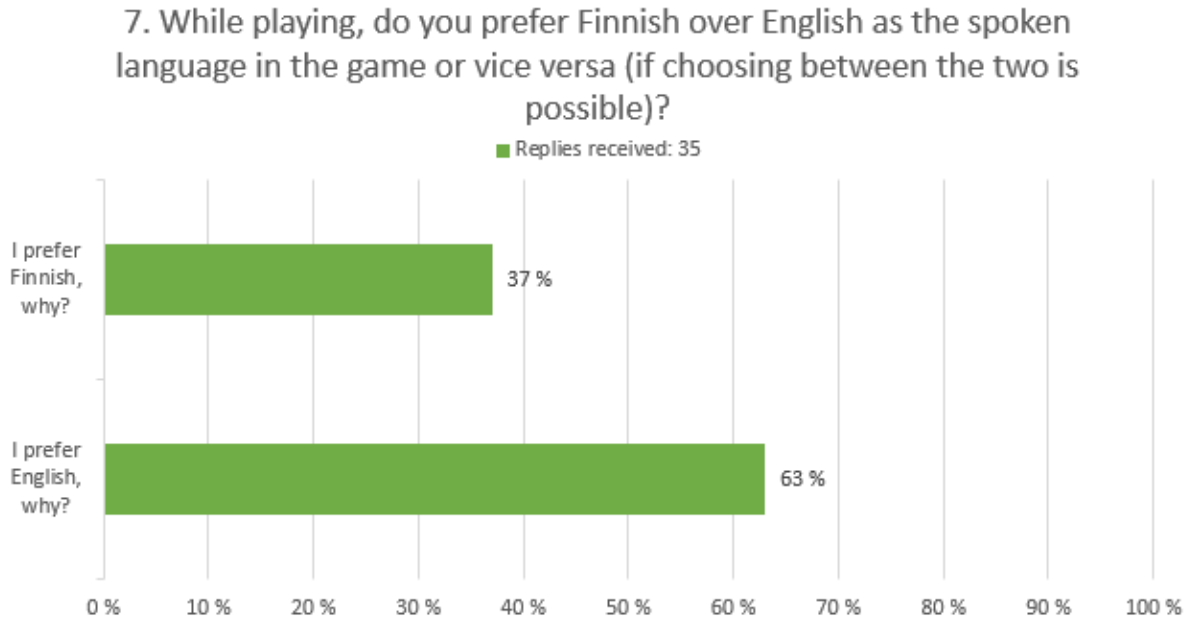


Figure 3. The percentages on answers about preferring English or Finnish as the spoken language.

4.3 Motivation and attitudes

Most of the games played by the pupils involve English one way or another. Several pupils would choose English over Finnish as a spoken language or the language of subtitles in the games they play because they learn the language through gameplay. Some stated that they enjoy the challenges new words or complicated structures provide and they feel that not understanding everything in the game does not necessarily mean playing it would be unenjoyable but quite the opposite. Challenges in terms of language and being aware of one's learning progress increases motivation and the desire to learn more.

When asked if playing video/console-games has affected the pupil's motivation and will to learn and study English more, 71% (25 pupils) answered yes and 29% (10 pupils) answered no. According to these results presented in Figure 4, games not intended for educational purposes can truly affect a learner's motivation towards learning English positively. This does require the learner to choose English as the language used in the game in order to see and hear it. Choosing Finnish or the learner's mother tongue in general as the only language used in the game (menus, characters,

descriptions, advice etc.) minimizes the chance of being in contact with English and thus does not increase motivation to learn it.

