SINGLE-PLAYER VIDEO GAMES AS AN INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

Views and experiences of gaming young adults

Master's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Videopelien pelaajilla on yleisesti tunnistettu ja tutkimuksissa havaittu kokemus kielenoppimisesta viihdepelien kautta (Cornillie, Thorne ja Desmet 2012, Sundqvist and Sylvén 2012). Huomio kuitenkin usein kiinnittyy verkkomoninpeleihin ja sanastonoppimiseen, yksinpelaamisen ja muiden kielen taitojen jäädessä vähemmälle huomiolle. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella viihteellisten yksinpelien tarjoamia oppimismahdollisuuksia pelaajien näkemysten ja kokemusten kautta. Tarkemmin käsitellään motivaatiota, pelien piirteitä, pelien kieltä ja oppimisstrategioita.

Tutkimus asettuu Reinhardtin ja Sykesin (2012) määrittämässä viitekehyksessä informaaliin kielenoppimiseen viihdepelien kautta, ja tarkastelee oppimismahdollisuuksia van Lierin (2000) tarjoumien eli affordanssien kaltaisena vuorovaikutuksena oppijan ja ympäristön välillä. Tutkimus toteutettiin haastattelemalla seitsemää aktiivisesti pelaavaa yliopisto-opiskelijaa. Haastattelut analysoitiin laadullisella sisällönanalyysilla käyttäen teema-analyysiä osin aineistolähtöisesti ja käyttäen useita eri teorioita avoimena viitekehyksenä tulkinnoille.

Esiin nousi kolme kielenoppimista motivoivaa tekijää: englanti pelaamisen valtakielenä, sekä pelissä eteneminen (progressio) ja peliin uppoutuminen (immersio), jotka vastasivat Yeen (2006) yleisiä pelaamismotivaatioita. Tärkeimpiä pelejä haastateltujen kielenoppimisessa olivat tarinalliset rooli- ja seikkailupelit, joissa kielen ymmärtäminen on olennaisinta itse pelaamiselle. Yksinpelien tarjoama kieli nähtiin monipuolisena ja teemojen mukaan erikoistuneena. Haastatelluille tärkein kielen taito pelatessa on ymmärtäminen, ja eniten opittu taito sanasto. Kokemuksia oli myös kieliopin oppimisesta peleistä, ja tuottamistaidoille oli käyttöä tietyissä peleihin liittyvissä tilanteissa. Kielenoppimiseen käytettiin useita eri strategioita, pelivalinnoilla kielelle itsensä altistamisesta tietoiseen kieleen keskittymiseen, esimerkiksi tekstitysten ja sanakirjan avulla.

Tutkimuksen tulokset antoivat monipuolisen ja aiempia tutkimuksia täydentävän kuvan yksinpelien pelaajien kokemuksista kielenoppimisesta. Kielen osaamisen kautta pelaaminen on helpompaa ja antoisampaa, joten pelaajalle syntyy motivaatio oppia pelin kieltä. Pelaajat hyödyntävät pelien tarjoamia kielenoppimismahdollisuuksia monipuolisesti ja itseohjautuvasti. Pelatessa saadut myönteiset oppimiskokemukset voivat myös tukea ja motivoida kielenoppimista muissa konteksteissa.

Säilytyspaikka – Depository

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

Video games have become a popular form of entertainment, with three in four Finnish people playing digital games at least occasionally (Mäyrä, Karvinen and Ermi 2016: 7-9). Particularly for Finnish children and youth, video games are a significant context for encountering English outside school, and English has become a second, rather than foreign, language in Finland for its wide use in media and the living environment (Piirainen-Marsh 2008: 136; Leppänen 2009). It is now also generally recognised that young players have also learned English while playing, as most video games in Finland are only available in English, and studies have also shown a correlation between active playing of video games and higher English grades or skills (e.g. Uuskoski 2011; Sundqvist and Sylvén 2012).

Along with the general public and media, also the fields of education and research increasingly recognise games as an important environment for second or foreign language learning (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 243). There is now a growing field of research on games for entertainment as a language learning environment, called *game-enhanced* language learning, which studies learning as informal and occurring incidentally on the side of playing, without pedagogical guidance or the use of games designed for learning purposes (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 38). Empirical studies of learning from games have often been case studies of various playing and research settings, so broader knowledge and more evidence is yet needed on the topic (Whitton 2014: 12-16; Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 38).

