

ENGLISH PRESERVICE TEACHERS' VIEWS ON GAME- ENHANCED LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Sekä opettajien ja oppilaiden mielipiteisiin liittyen videopelien ja kielen oppimiseen on jo tällä varsin nuorella tutkimusalalla keskitytty, joten tämä tutkimus pyrkii saamaan tulevien opettajien äänen tulla kuuluksi. Tässä tutkielmassa on selvitetty, millaista pelitaustaa Suomessa asuvilla englannin kielen aineenopettajaopiskelijoilla on, ja mitä mielipiteitä heillä on videopelien käytöstä osana opetusta. Lisäksi tutkielma keskittyy heidän halukkuuteensa käyttää videopeljä omilla oppitunneilla ja siihen, vaikuttavatko osallistujien pelitausta näiden mielipiteiden muodustumiseen. Tutkimus on toteutettu haastattelemalla kolmea yliopisto-opiskelijaa, ja tulokset on analysoitu kvalitatiivisin menetelmin.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoittaa, että opettajaopiskelijat ovat pelanneet paljon erilaisia pelejä varsinkin lapsuudessaan, mutta nykypäivänä he pelaavat paljon harvemmin. Pelejä on pelattu eri alustoilla, kuten konsoleilla ja tietokoneella. Tutkimukseen osallistuneet opiskelijat kokivat videopelien tukevan kielten opiskelua, sillä se mahdollistaa altistumisen autenttiselle kielelle, yksilöllistettyä oppimista ja kasvattaa oppijoiden motivaatiota. Heillä oli myös korkea halukkuus käyttää videopeljä tulevina opettajina, ja yhdellä osallistujalla olikin jo kokemusta tästä. Lisäksi opettajaopiskelijat olivat kiinnostuneita osallistumaan kursseille, jotka keskittyvät siihen, kuinka videopelit tukevat kielten oppimista. He haluavat myös oppia lisää videopelieistä, jotta he voisivat käyttää sopivia pelejä oppitunneilla, sillä kaikki videopelit eivät heidän mielestään ole välttämättä soveliaita. Haastatteluissa ilmenneitä videopelien negatiivisia puolia olivat kiusaaminen nettipeleissä ja puute tarvittavista välineistä käyttää videopeljä.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimusala hyötyisi samankaltaisesta tutkimuksesta, jossa olisi laajempi otanta. Lisäksi jatkossa voitaisiin tutkia kvantitatiivisten menetelmien avulla, kuinka paljon kielten aineenopettajaopiskelijat ovat pelanneet pelejä ja nykyään pelaavat pelejä. Myös aineenopettajille kohdistettua opetus suunnitelmaa kehittäessä olisi hyvä keskittyä näiden opiskelijoiden mielipiteisiin nykyisistä kursseista, jotka keskittyvät pelien käyttöön osana vieraiden kielten opetusta ja tietokoneavusteiseen kielen oppimiseen ja opettamiseen.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Video games have become an increasingly popular form of entertainment as technology has evolved rapidly in recent years, with many people from small children to people in pension consuming video game content by playing games themselves or following other people playing them in streaming platforms or in E-sports events. For instance, a survey from the UK, in which 4626 young people aged 11 to 16 participated, showed that 83.1% of the respondents play video games (Picton, Clark, Judge: 2020). Furthermore, as the world was faced with unprecedented times in 2020 due to the pandemic, video games became a way to cope with the stress. This can be seen with the sales figures of the video game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, which was released conveniently at the beginning of the pandemic. It quickly became one of the best-selling video games in Japan and for the Nintendo Switch console, as it sold 1.88 million physical copies in just three days of its release (The New York Times, 2020; The Verge, 2020).

As technology is rapidly growing and evolving, education systems have responded to this change. This can be seen, for instance, in the curriculum of Finland. The Finnish National Agency for Education (2014: 23) states that ICT competence is an important skill in its self and as a part of multiliteracy, and everyone should have equal opportunities to develop those skills. Therefore, information and communication technologies are utilised in different grades and subjects. Furthermore, the Finnish National Agency for Education (2014: 350) focuses on the importance of gamification, especially in language learning, since it is seen as an opportunity for the students to use their growing language competence along with music and drama. These statements could be parallel with the rising popularity of video games and their recognition as learning tools in foreign language teaching.

When doing research on game-enhanced language learning, often the focus is on how students and teachers perceive video games and their affordances for language learning. However, many future teachers are part of the generation that has grown with the rapid evolution of technology and the popularity of video games, giving a new perspective for the field. Therefore, the present study examines what opinions do preservice English language teachers have of game-enhanced learning and teaching, and whether their previous gaming backgrounds influence these views.

The main focus of this study is on commercial games that use vernacular English, hence the term game-enhanced learning (Reinhardt 2019: 8). The study was conducted by interviewing three university students from Finland that are studying to become foreign language teachers, having English as their major.

The thesis will first focus on background information by presenting key terms and giving an insight to the usage of technology and video games in foreign language learning and teaching. These are followed by the introduction to past research of the field, focusing on students, teachers and preservice teachers' views on video games. The research questions and methods for data collection and analysis are presented in chapter 3, and chapter 4 will present and analyse the findings of the research interviews. Finally, chapter 5 will conclude the present study.