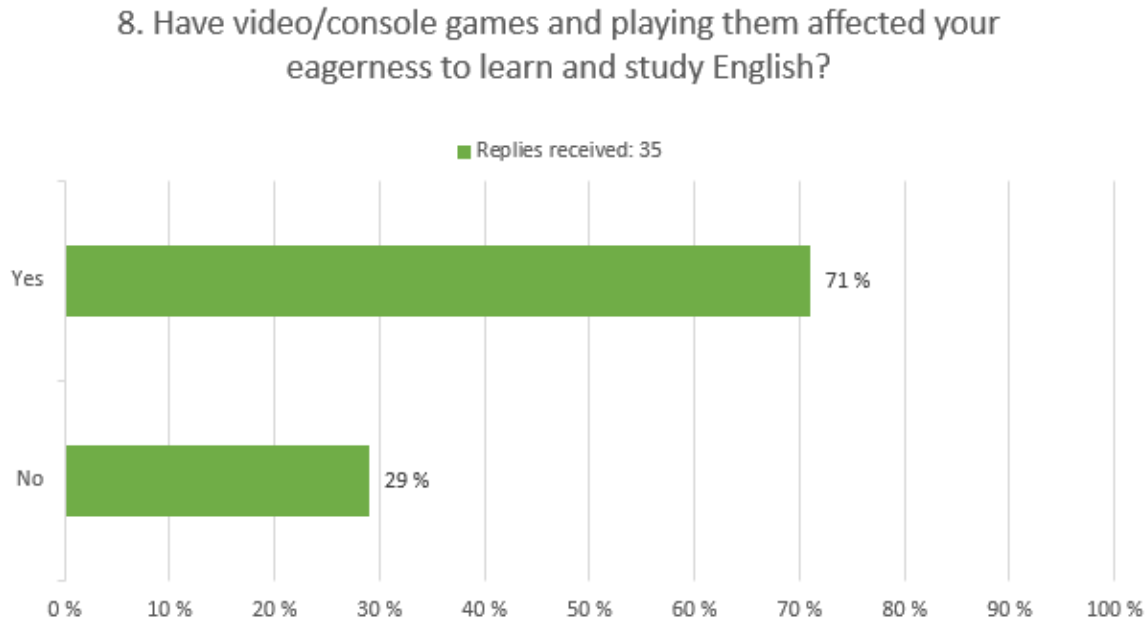


Figure 4. Distribution of answers in the question about games' effects on learning motivation.

Another question in the questionnaire concerning motivation was if playing games had made understanding and learning new things during English language lessons easier. Of the 35 pupils, 83% (29 pupils) answered yes and 17% (6 pupils) answered no. This suggests that being in contact with a foreign language through something non-educational can positively affect the way new things are understood during language lessons at school.

The results of this question are strongly related to the results seen in question number 10 (Figure 6), where the pupils listed all areas of language efficiency where they had seen improvement due to playing digital games containing English. Better understanding of new things introduced in the classroom by the teacher affects the development of one's skills on different language efficiency areas and vice versa.

9. Do you feel that playing video/console games has made learning English and understanding new things during lessons easier?

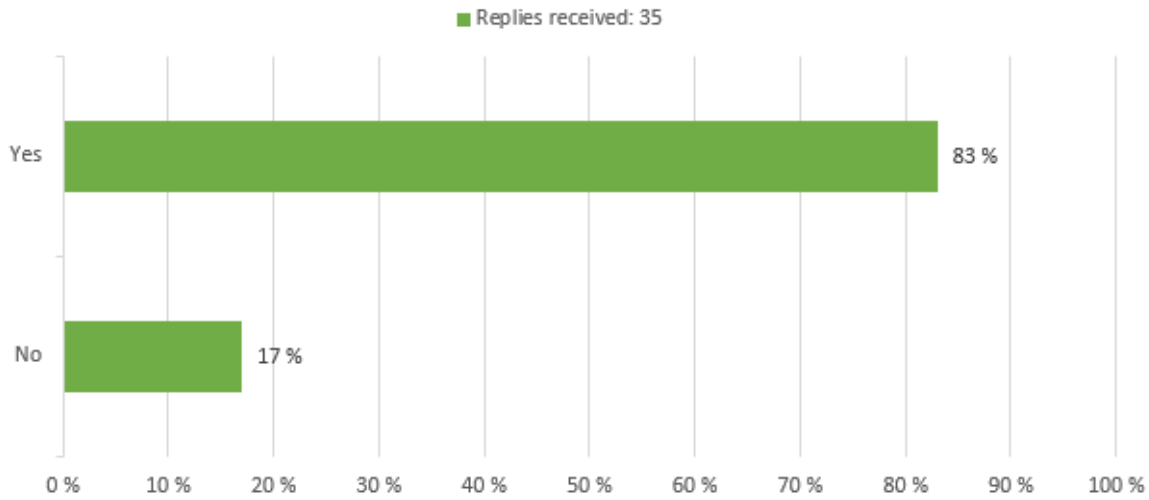


Figure 5. Distribution of answers on the question of games making understanding new things in the classroom easier.