In the recent decades, research and evidence on language learning from games have strongly focused on multiplayer games and the communication between players (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 247), but multiplayer gaming does not provide an overall picture of gaming and game-enhanced language learning. Most players play single-player games, or even while playing online they spend most of their time playing alone (Mäyrä 2008: 137-138). Also those adults who have played since their childhood have not necessarily had similar opportunities for online play as younger generations

today, but many of them, myself included, have nevertheless had very significant language learning experiences with games. In addition, it seems unfair that playing games has, in many people's minds, become more justified and accepted as it has become social and popular, instead of a solitary activity which is valuable in its own right: just because it is easier to witness language use in social situations, it does not mean that no language use or learning occurs while playing alone. That is why the present study focuses on the language learning opportunities provided by single-player games and solo playing, based on the views and experiences of gaming young adults. Furthermore, in studies on both incidental language learning and learning from games, the focus and most empirical findings have often been limited to vocabulary (Hulstijn 2003: 349; Sundqvist and Sylvén 2012). The present study aims to look at language learning opportunities more broadly, including grammar and other skills less often associated with game-enhanced learning. Also the process of learning language from games has not been described from the player's perspective in much detail.

The present study investigates single-player games and solo playing as an informal language learning environment through examining the language learning opportunities provided by games and used by players. As a general language learning framework for the present study, an ecological perspective on affordances in language learning was chosen. This means that learning is interaction between an active learner and the language environment, where the learner perceives and uses learning opportunities based on the learner's personal needs and abilities (van Lier 2000). Four aspects are looked into with more detail: How does playing motivate learning, and what is the significance of language for playing? What types and features of games provide opportunities for learning? What language varieties and skills can be learned from games? How do players use the opportunities provided by games? Seven themed interviews of gaming university students were used as data and analysed with qualitative content analysis through themed analysis. This was in order to gain an extensive image of presupposed learning opportunities along with possible emerging themes.

The present study aims to acknowledge those players to whom solo playing has been a defining experience in their language learning. The views and experiences of players

provide knowledge of what is most significant to them, instead of looking at the games separately. The views of learners on game-enhanced language learning have recently been studied by Erkkilä (2017) and Väisänen (2018) in their thesis studies, notably with very similar aims to those in the present study. However, whereas Erkkilä (2017) gathered quantitative questionnaire data from upper secondary school students on their views, the present study used interview data to collect qualitative, more open-ended data from a small set of adult participants. Furthermore, the present study focuses on solo gaming, whereas Erkkilä was interested in mobile games and the social aspect of gaming and player interaction. Väisänen (2018), on the other hand, studied the language learning experiences of players age 16 and older through interviews. In his results, he found that most players had experiences of learning vocabulary and communicative skills particularly from online role-playing games, along the effect of age on learning motivation. With the different methodological choices, definition of target games and specific foci in research questions, I believe my thesis will complement the previous data well and be a significant addition to the still rapidly growing number of studies on games and language learning.

The structure of the present study is as follows: First, general background on video games and gaming based on research literature is provided in chapter 2. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for single-player games as a language learning environment, based on the ecological perspective on language learning, informal learning and game-enhanced second language learning, and continues to describe different closer aspects of video games related to learning language. Chapter 4 lays out the research questions and methodology of the present study, along with background information of the study participants. In chapter 5, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed, and chapter 6 summarises and concludes the present study.

2 CENTRAL CONCEPTS OF VIDEO GAMES

In this chapter, an introduction to playing and studying video games is presented based on general game literature, so that those who are not gamers or researchers of games can understand the central concepts revolving around them, and to clarify the underlying

assumptions and the primary focus of the present study. First, the research field of game studies is briefly presented, followed by various definitions of video games. After that, three general aspects of video games relevant to the present study are described: game genres, a game's designed purpose to entertain or educate, and single-player games and solo playing.

2.1 Game studies

The field of game research has grown, as games have gained a firm foothold in everyday life, along with the fact that gamers themselves have grown and become researchers themselves (Mäyrä 2008: 4-5). Game studies have also studied play and how humans have been attracted to all kinds of games long before the first computer. The field today is characterised by multidisciplinarity, with its own branch for the study of learning with games as the focus of interest, which Mäyrä (2008: 6) particularly highlights in his definition of game studies as "a multidisciplinary field of study and learning with games and related phenomena as its subject matter".