2 BACKGROUND

In order to further understand the field of game-enhanced language learning, I will be first introducing computer-assisted language learning and teaching since it serves as a hypernym for game-enhanced language learning. In addition, I will be talking more in depth about game-enhanced language learning while focusing on how video games can be used as classroom activities and introducing teachers' and learners' experiences. Then, I will present previous studies of preservice teachers' beliefs to further justify why research is needed for my chosen topic while also presenting what has been found thus far from the field of game-enhanced language learning.

2.1 Computer-assisted language learning

Computer-assisted language learning, abbreviated to *CALL*, focuses on using commercial technology in the classroom to further support foreign language learning. For instance, these devices or softwares enable the usage of authentic materials (Reinhardt 2019: 3). In the beginning of *CALL*'s development, language learning still focused on behaviourist premises (Jarvis & Achilleos, 2013: 1), which Reinhardt (2019: 105) describes that learning is most effective when positive and negative reinforcements are used, and learning has become a formation of habits. One of the first softwares used when *CALL* was being developed, was CD-ROMs, which enabled the usage of sound, videos, graphics that were visually appealing alongside text-based learning activities. Different learners now had more variety, and they could find learning activities that they found most effective since learning with computers was more engaging (Peterson 2013: 3). However, CD-ROMs had drawbacks since the activities focused on drilling, which is often associated with behaviourism. Peterson (2013: 4) argues that while using CD-ROMs in the classroom, important parts of effective foreign language acquisition such as communicative interaction and negotiation of meaning are forgotten. In addition, the equipment was expensive, some had poor quality and they did not meet some of the teachers' needs (Peterson: 2013: 4).

Since the rapid development of new technologies and the World Wide Web, Thomas et al. (2014: 24) describe that in the area of scholarship, *CALL* is becoming more widely accepted. The issues that CD-ROMs had in the early development of *CALL* have now been fixed with new softwares and devices that are more freely available. For instance, schools have more

access to portable devices such as laptop computers, smartphones and tablets (Thomas et al. 2014: 24) and online blogs, virtual learning environments, different apps and many others are included in CALL (Jarvis & Achilleos 2013: 2). In addition, these are more portable, and mobile technologies enable greater free usage, therefore CALL pedagogies have moved away from behaviourist principles. With the current state of CALL, learning environments are more interactive and collaborative, and Thomas et al. (2014: 24) theorise that technology and digital literacy skills of learners can therefore be improved. Moreover, language learners have a greater chance of developing their understanding of cross-cultural communication in today's CALL environments (Thomas et al. 2014: 24).

Not only did the development of new technologies improve CALL environments, new types of games started to emerge. They were now also more easily accessible due to the widespread availability of personal computers and laptops, different gaming consoles with advanced graphic designs and smartphones. In addition, online gaming started to become more popular as the Internet became more easily accessible (Peterson 2013: 73).

2.2 Game-enhanced language learning

While the field of CALL was maturing, researchers and teachers recognized how video games could be potential materials for language learning (Lee 1979, as cited in Reinhardt 2019: 6), however, they were mainly used alongside with other CALL materials. If teachers wanted to use video games in the classroom, they opted for vernacular games (Reinhardt 2019: 6). Vernacular games are commercial and non-educational, meaning they were not designed with the intention to teach the players a foreign language. In addition, the language used in the games often resembles spoken language's qualities and is therefore informal. These games can be, for instance, Animal Crossing, Pokémon games or Spyro, to name a few. They can still be adapted and used for educational purposes, and when these types of video games are adapted as classroom activities, and the player gains a learning experience through them, most often the term used for this is *game-enhanced language learning*. However, if the video game was designed with the intention to teach a foreign language and then adapted to the classroom, the term used for this is *game-based language learning* (Reinhardt 2019: 8). Since the focus of this study is on commercial and non-educational games, I will not discuss game-based language learning furthermore.

Reinhardt (2019: 143-144) describes that pedagogical mediation can be defined as teachers developing different wraparound materials or activities in the classroom, and they suggest that pedagogical mediation is an important step to do when planning to incorporate game-enhanced language learning to the classroom since vernacular games are authentic materials. Furthermore, Reinhardt (2019: 144) informs that in game-enhanced language learning, such material can be, for instance, a list of in-game vocabulary that the learners can review beforehand. These can help the learners to pay more attention to the used language that would not usually be emphasized for fluent users. Learner needs are crucial to consider when implementing such materials and the materials should scaffold comprehension (Reinhardt: 144-145).

Both the teachers' and students' experiences and opinions on game-enhanced language learning have already been studied, for instance, Erkkilä (2017: 11) did research on over 700 Finnish upper secondary students and how their gaming backgrounds have influenced their English learning and proficiency. The results showed that the majority of the participants identified video games having a positive influence on their language learning. In addition, they named specific genres of games that have been most influential and which aspects of language learning have greatly improved with playing video games. Furthermore, the participants mentioned discussing video games outside of the actual playing in game-specific communities (Erkkilä 2017: 87-88).

It can be analysed from Erkkilä's (2017) study that these participants have great experience of playing multiple different video games since they were able to easily identify how they have supported their English language learning. Therefore, preservice English language teachers, who also have similar experiences of video games, could possibly relate to these findings. With the support of their teacher training studies, they could further analyse which elements of video games actually support foreign language learning.