The 10th question of the questionnaire was about areas of language efficiency and if the pupils felt that games had influenced any of those areas. Of the 35 pupils, 63% (22 pupils) felt that their listening comprehension skills had increased due to playing games, 46% (16 pupils) picked reading comprehension, 46% (16 pupils) picked oral skills including pronunciation, speech fluency etc., 31% (11 pupils) picked written skills and 51% (18 pupils) picked vocabulary. Again, this shows that games can have a positive impact on the learner's language efficiency on various areas even if the purpose of playing is not necessarily directed towards language learning.

The reason for listening comprehension being the most picked area of language efficiency in Figure 6 can lie in the fact that gameplay strongly relies on instructions, dialogue, communication as well as spoken language. Reading comprehension is related to listening comprehension and they function similarly in games. This was also discovered by Yusny and Fitri (2013: 244); games helped create more positive learning experiences and improvement was visible especially in listening and reading skills (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 244). In traditional gaming, the player – if they do not have problems with hearing or vision – somehow needs to acknowledge what is happening in the game and make choices based on what they receive through hearing and seeing. Being

motivated and focusing on hearing and reading a language while playing also affects language acquisition due to the player's motivated mindset. For some, it may make it easier to engage in e.g. spoken English in the classroom if they are used to using English when playing games like *Counter-Strike: Global offensive* with players from other countries or groups speaking a foreign language. Games like *CS (Counter-Strike)* require some kind of communication and strategizing during gameplay so many players use different ways, like voice-chat, to communicate with one another.

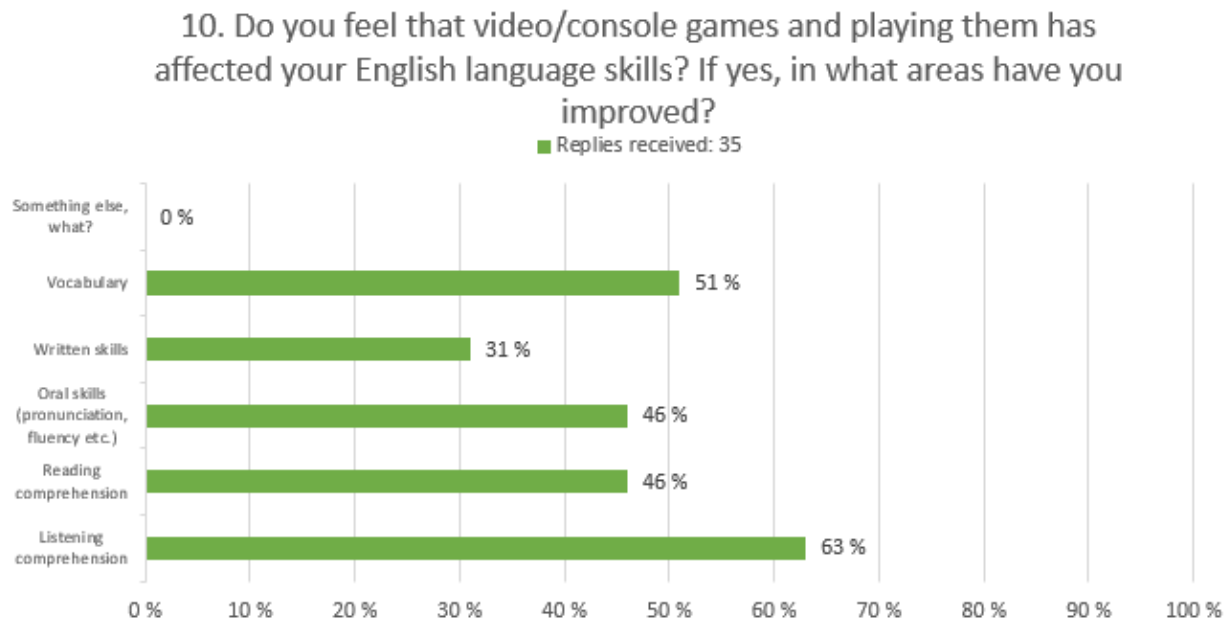


Figure 6. Distribution of answers concerning development in different language skill areas.

One of the most positive findings of this questionnaire was the percentage of answers received for the 11th question concerning attitudes towards the English language and learning it. None of the pupils felt that playing games has affected their attitudes towards English negatively. 34 % (12 pupils) stated that there have been no changes in attitudes and 66% (23 pupils) stated that the effects playing games has had on their attitudes have been positive. This can have a strong effect on the player's learning motivation even though they might not knowingly acknowledge that. Having a positive attitude towards something and learning more about it can result in the will to learn more easily and more effectively.