Game research can be divided into some main branches (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 12-13), such as formalism, which analyses what games are, and situationism, which analyses the players and culture, and games in different uses and social practices, education and learning being one of the most significant areas of interest. Earlier there have been many debates on what games are and how they should be studied, mainly the ludology vs. narratology debate (e.g. Juul 2005: 11-16) on whether games are a unique media or one that can be studied through traditional methods. Now it is more agreed on that different perspectives are needed to comprehensively study video games (Ensslin 2012: 30).

2.2 Definitions of video games

To define *video games* simply is to rely on a general understanding of games, and add a description of the form, or rather, platform of the game. Erkkilä (2017: 13-15) searched for definitions of *a game, a computer game* and *a video game* in four online dictionaries (OED, MOT Collins, MacMillan and Merriam-Webster), and summarised that a *game*

refers to "a leisure time activity with an entertaining, competitive and rule-governed nature" (Erkkilä 2017: 13). *Digital game* was not used in those dictionaries, and there were minor distinctions between a computer and a video game, based mainly on the device used for playing. In research, the terms *video game* and *computer game* have been used interchangeably (Sundqvist and Sylvén 2012: 189). Although sometimes the terms have been used to refer to games on different platforms, *digital games* is a more established umbrella term to cover games played on different gaming platforms, such as a computer, console or mobile device (e.g. Mäyrä 2008: 52).

In the present study, the terms *digital games* and *video games* are used interchangeably as general umbrella terms for games played on different digital devices, as *video game* is a common term in general, whereas *digital game* is one more often used in research. More specific terms for different gaming platforms, like computers and consoles, are used when needed. Also, *games* refer to digital games rather than non-digital games by default in the present study.

To better understand what *a game* actually is, several formal and pragmatic definitions as well as general models have been created in games research, overviewed by Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013: 27-45). Formal definitions attempt to define games in their own right, whereas general models often describe games in relation to something else. Pragmatic definitions, on the other hand, are more practical tools for designing games. Rather than having a definite general answer, a definition is chosen for distinguishing them from other forms of entertainment, finding suitable methods for research, and importantly, being more aware of the underlying biases or assumptions when researching games. Some models and definitions of these different types are discussed next.

Games are usually defined through their fundamental features which distinguish them from other forms of entertainment and activities, such as in the first formal definition of computer games by Chris Crawford in 1982 (Crawford 1997, adapted from Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 38-39):

1. *Representation*: Games are about something without being part of it.
2. *Interaction*: Player influences the game and receives meaningful responses for actions.
3. *Conflict*: Game has a goal blocked by obstacles.
4. *Safety*: Conflicts do not have the same real-life consequences.

Many early models of games have been influential and led way to many other definitions, each emphasising different aspects of the game's essence and playing experience. The concept of a *magic circle* by Johan Huizinga sees games as separate from the real life (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 29-31), similarly to Crawford's aspect of *safety*. Mäyrä (2008: 52-53) compared games to other software, arguing that *interactivity* is "what games are and what they do, at the very core of gameplay", and that "genuine and rewarding interaction" is what makes gameplay special. Further, the player does not only interact through gameplay, but always interprets its meanings as well, and later definitions have increasingly noted the role of the player. Salen and Zimmerman's (2004: 12) well-known definition builds on Crawford's definition: "A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome", which emphasises games as a system with goals. From a similar basis, Juul (2005: 36) formed a *classic game model* to define basic features common to all non-digital and digital games:

> A game is a rule-based formal system with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable. (Juul 2005: 36)

These features act on three levels of relations: the properties of the game as a formal system, the relation between the player and the game, and the relation between the game and the rest of the world. Juul clarifies that borderline cases do exist, and also claims that modern games may find new sides to or break this classic model. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013: 40) debate whether the player's attitude and emotional investment can define whether a game is not a game, but the player's significant role is a perspective worthy of investigation. All in all, Juul's model attempts to explain the intuitive and implicit ways in which people define games.

From a practical game design perspective, the MDA model (Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics) by Hunicke, LeBlanc and Zubek (2004) describes games from two perspectives, where a designer interacts primarily with the Mechanics and code of the

game, whereas the player interacts mainly with the Aesthetics, the enjoyment of the game; and then with Dynamics, which are born from the interaction between game mechanics and the player. The model describes games as systems unlike the pre-determined structures in other media, such as books and movies (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 43-45).