As for teachers' perception of game-enhanced language learning, Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño (2017: 441) detected them having opposing opinions, some teachers noticing their students having more motivation and concentration during class when games were being used. Others, however, mentioned that the lack of resources and limited preparing time for gamified activities created challenges. They also mentioned not having enough knowledge on gamification itself and therefore thinking it is not an effective learning technique (Sánchez-

Mena & Martí-Parreño, 2017: 441). The reason for this could be that the teachers possibly do not have personal experiences of playing video games and learning English through them. As the results in Erkkilä's (2017) study showed that since the participants have personal experiences of learning English through video games, they also viewed their learning affordances more positively. Therefore, if the teachers themselves have experiences of video games, they could also be able to identify how they support language learning. In comparison, preservice teachers could already view game-enhanced language learning more positively if they have experiences of playing video games. Therefore, video games could be more present in the classroom in the future as the new generation of teachers have learned a foreign language through them.

Similarly to Rocha, Tangney & Dondio's (2018) study, the majority of the participants that were primary and secondary school teachers perceived motivation and engagement increasing with students while they played video games. The results also showed opposing beliefs about how games help students to achieve learning goals with 47% of the participants agreeing with the statement, however, 44% of the participants disagreed with it. Furthermore, Rocha, Tangney & Dondio (2018) report that the main reason teachers do not implement video games for teaching is due to not having enough time and the lack of technology resources.

In their study, Mäkimattila (2019) found that Finnish English language teachers felt similarly about video games and their educational value as with the studies mentioned above, and how the lack of time and technology resources discouraged teachers from using them. The participants also commented how video games offered them good teaching material to use in the classroom and them being an important part of contemporary culture that should be explored. The reason for this is that teachers acknowledged that the students interact in English outside of the games, for instance, in discussion forums, and perceived it positively due to it providing opportunities to interact in English with other people (Mäkimattila 2019: 64). When it came to how video games aided teachers with student assessment, Mäkimattila (2019: 65) and Rocha, Tangney & Dondio (2018) had comparable results, since teachers felt that games did not provide easy opportunities to assess students. This was due to most games not presenting the students' performance and advancement to teachers (Mäkimattila 2019: 65).

2.3 Preservice teachers' views

Ray, Powell & Jacobsen (2015) researched how willing preservice teachers are to integrate video games into their teaching and what are their views on them as efficient learning tools. In this study, 41 undergraduate preservice teachers took part in a questionnaire that was used twice as a holistic pretest and posttest. This was to determine their initial view of their own willingness to integrate and how it had changed when comparing the results of the pretest and posttest. These tests were part of a course that focused on junior-level technology used for learning and they were done in the beginning and at the end of the course. Throughout the course, an instructor would introduce different games to demonstrate and reinforce course topics and concepts. Most of the participants taught English/language arts or mathematics, however, only one participant taught English as a foreign language. Other mentioned subjects among the participants were, for instance, social studies, history and science. The results of the posttest demonstrate that the majority of the participants viewed video games being efficient learning tools. They saw video games supporting inquiry and visual learning and they consider them contributing to a positive approach to learning. However, the participants felt insecure about their proficiency on how to successfully integrate video games into teaching and therefore they reported that they would need to gain more expertise and have support. This resulted in over half (61%) of the participants feeling only neutral regarding their willingness to integrate in the posttest, which did not differ from the results of the pretest.

Kenny & McDaniel (2011) did a similar study while focusing on how preservice teachers' beliefs on video games influence their adopting and integrating them into their classrooms. The main objective of this study was to find how much preservice teachers in the ages of late teens to early twenties play video games and what could influence their high interest or disinterest towards them. Unlike with Ray, Powell & Jacobsen's (2015) research, it was not reported whether the preservice teachers partaking in the study expertise in a specific subject. This study also conducted pre- and posttest questionnaires. The main focus of the pretest was to discover how active video game players the participants were and whether they preferred other freetime activities. The posttest was conducted right after and the students had been exposed to the same video game in between the tests. The results in the pretest showed that approximately only 42% of the 58 participants regularly played video games and they mentioned rather spending their free time doing other activities than playing video games. The participants also felt that video games are complicated to play or too time-consuming to play, however, video games did not

seem to be too intimidating for them despite these factors. Furthermore, 60% of the participants disagreed with the statement 'I think video games can teach things in that classroom' which means they are not really willing to include and integrate video games into the classroom. However, after the participants were exposed to different video games and gained more experience on playing them, their views started becoming more positive. Therefore, Kenny and McDaniel (2011) state that video games should be part of teacher-training programmes. This could also be relevant in Ray, Powell & Jacobsen's (2015) study to further increase the willingness of the preservice teachers to integrate video games into their teaching.

If the preservice teachers already had more experiences of playing different video games, then the results of both studies could change. Their willingness to use video games in the classroom could also be higher, which could result in them being interested to take courses relating to game-enhanced language learning. Therefore, the demand for such courses could also rise in the future.

It should be noted that both of these studies mentioned already do not specifically focus on language preservice teachers nor English language teachers, which shows the lack of research on how they feel about game-enhanced language learning. Furthermore, these studies focus more on the general educational affordances of video games, and not how they can support and aid specifically foreign language learning.

3 DATA AND METHODS

In this section, I will introduce the research aims and the participants of the present study. I will include justifications to my chosen methodology for collecting data and discuss the used methods for analysing the findings.