One way games can have a positive impact on a learner's attitudes towards English and learning it has to do with connecting the learner's interests to language teaching and learning (Oroujlou and

Vahedi 2011: 999). These kinds of motivational strategies in language teaching can be an effective way of positively influencing the learner’s attitudes and, through them, language learning motivation (Oroujlou and Vahedi 2011: 999).

However, one must keep in mind that English used in video games or gameplay interaction with other players may differ from English used in a classroom. In a classroom, the language produced usually relies more on instructions given by a teacher. During gameplay, language production is in tight correlation with context and is freely produced by the speaker. Playing games may result in students finding new efficient study-methods for e.g. memorizing vocabulary, since many games have a set of lexical elements that are repeated throughout the game.

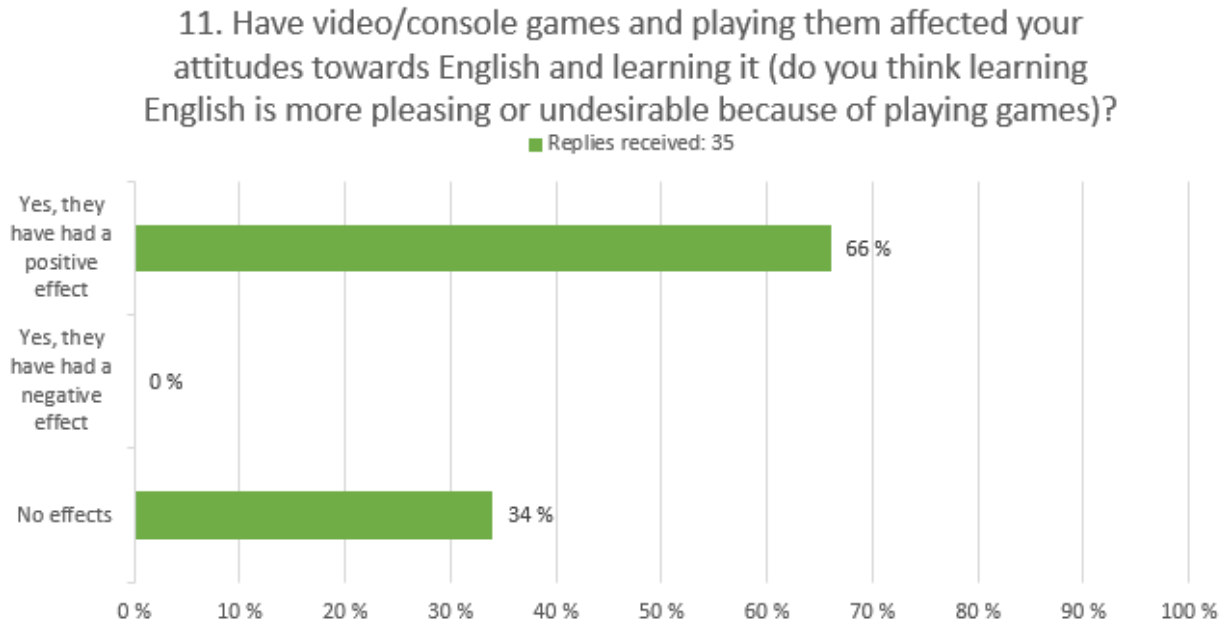


Figure 7. Distribution of answers concerning games affecting attitudes towards English and learning it.

The final question of the questionnaire (Figure 8) was about the pupils’ opinions on using digital games in English language teaching. 37% (13 of the pupils) answered “No” whereas 63% (22 pupils) answered “Yes, how?”. After answering “Yes, how?”, the pupils were able to clarify the reasons for choosing this option as well as explain different ways they thought games could be used in English language teaching.

Some examples of how games could be used in English language teaching were the following: some of the teaching could take place in a computer classroom, where the pupils would be able to play games in English and practice communication. This would be possible through online games, where the pupils would be able to speak English with one another as well as through playing games with a thorough storyline in order to use, see and hear as much English as possible. Some simply stated that using games in an English language classroom would make the lessons more enjoyable and less passive.