As a wider, societal perspective, Jenkins (2005) argues that video games are a new form of popular art in the digital age. To Jenkins, player control and the influence of the player's actions are central to games, and best games let the player do things not possible anywhere else, like playing a god and seeing how their actions pan out in a visible world. In prejudice against games, he draws parallels to other initially critiqued media such as comics, jazz music, and cinema. Games evoke strong emotions and memorable experiences through their aesthetics and characters. Although many games do not use their aesthetic potential to the fullest, but rather follow formulaic conventions, this can partly be ascribed to the rapid changes in technology which allow less exploring of the media. (Jenkins 2005; Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 36-37)

To summarise, in the present study games are seen as a modern popular media and a form of art with unique qualities, such as interactivity and the role of the player in the designed experience. These features have been well defined in Crawford's formal view of representation, interaction, conflict and safety, and Juul's game model where the player's implicit attitude towards the game is significant. The MDA model is seen as a useful tool in understanding the relationship between the player and the designed gameplay experience. Games are not seen only as one foreign language media and extramural English activity amongst others (see section 3.2.2) and entirely comparable to them, but as their own type of media with its distinct discourses and practices.

2.3 Video game genres

The variety of video games is endless: there are simple games completed in ten minutes, and complex games played intensively for hours at a time, and there are games for all

ages and different life situations. Games have different types, themes, structures and ways of playing, which have been described by different typologies and genre categorisations. From a linguistic perspective, Ensslin (2012: 19) identifies at least three levels of *genres* in relation to video games: First, there are varying game typologies and the common "game genres proper" such as adventure, horror and sports games, used in marketing and discussing games based on their content and mechanics. These will be discussed in this section. Second, at the "*intra*textual" level, the texts in individual games present a great variety of genres, for example in dialogues, diaries, narratives and memos. Third, there are various text genres surrounding games in manuals, reviews and websites, also called "paratexts" and the *inter*textual level. These latter two meanings will be discussed in sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 regarding textuality and language in games.

Several typologies of game genres have been formed for understanding games and for the purposes of game design and research. Many try to fit games into a small number of categories based on the main elements of enjoyment, like Caillois' early categories from 1957: *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (role play) and *ilinx* (vertigo) (e.g. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 31-33). Some focus on the main structure of the gameplay, like Juul's (2005: 56-57) description of games of *progression*, which present a series of challenges, and *emergence,* where the game provides a system in which varied results emerge and is best described as "easy to learn but difficult to master". Typologies may also become exceedingly complex, such as the typology adapted by Ensslin (2012: 44-47) based on 22 interactive goals and gameplay elements of games.

As Kemppainen (2012: 57-58) states, game genres have seldom been defined in terms relatable to the players' everyday use of genres, and often a more practical categorization is needed in gaming communities. He describes genres mainly as a tool for marketing and discussing games, so he studied genre names used by game stores and publishers to analyse the hierarchical structure of genres (Kemppainen 2012: 56). He found that nine most general themes, like Action and Strategy, become more describing through the use of subthemes like shooter, real-time and flight (Kemppainen 2012: 66). Ultimately, game genres used in game services present a "wild west" where categories are hierarchical, but incommensurate and disorganised (Kemppainen 2012: 56, 66). The

present study relies on these commonly recognised game genres, which are usually based on the general type of gameplay (adventure, strategy, puzzle) and the theme or additional mechanic (fantasy, shooter, real-time) of the game. The present study also emphasised narrative games, which will be defined in section 3.3.2.

The Finnish Player barometer of 2015 (Mäyrä, Karvinen and Ermi 2016) used a list of 13 types or genres of digital games along with a list of 6 different gaming platforms for studying the popularity of various games in different groups. The full genre list consists of puzzle and card games, adventure games, action games, shooters, strategy games, role-playing games, driving games, simulation games, sports games, music and party games, online role-playing games, other online multiplayer games and learning games. The genre list provides a straightforward approach to main genres seen by players and other people, although many games may be difficult to place in only one genre, but rather are a combination of several genres, and the list consists mostly of game mechanics-based genres, and only some theme-based genres. Curiously, online role-playing games were separate from other role-playing games, and playing other genres online or offline, alone or multiplayer was not distinguished. The gaming platforms in the barometer were, arranged by general popularity, a computer, mobile devices, gaming consoles, other browser games, Facebook, and handheld consoles.