3.1 Aims and research questions

The main purpose of the study is to gain knowledge on what beliefs and attitudes Finland's preservice English language teachers have about game-enhanced language learning. These beliefs could possibly be related to their own gaming backgrounds, whether they have played video games in their free time or perhaps in foreign language classrooms. In addition, I will focus on whether these experiences have an influence on their own teaching philosophy, meaning if the preservice teachers would use video games as fully-qualified teachers, and what type of games they would opt for. This also raises the question of whether they would attend courses to develop their expertise on adapting video games to foreign language classrooms.

These are the following research questions of the present study:

1. *How do Finnish preservice English language teachers perceive game-enhanced language learning in the classroom?*
2. *How does a previous gaming background influence preservice English language teacher's view on game-enhanced learning and teaching?*

3.2 Data collection

For this study, I chose to gather data by doing qualitative research interviews since the purpose of the present study is to explore meanings and perceptions that the participants have. With qualitative interviews, often the interviewee describes their beliefs, and the interpretation or analysis of the interview data is left for the researcher (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This method of data collection fits well to answer the research questions because I am trying to analyse the participants' personal perceptions and achieve a deeper understanding of different beliefs on game-enhanced learning and what affects those opinions. I opted for semi-structured

interviews with open-ended interview questions, which I planned before the interviews. This allowed me to ask other questions that arose during the interview, which retained flexibility and I was able to avoid misconceptions.

For the present study, I interviewed 3 pre-service teachers that study English in university and all participants originate from Finland. The level of experience with teaching and how long they had been studying in the university varied between the participants: Antti (pseudonym) has been studying in the university for over 10 years so far, having been a substitute teacher when not a full-time student. They mentioned that they have taught, for instance, both English and Swedish in an elementary school. Suvi (pseudonym) is a 3rd year English major, and they stated that thus far they have finished the basic studies of pedagogical studies, which included a teaching practice. In addition, they have acquired teaching experience from doing simulation lessons for their peers. Liisa (pseudonym), a 4th year English major, had similar experiences with teaching as Suvi, however, they have not done a teaching practice thus far.

I acquired the interviewees by sending emails to an English subject association in a Finnish university, and two participants volunteered from the same university. I contacted the third participant, who was from another university in Finland, directly since I already had their contact information. In addition, the participants gave their consent for the interviews to be recorded, and the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) was followed. The interview questions (see Appendix) focused on the participants' knowledge and experience with video games from childhood to present, whether they have had the chance to use games in their own teaching, and if they would be interested to deepen their knowledge on game-enhanced learning. In addition, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to make presenting the findings clearer.

3.3 Methods of analysis

For analysing the data gathered from the interviews, I used qualitative content analysis as my method of analysis. Selvi (2019: 440) describes how this data analysis allows room for the methodological flexibility and easy adaptation to real-life settings. Furthermore, this allowed me to create a general understanding of the research questions while simultaneously presenting the findings of the study and how they answer the research questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). Since the findings of this research cannot be statistically generalised because

the focus is on personal views and experiences, therefore qualitative content analysis fit well with the purposes of this study.

As previously mentioned, the interviews were transcribed, and I colour-coded the common themes that emerged from the interviews. This gave me clarity as I was analysing the data since the colour-coded parts were more noticeable in the transcriptions. In addition, this way it was easier to find contradicting and aligning themes between the present study and previous research. I found four common themes, which are the following: personal experiences with video games, views on video games as learning tools for foreign language learning, willingness to use video games and previous gaming background's influence. I was then able to answer the research questions of the present study with these themes.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I will be presenting the results of the research interviews and analysing them. The first section focuses on the participants' experiences with video games throughout their lives. Then, I will be discussing what views the participants have of video games, and if they support foreign language learning and teaching. The last two sections of the analysis will focus on the participants' willingness to use video games as future teachers, and whether a previous gaming background has an influence on the participants' views. Throughout my analysis, I will be referring to the literature review and using direct quotations from the interviews to support my evidence.

4.1 Previous and current personal experiences with video games

All three participants had varying and unique experiences with video games from their childhood. During the interviews, they mentioned how they had mainly played video games with other people, for instance friends and family. In addition, Suvi mentioned how their older siblings had influenced them to play different video games. The participants mentioned having played on the PC, the PlayStation consoles or the Nintendo consoles, and they proceeded to list out different games as examples during the interviews, for instance Crash Bandicoot, Spyro, Worms, Doom and The Sims. In addition, all participants remember playing Super Mario games. Only a few online games were mentioned, such as Club Penguin and Bomberman.

Although the participants had pleasant experiences with video games from their childhoods, they do not currently regularly play video games. For instance, Antti stated that they prefer browsing the Internet, which was the result of not having enough resources for the newer frequently releasing video games. Furthermore, they discussed how they found video games time-consuming or too difficult to play, which has decreased their interest towards video games and, they now only play occasionally. Antti explains their opinion in example 1.

Example 1:

A: [...] oikeastaan ei mua ihan kauheasti kiinnosta pelata tai sitten jos mä oon ruvennut pelaamaan ja sitten ne on ollut usein jotenkin semmoisia liian vaikeita ja semmoisia, niin kuin tavallaan aikaa vieviä, että se on tuntunu, että se vaatisi kauheasti niinku ajallista ja semmoista kaikennäköistä panostamista, rahallista panostamista, ajallista panostamista ja semmoista niin kuin älyllistä panostamista [...] mä en niinku jaksa ja sit jos se on liian vaikea [peli] niin sit se saattaa jäädä ja sitten mä en ikinä vaan palaa siihen enää [...]