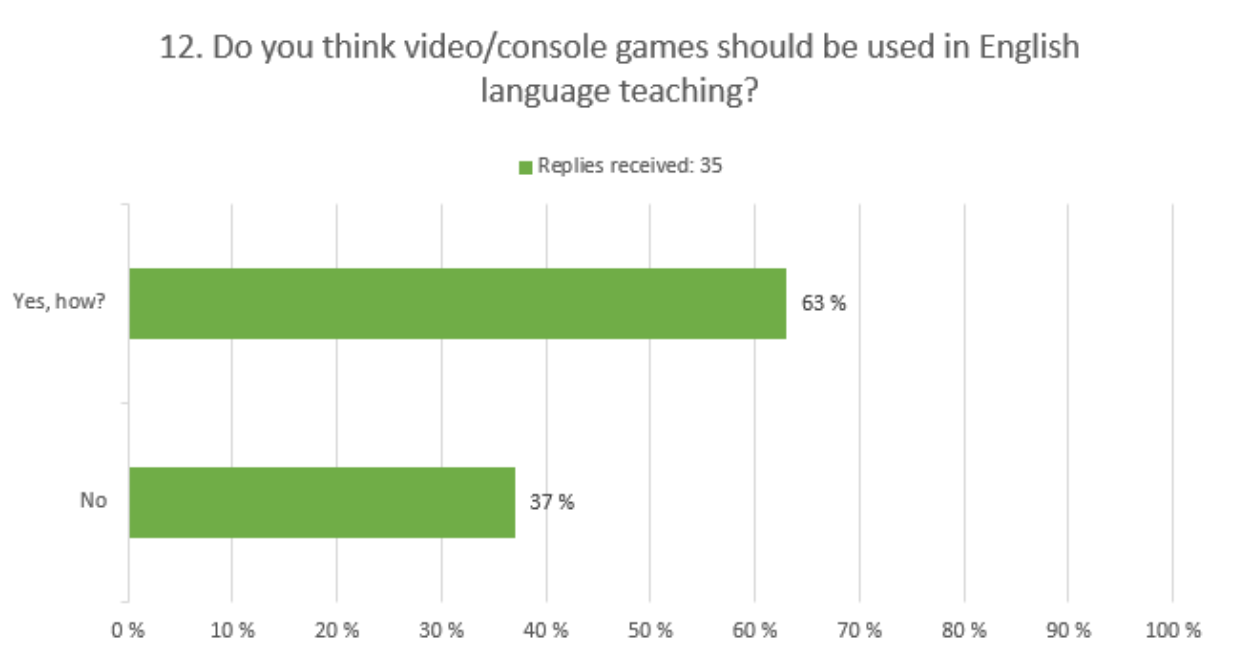


Figure 8. Distribution of answers on whether games should be used in English language teaching.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that non-educational video and console games can, with high probability, have a positive impact on a language learner's learning motivation, attitudes towards the language learned as well as the idea of using non-educational video and console games in teaching. As Yusny and Fitri argue (2013: 225), games and gaming are a powerful tool for teaching and learning a language and their effects have been proven positive by other studies as well. Gaming is a learning process and its potential in increasing learner motivation can lengthen the

learning process positively by pushing the learner to acquire more and more information (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 226).

Similar to this study, Yusny and Fitri's study also concluded that a majority of the students taking part in their study stated that games help with learning motivation, interests towards the language itself, learning it through different levels of difficulty and tasks with numerous possibilities and rewards (Yusnu and Fitri 2013: 244). Pupils filling out this study's questionnaire also expressed that games provide challenges on different difficulty-levels and by choosing English as the language of the game, linguistic challenges grew as well. This was something several pupils saw as positive challenges as playing would help them learn e.g. new vocabulary.

Gamification and using games for learning can help in creating a more relaxed atmosphere as well as a lower threshold for trying something a learner might consider too challenging in a normal classroom. The fear of failure decreases and the learner can set higher goals for themselves (Iamerenko 2011: 131). In questions 6 and 7, several pupils explained that the reason they prefer English to be used in the game instead of Finnish is because it is a great opportunity to learn the language and it also challenges them to concentrate and internalize new vocabulary etc. This phenomenon could also be brought into a school environment. Even though the likelihood of mistakes increases, the fear of them can decrease if challenges are faced through playing or gamification in the classroom.