A: [...] actually I am not very interested in playing or then if I have started to play and then they have often been kind of too difficult and time consuming so it feels like it would require a lot of like time and all sorts of investing, financial investing, time investing and like intellectual investing [...] like I am too tired to and if it's [the game] too difficult then I might just leave it and then I never return back to it [...]

As for the other participants, Suvi mentioned having phases where their interest towards the Sims is increased, and that they are interested in playing crossword puzzles in English on their phone. Furthermore, Suvi did add that they would like to try playing newer more interactive video games on different platforms. Out of all the participants, Liisa is the one who currently plays the most, estimating that they play once a month or more. They play mainly on the PlayStation and the games are co-operation games, such as Lovers in a Dangerous Spacetime and It Takes Two. These results show similarities with Kenny & McDaniel's (2011), where the majority of the participants did not actively play. The reasons why they preferred doing other activities align especially with Antti's statement of games being too complicated and time-consuming.

When discussing the experiences they had with video games in the classroom, the participants could not remember many occasions where video games were used when they were, for instance, in elementary school or junior high school. It should be noted that the following examples focus more on game-based language learning, since the participants did not mention any commercial video games, therefore game-enhanced language learning was not present in

the classroom. Both Antti and Liisa remember playing a video game intended for studying maths. In Liisa's case, the video game had to be first installed from a CD, and they only played it a few times in the computer lab. They mentioned how the gameplay was very simplistic, not interesting especially for children, and the game resembled a maths exam. Therefore, CALL was present in the classroom, however, only rarely, and the exercises were supported by CD-ROM softwares. As Peterson (2013: 3) had argued, CD-ROMs were not effective for foreign language acquisition since the activities focused on drilling and not on communicative interaction and negotiation of meaning. This further supports Liisa's view (example 2) of the CD-ROM activities they had played.

Example 2:

L: [...] meillä oli ehkä joskus niinku ala-asteella tai yläasteella joku sellainen, että annettiin semmoinen niinku CD, minkä pystyi ite asentaa omalle koneelle, mut ne oli tosi huonoja ne pelit siellä silleen et ei ne ollu niinku lapsille tiiätkö yhtään kiinnostavia [...] vähän niinku sellaista, että on vaikka joku kysymys ja sitten kun vastaa siihen oikein niin se on vaan silleen "jee hyvää työtä". Ettei ollut niinku mitään semmoista jännittävää tavallaan vaan enemmän semmoista koemaista.

L: [...] we had maybe I think in elementary school or in junior high school something like we were given like a CD, which you could install on your own computer but the games were really bad there that they were not you know not interesting enough for children [...] kind of like there is for example a question and when you answer it correctly it is like "yey good job". So it was not like anything like exciting in a way, more like exam type.

Furthermore, Antti recalls that the video game they had played was a new concept in the 90s, and their school piloted new teaching materials, however, due to the time period, other technology was not used in the classroom. Suvi recalls that video games and technology itself was more present later in their studies, especially in the university. In addition, they wondered why video games were not present earlier in their studies, as illustrated in example 3.

Example 3:

S: [...] myöhemmissä opinnoissa on mun mielestä just enemmän [pelejä] ollut, että on sitten hyödynnetty. Mut jos mä koitan varsinkin niinku perus kouluaikoja miettiä niin en kyllä muista että ois, vaikka voisi nimenomaan luulla, että siellä enemmän just pelin ja leikin kautta se opetus tapahtuisi toisin kuin ylempillä asteilla niin toi on ehkä vähän silleen vinksallaan. Mutta en mä tiedä onko toi sitten semmoinen, mikä on tullut vasta niinku viime vuosina enemmän käyttöön, että niistä hyödyistäkin on ruvettu puhumaan enemmän, että voisiko se siitä sitten johtuu minkä takia ei ole silloin käytetty.

S: [...] later in my studies I think there have been more [games] that have been utilised. But if I try to remember specifically elementary school then I don't think there were any, even

though you could expect there to be more games and play in the classroom unlike in higher grades so that's kind of odd. But I don't know if that's something that has become more popular in recent years since the benefits are more talked about, so maybe that could be the reason why they weren't used back then.

4.2 Views on video games and foreign language learning

All participants viewed video games as being a great supporter for foreign language learning and teaching. This is parallel with Erkkilä's (2017: 11) study where the majority of the participating upper secondary Finnish students identified video games having a positive influence on their foreign language learning. During the interviews, the participants gave further explanations as to why they think learners benefit from video games. For instance, Antti related to how there is already research on the topic and the benefits of games for foreign language learning, showing deeper knowledge of the field itself. Suvi also mentioned there being research on the topic, however, they themselves have not further familiarised with such studies. Furthermore, the participants drew their views from their personal experiences with playing the games or using them in the classroom, for instance, Antti had most experiences out of all three participants with the latter since they have the most teaching experience.

The participants agreed on how players are exposed to authentic language that is used in video games, and everyone mentioned that especially online games provide opportunities for players to use the target language effectively. Suvi further analysed that discussing the games with other players also provides learning opportunities and possibilities to use the target language. In addition, Liisa believes (see example 4) that when the player has to spontaneously use the target language, their ability to produce language strengthens and the players are less nervous to speak.

Example 4:

L: No musta tuntuu että monesti oppilaat ei välttis siksi halua puhua, että niitä ujostuttaa tai jotain, mutta siinä pelissä sun on vähän niinku pakko kommunikoida tai sä et pysty pelaamaan sitä. Ja niin ehkä siinä pienempi kynnys käyttää sitä [kieltä] [...]

L: Well I feel like often students might not want to speak because they feel shy or something but in the game you must like communicate or you can't play it. And yeah maybe there is a lower threshold to use it [the language] [...]

These statements align with Erkkilä's (2017: 87-88) findings, since in their study the students discussed that they have talked about video games in game-specific communities, which the

participants of the current study have acknowledged, and they have further analysed how it positively affects learning. Furthermore, in Mäkimattila's (2019: 64) study, teachers viewed video games as teaching materials positively since they acknowledged that the students interact in English with other people outside of the video games, for instance, in discussion forums. They saw that these provided good opportunities to interact in English and strengthen their language skills.

Both Suvi and Antti mentioned how video games motivate students to learn foreign languages, and that video games provide individualised learning for everyone, therefore the video games take into account different learners. Suvi further explained that since there are many games available, all students' needs can be met. In addition, Suvi felt that students might find learning through video games more fun since their motivation is higher, and perhaps learning the target language is only a bonus when playing. Suvi explains their view in example 5.

Example 5:

S: [...] Niinku se [pelit] tekee myös paljon motivoivampaa siitä oppimisesta ja kyllähän sitä ainakin tutkittu, että mitä mielekkäämpää se oppiminen on niin sitä parempia myös ne oppimistulokset on. [...] Oppilaat tavallaan oppii sen kielen siinä vähän niinku sivussa samalla kun ne tekee jotain mistä tykkää niin varmasti siinä oppii paremmin.

S: [...] They also make learning more motivating and it has been researched that if learning is more enjoyable then the learning outcomes are better. [...] Students kind of learn the language there on the side when they are doing something they like so it most likely improves learning.

In Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño's (2017: 441) study, some teachers also noticed that when video games were used in the classroom, the students' motivation and concentration levels were higher. Rocha, Tangney & Dondio (2018) found similar views from primary and secondary school teachers who also saw the increase of motivation and engagement when students played video games.

During the interview, Antti discussed how they have noticed that students can make their own reachable goals when playing video games, and that these goals are often challenging enough for them. As a result, the learning becomes more effective. Furthermore, Antti mentioned that in their opinion it is a positive aspect that students can independently use the games, stating that in a sense the students can independently choose through their interests how to proceed in the game and what goals they want to reach. Liisa also had similar views, adding that when students try to reach certain goals in the games, it supports authentic language use.

This is slightly in contrast with Rocha, Tangney & Dondio's (2018) study, since 44% of the participating teachers believed that games did not help students to achieve their learning goals. Furthermore, in the same study as well as in Mäkimattila's (2019: 65), teachers felt that video games did not provide easy opportunities to assess students since some games did not present the students' progress and achievements to the teachers. It can therefore be theorised, whether these teachers then found students independently using the games useful which opposes Antti's statement.

4.3 Willingness to use video games as a future teacher

All participants of this study showed enthusiasm towards using video games in the classroom as a future teacher. However, both Liisa and Suvi felt that they still lacked enough knowledge on suitable video games and what aspects of video games actually support foreign language learning. They therefore were interested to take courses relating to the topic in their universities. Antti was also willing to partake in such courses, explaining that they could provide more theoretical knowledge on games, which the other participants also agreed on. Furthermore, Liisa states that they think such courses would be useful since the teacher would then be able to efficiently incorporate suitable video games to the classroom, which students would greatly benefit from. They also added that it is important to choose a game that fits all learners and their needs when choosing a video game.

During their interview, Suvi mentioned that since there are many video games available in English, they provide different useful materials to be used in the classroom. However, Suvi felt slightly unsure which games would then be suitable and therefore they thought the courses on game-enhanced language learning would guide them when choosing suitable teaching materials. In addition, Suvi mentioned that there could be even more courses available, and digitalisation should also be taken more into account in teacher-training programmes, as seen in example 6.

Example 6:

S: Joo kyllä musta tuntuu, että tuommoiselle [kurseille] voisi ihan hyvin olla tilaa ja ehkä niinkun tavallaan isompana kokonaisuutena, että ylipäätään enemmän käytäisiin niitä tavallaan vähän niinku poikkeavia opetusmateriaaleja läpi ja tuommoisia niinku käytännön juttuja mitä voit hyödyntää [...]

S: Yes I do feel like there could be space for them [courses] and maybe as a kind of larger entity so that overall we would go through sort of variable teaching materials and practical things that can be utilised [...]

In Antti's case, they already had experience of using video games in the classroom. They had used, for example, Kahoot, Ba Ba Dum and an app called Quickdraw, where students draw based on the English word they are given and then artificial intelligence guesses what the word is based on the student's drawing. Furthermore, Antti had also incorporated digital material and exercises provided from the textbooks they use in the classroom. During their interview, Antti discusses how they have only relied mainly on game-based language learning and teaching, however, they have given the students homework where they play any video game they like and then the students have reported their playing experiences. Interestingly, Suvi suggested a similar exercise in their interview: they said that the whole class could discuss what their favourite commercial games are and those can then be incorporated into lessons.