Games have shown to be something that affect the player's emotional, social and cognitive areas and thus make the game motivating and invites the player to continue the game experience (Iaremenko 2017: 128). Games that require high energy and are competitive increase motivation especially in the case of extrinsic motivation, where an external reward is given to the player inside the game after passing different quests or obstacles (Iaremenko 2017:131). Several of the games mentioned by the pupils – CS: GO, Minecraft, Fortnite etc. – involve reward-driven playing and many games combine rewards with an engaging and interesting storyline to follow in the game.

Like Deterding (2011: 7) states, gamification is a great example of using games and game design in something that is not game-related – like traditional language teaching – and helps motivate

learners to engage in the learning experience. Even though digital games have been actively incorporated in teaching in recent years, the games have usually been developed specifically for teaching a certain school subject. Making video- and console games an effective additional way to learn and teach a language as well as helping learners get more motivated depends on the way the teacher utilizes gameplay in their teaching.

The learners' attitudes and interests towards gaming are also something that need to be taken into consideration: in the questionnaire, some pupils stated that games should be used in teaching in order to make lessons more engaging, enjoyable and interactive, whereas some were against the idea of non-educational digital games becoming a part of English language teaching. The teacher's ability to plan and execute gamification and use games in the classroom when it is most effective is also important (Iamerenko 2017: 131). User engagement is one of the main aspects of gamification (Deterding 2011: 7) and the goal of making the learning process more fun and enjoyable was mentioned multiple times in the questionnaire answers. Teachers should always make sure that using games for a specific purpose is useful for the learner and is not harmful to them in any way, especially in the case of non-educational games, as Xu, Turel and Yuan argued (2012: 323).

One of the questions in the questionnaire was about the effects video- and console games might have had on different English language skills such as listening comprehension etc. According to the pupils, they have improved on various areas of language skills and this supports Iamerenko's (2011: 128) statement of games having an impact on emotional, social and cognitive areas of game players. In this study's questionnaire results, social areas can affect hearing and listening comprehension as well as oral skills, cognitive areas can help with new vocabulary and grammar, and emotional areas can affect the way learners attach learned topics to their everyday lives or interests. Yusny and Fitri (2013: 244) also found that using a digital game resulted in better learning outcomes especially in listening and reading skills.

As for motivation, games generate positive mindsets towards learning and thus increase motivation among learners (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 244). Questionnaire questions 8 and 11 also support this observation since most of the pupils responded with positive answers on whether their learning

motivation has increased and if games have had a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes towards the English language.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on the answers in the questionnaire given by the 35 pupils, video- and console games have had a positive impact on their English language skills as well as their motivation to learn and study English. None of the pupils indicated that playing games has had a negative impact on their attitudes towards the language itself, learning or studying it. Most of the pupils had had a positive impact on their attitudes and some replied that games had no impact. This is an important factor in determining whether games are harmful for a child's learning process and if games have the potential of affecting a learner's attitudes towards learning and studying a language.

In question number 12, 37% of the 35 pupils answered "No" and 68% of them answered "Yes, how?". One of the reasons for this might be that actual applications of non-educational digital games in language teaching are quite rare and are not familiar amongst language learners inside a school environment. Most children and adults as well see digital games as something connected to their free time and their pedagogical potential is understood mostly by educational professionals (Yusny and Fitri 2013: 225). Those who answered "Yes, how?" mostly relied on the interactional opportunities online games can provide to the learners as well as games being a good way of practicing listening and reading comprehension.

Even though the link between English used in games and teaching English in a classroom is not necessarily fully understood by the pupils, 83% or 29 of the 35 pupils did feel that playing games has made understanding and learning new things during English language lessons easier. This shows that even if a connection between being in contact with a foreign language through games and its effects on the ways a learner encounters new topics during lessons is not necessarily purposeful, it can still be noticeable. This applies to the answers given to e.g. question number 10: "Do you feel that video/console games and playing them have affected your English language skills? If yes, in what areas have you improved?" Improvement had taken place on every language skill area listed as an option.

6.1 Strengths and limitations of the study

The results of this study and the answers received in the questionnaire can help other language learners better understand and see the connection between gaming and language acquisition. It is also possible that the pupils who filled out the questionnaire benefited from simply taking part in this study; the questions put learning a language through games into words. This could have possibly helped the pupils evaluate their learning experience and how they were going to answer the questions – and through this – understand the actual scale on which playing games has assisted them with learning English.

The strengths of this study lie in the questionnaire used for data collection. The questions in the questionnaire were formatted so that the children would have room for their own personal answers when needed, they were not misleading, and difficult vocabulary was avoided e.g. motivation was replaced with eagerness and so on. Only a few written answers from the pupils answered with “I don’t know” or “I can’t remember”, so a variety of different answers created a diverse base for the analysis of the questionnaire.

This study was not about a specific game or a gaming system and its effects on language learning motivation, but something that wanted to form a base for the assumption of games being helpful in language teaching and learning inside and outside of school. This study is an easy platform for future studies and the possible directions a new study can go from this one are almost limitless.

The limitations of this study have to do with the number of pupils filling out the questionnaire. A group of 35 pupils is a small number compared to e.g. all pupils in the same school who play video- and console games. However, the 35 pupils who filled out the questionnaire, represent a versatile scale of pupils from two different teaching groups and the group taking part in the study did not consist of same-sex participants. Games from various genres – action, adventure, rhythmic etc. – were mentioned by the participants and thus the results are not based on just one or two types of digital games.

6.2 Possible future research

Possible future research could focus more on the effects on motivation a specific game might have, not necessarily games in general. WoW (World of Warcraft), which is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game or an MMORPG, or CS: GO (Counter Strike: Global Offensive), which was one of the games most played by the pupils who filled out the questionnaire, are games that highly incorporate player interaction and could be great sources of learner motivation as their own units.

Games and language learning motivation is a topic that has many possibilities for research. Since ways of incorporating games, game design and gamification in teaching is a relatively new phenomenon, more research needs to be done in order to understand it more, as well as design and create new game related or game-based teaching and learning materials.

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APPENDIX
The questionnaire

**Video- ja konsolipelien vaikutukset englannin kielen
opiskelumotivaatioon**

1. Ikä ja luokka *

2. Sukupuoli *

- Mies
 Nainen
 Muu

3. Millaisia video- tai konsolipelejä pelaat (esim. räiskintä-, strategia-, areena-, taistelu-, urheilu-, ajo-, rytmi- ja tanssipelit)? *

500 merkkiä jäljellä

4. Anna esimerkkejä peleistä, joita pelaat (esim. CS:GO, League of Legends, Fortnite, Borderlands, Dota 2, Just Dance, FIFA jne.) *

500 merkkiä jäljellä

5. Käytetäänkö peleissä englannin kieltä? *

- Ei
- Kyllä, miten (esim. tekstitykset, hahmot puhuvat englantia, valikot ja ohjeet ovat englanniksi jne.)?

6. Valitsetko pelatessa mieluummin suomen vai englannin kieliset tekstitykset (jos niiden valitseminen on mahdollista)? *

- Valitsen mieluummin englannin kieliset tekstitykset, miksi?

- Valitsen mieluummin suomen kieliset tekstitykset, miksi?

7. Valitsetko pelatessa esimerkiksi hahmojen puhuvan mieluummin suomea vai englantia (jos puhutun kielen valitseminen on mahdollista)? *

- Valitsen mieluummin englannin puhutuksi kieleksi, miksi?

- Valitsen mieluummin suomen puhutuksi kieleksi, miksi?

8. Ovatko video/konsolipelit ja niiden pelaaminen vaikuttaneet innokkuuteesi oppia ja opiskella englantia? *

- Kyllä

- Ei

9. Koetko, että video/konsolipelien pelaaminen on helpottanut englannin kielen oppimista ja uusien asioiden ymmärtämistä tunneilla? *

- Kyllä

- Ei

10. Koetko, että video/konsolipelit ja niiden pelaaminen ovat vaikuttaneet englannin kielen taitoihisi? Jos ovat, millä osa-alueilla koet kehittyneesi? *

- Kuullun ymmärtäminen

- Luetun ymmärtäminen
- Suulliset taidot (lausuminen, puheen sujuvuus jne.)
- Kirjoitustaidot
- Sanasto
- Jokin muu, mikä?

11. Ovatko video/konsolipelit ja niiden pelaaminen vaikuttaneet asenteeseesi englannin kieltä ja sen oppimista kohtaan (koetko englannin kielen oppimisen siis mieluisampana/epämieluisampana pelien pelaamisen vuoksi)? *

- Kyllä, ne ovat vaikuttaneet positiivisesti.
- Kyllä, ne ovat vaikuttaneet negatiivisesti.
- Eivät ole vaikuttaneet.

12. Oletko sitä mieltä, että video/konsolipelejä tulisi käyttää englannin kielen opetuksessa? *

- Ei.
- Kyllä, miten?