These findings are similar to Ray, Powell & Jacobsen's (2015) study where 61% of the participating pre-service teachers felt insecure about how to successfully integrate them into teaching, therefore reporting they would like to deepen their knowledge and have support. This resulted in them feeling only neutral about their willingness to use video games. However, the majority of the participants still viewed video games as efficient learning tools, which aligns with all of the participants in the current study. Both findings are in contrast with Kenny and McDaniel's (2011) pretest study since 60% of the participants viewed video games as learning tools negatively and therefore their willingness to integrate was low. However, the posttest showed that their views had changed to be more positive when they were exposed to different video games.

The participants in the current study were also asked whether they have any reasons not to use video games in the classroom. Most common answer that arose from the interviews was that not all video games are suitable especially for young learners due to the graphic content. Therefore, having a good knowledge on suitable games for teaching is necessary, as Liisa stated in their interview. Furthermore, both Antti and Suvi mentioned that bullying can happen in online games and online communities which is also harmful for young students. Suvi added (see example 7) that it can be difficult for the teacher to notice the bullying since it is not visible in the classroom.

Example 7:

S: [...] jos on vaikka joku online tyyppinen peli, no tuli vaan siis mieleen kiusaaminen että voisiko se olla jotenkin sitten helpompaa niillä alustoilla? Tai sillä tavalla, että se ei ole sitten niin näkyvää opettajalla, kun se tapahtuu siellä, eikä niin kuin fyysisesti luokassa. Mutta veikkaan että nekin tapaukset on varmaan, ainakin toivottavasti, sen verran harvinaisempi, että ei olisi.

S: [...] if there was some kind of online game, well it came to mind that maybe bullying could be easier on those platforms? Or in a sense that it then would not be visible for the teacher when it's happening there and not like physically in the classroom. But I guess that those cases are probably, at least hopefully, really rare and that they don't often happen.

The participants also felt that video games can cause disruption in the classroom. For instance, Liisa mentioned that the environment of the classroom can get quite loud, however, they added that it would not bother them since discussion tasks are an important part of foreign language learning and those also increase the volume. Furthermore, Suvi contemplated how video games could affect the students' concentration but came to a conclusion that it depends on the group itself. Antti had experiences with the competitive aspect of the video games negatively affecting the classroom dynamic and students getting upset over the game results. Therefore, Antti suggested that in such cases it is better to opt for games that do not include competition between the students.

Suvi and Liisa mentioned that not having enough resources is also a reason why they possibly would not use video games in the classroom. Similarly, Antti said (see example 8) that during their time as a substitute teacher, they have taken into consideration how some of the students may not have the same resources to play video games at home.

Example 8:

A: [...] sitten siinä on sekin, että kaikilla ei ole niinku ehkä ihan yhtäläisiä mahdollisuuksia sitten pelata. [...] Sit mä annan jotain muuta [läksyä] että jos ei halua pelata niin voi vaikka katsoa jonkun englanninkielisen leffan tai jotain vastaavaa. [...] sitten jos kauhean laajasti antaa tommosta kotiläksyä tavallaan tämmöisten pelien muodossa niin pitää aina ottaa se huomioon että semmoinen niinku digitaalinen inkluusio, että tota kaikilla on sitten yhtäläiset mahdollisuudet pystyä suorittamaan sen.

A: [...] and then there is also that not everyone has, you know, similar opportunities to play. [...] that's why I give something else [homework] that if you don't want to play then you can, for example, watch a movie in English or something similar. [...] then if you give such homework very often where you include games then you have to take into account digital inclusion, so that everyone has equal opportunities to execute.

These views align with the other findings why some teachers were hesitant to include video games in the classroom. For instance, Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño (2017:441) found that there was a lack of resources and limited time to prepare gamified learning activities which gave some of the teachers challenges. Furthermore Rocha, Tangney & Dondio (2018) found similar reasons as to why teachers' willingness to integrate was low, them reporting that teachers did not have enough time and there was also a lack of technology resources. Similarly, Mäkimmattila (2019) found that Finland's English language teachers felt discouraged by these same complications to use video games in the classroom.

4.4 The influence of a previous gaming background

The results from the interviews show that the participants view video games in a positive light, and they think that the games provide useful learning materials and opportunities for students. They all also have experience with playing video games from different genres and on different platforms, therefore their knowledge on video games is not limited. Although they wish to expand their knowledge on video games and game-enhanced language learning, it only shows enthusiasm towards the topic. This contradicts the results from Sánchez-Mena and Martí-Parreño's (2017: 441) study, where some of the participating teachers felt that using video games was not an effective learning technique since they did not have enough knowledge on gamification. Therefore, it can be observed that having a positive experience with various games has influenced the participants' views to be positive in the current study.

Although the participants stated not regularly playing video games currently, the results show that they do not disregard the importance of video games as learning tools. For instance, Antti said that they are not interested in playing video games since they felt they are too difficult to play, expensive and time-consuming. However, during the interview they added that they recognise video games being important learning tools and how effective they can be for some students. Furthermore, Antti mentioned that they do follow what people are currently playing and which of these popular games could be utilised in the classroom. This aligns with Mäkimmattila's (2019: 64) findings since the participating teachers viewed video games being an important part of contemporary culture that should be included. Therefore, in Antti's case, it can be noticed that the previous gaming background might not correlate in some ways with their views on game-enhanced language learning.

As for Suvi and Liisa, their previous gaming backgrounds also influence them to have positive views on video games, as they have gathered personal and positive experiences of them. The only reason they did not regularly play video games was due to being busy with other aspects of life, however, they were still interested to play other games. For instance, Suvi mentioned in their interview how they would want to try more interactive games and online games. These statements can be compared to Antti's, since both Suvi and Liisa are interested to play video games for entertainment purposes. Antti, on the other hand, showed interest towards video games due to them being useful learning tools.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study focused on how Finnish preservice English language teachers perceive game-enhanced language learning in the classroom and whether and how the participants' previous gaming backgrounds have influenced these views. In addition, the participants' willingness to use video games as future teachers was explored. The data was gathered by interviewing three university students, and the interviews were semi-structured. The data itself was analysed with qualitative methods.

The results showed that the participants viewed game-enhanced learning positively, and they saw video games being a great asset for foreign language learning and teaching. During the interviews, all participants mentioned how players are exposed to authentic language, and the games provide opportunities for the players to use the target language efficiently. Other positive aspects that were mentioned were how video games provide individualised learning and that they can increase students' learning motivation. Furthermore, all participants showed high willingness to use video games in the classroom as future teachers, and one of the participants already had personal experiences with it. They were also interested in partaking in courses that focus on game-enhanced language learning and teaching. They mentioned that through such courses they could learn more about video games and their theoretical aspects as well as how to efficiently use the most suitable video games during lessons. Therefore, it can be noted that there is a demand for such courses to be in the teacher training programme, and it can possibly rise in the future.

The present study also explored the reasons why the participants would not use video games as a part of teaching. All participants stated how not all games are suitable especially for young

learners since some might include graphic content. Another negative aspect was how some bullying can occur in online games and online gaming communities, one participant stating that it would then be more difficult for the teacher to notice. Not having enough resources to use video games was another aspect that could hinder the usage of video games in the classroom or at home.

All participants had varying positive experiences with playing different video games in their childhood and in the present, some more than the others. Therefore, it can be observed that these experiences have influenced the participants' views of game-enhanced language learning and teaching to be positive as well.

These findings give insight on how Finland's preservice English language teachers view game-enhanced language learning, which in itself is a new point of view in the research field. Both teachers and students' views have been explored to some degree, however, the focus should also respectfully be on the future teachers themselves. As the present study shows, the participants have knowledge of video games and positive experiences playing them, which have influenced their willingness to use them in the classroom. Furthermore, the participants in the current study show interest in the topic, which can indicate that in the future video games might be even more present in the classroom and not only just educational games. The results of this study can therefore be beneficial especially when planning the new curriculum for teacher training programmes.

Despite the fact that the present study was a small-scale study, I was able to gather enough data to answer my research questions, and the aims of the study were achieved. In the future, a more larger scale studies should be conducted on this topic in the future, as the field is still quite young. With a larger study more varying views on game-enhanced language learning could be found. Other suggestions for possible future research include a quantitative study on how much pre-service teachers have played video games and currently play video games. It could also be explored how preservice teachers view courses in the teacher training programme that focus on game-enhanced and game-based language learning or computer assisted language learning. In addition, this research field can benefit from other larger scale studies on whether a previous gaming background influences participants' views on video games.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Alkuun kysymyksiä haastateltavista (Questions of interviewees' background):

Kuinka kauan olet opiskellut englantia yliopistossa?

- How long have you studied English in university?

Kuinka paljon olet käynyt kasvatustieteen kursseja?

- How many pedagogical studies courses have you taken?

Onko sinulla kuinka paljon kokemusta opettamisesta ja oppituntien pitämisestä?

- How much knowledge do you have on teaching and planning your own lessons?

Kysymyksiä videopeleistä ja omista kokemuksista (Questions about video games and own experiences):

Millaisia kokemuksia sinulla on videopeleistä lapsuudesta?

- What kind of experiences do you have of video games?

Millaisia pelejä olet pelannut?

- What type of games have you played?

Pelaatko nykypäivänä paljon videopelejä ja millaisia? Tai miksi et?

- Do you currently play many video games? Or why do you not play them?

Onko videopelejä käytetty oppitunneilla, kun olit peruskoulussa ja toisella asteella? Missä oppiaineissa?

- Were video games used in the classroom when you were in elementary and in upper secondary school? In which subjects?

Millaisia pelit olivat jos niitä käytettiin?

- What type of games were they?

Koetko että videopeleistä on hyötyä vieraiden kielten opiskelussa? Miksi tai miksi ei?

- Do you think video games support foreign language learning? Why or why not?

Haluaisitko tulevana opettajana käyttää videopelejä osana opetusta? Miksi?

- Would you want to use video games in the classroom as a future teacher? Why?

Miksi et käyttäisi videopelejä osana opetusta?

- What are your reasons for not using video games in the classroom?

Haluaisitko käydä kursseja jotka keskittyvät videopeleihin ja kuinka niitä voi hyödyntää osana vieraiden kielten opetusta? Miksi tai miksi et?

- Would you want to attend courses that focus on video games and how you can use them in the foreign language classrooms? Why or why not?