2.4 Games for entertainment

A very important distinction of the games studied in research on digital games and learning is whether the games are designed for learning purposes or not. The first category includes *games for learning,* also called *learning games, educational games*, *edutainment* or *serious games*, which all refer to games with the purpose and design of promoting learning (e.g. Mayer 2014: 4; Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 246). In the second category are *games for entertainment*, also often called *commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) games* (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 246), *non-learning games*, *vernacular games* (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 32)*,* or *recreational games* (Thorne, Fischer and Lu 2012: 280). Whereas in the learning game area there may be specific connotations to specific terms, the terms for non-learning games have been used more generally and interchangeably. The present study will mainly use the closest translations

to the ordinary Finnish terms for **games for entertainment** (*viihdepelit*) and **learning games** (*oppimispelit*), as they are the most suitable umbrella terms for their clarity also in the data collection conducted in Finnish. The other terms may be used to avoid repetition or for brevity.

In language learning related game research, games for entertainment are often defined as the opposite of learning games, in that they lack the design elements purposed explicitly for language learning (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 32; Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 247). Further, Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet (2012: 247) describe that commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) games "may function more as environments that may incidentally support language-specific learning". Therefore, although the main goal is player's enjoyment, games for entertainment do not at all exclude learning, as they may support learning language or other subjects and skills without becoming learning games as such. A well-known example is learning history from the encyclopedias included in strategy games like Civilization, but the topics in games vary greatly. It can also be argued that when playing in a foreign language, all games are possible language learning games, although players usually prefer to play for fun and to learn incidentally rather than intentionally while playing. All in all, the division is not entirely strict, and both games can be and are used in self-directed learning, teaching, and research. Other than the designed purpose of the game, some major differences between games for entertainment and learning have been summarised by Whitton (2010: 120-124) as follows: commercial entertainment games have better graphical quality, learning to play the game is part of the experience in an entertainment game, the time expected to be spent by players is limited in education, and educational games avoid focusing on competitive elements.

2.5 Single-player games and solo gaming

The present study aims to look at single-player games and solo playing in language learning. Video games have different player configurations, meaning the possible number of players involved in the game. These include single-player (solo), multiplayer, and massively multiplayer games, ranging from one person to millions playing simultaneously. In addition, many games have different parts of the game or modes for

different number of players, such as a co-operative mode, where two people can play together, or inversely, a multiplayer game may include different single-player modes or campaigns as well. Solo playing thus includes playing on one's own regardless of the game type. In addition, the number of people involved in the actual playing situation may be different than the originally set player configuration, and players can interact in various other ways than designed into the game. Whitton (2014: 60) has described different models of collaboration in single- and multiplayer games, where the most relevant models to solo playing include (adapted from Whitton 2014: 60):

- *Asynchronous co-located*: turn-taking in the same space, can be designed for multiplayer or single-player.

- *Single-player.* The use of a game designed for one player by one or more players, either in the same physical space (for example, players sitting together with one computer to solve the puzzles in an adventure game) or in distributed spaces (for example, players in some online adventure games can communicate through a real-time chat channel to offer hints and tips to one another).

- *Community-supported.* Games that are either played with others or individually that have associated online communities, web sites and asynchronous messaging offering hints, help and support.

Whitton (2014: 29, 61) notes that single-player games do not require collaboration as such, but several forms of collaborative interaction are possible and common. Players can play together or in turns, work together to solve problems and support each other in the same space or online. Along with simultaneous communication, the games' online communities provide hints, tips and other significant support to players. This has been the case since the beginning, as players have watched others play, worked on problems together and taken turns in playing games designed for one player long before online play become available and 'play-alone' games such as adventure or platform games were the norm (Whitton 2014: 53). The interaction while playing can then include different languages even when all people have the same first language, particularly through *code-switching*, which refers to mixing different languages for various social and interactive purposes (Piirainen-Marsh: 2008: 143) and which has been studied extensively in the gaming context. In addition to the possible social interactions and related language use, single-player games include language in various forms, which will be further discussed in sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4. Also, the solo player interacts with the game and its characters, and Gee (2003: 7) describes video games as "inherently social", whether other players are real people or computer-created characters and fantasy creatures.

Despite having the players of the world only a click away, many players still prefer playing alone sometimes or at all times. In a European Consumer Study from the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE 2012), out of the Finnish people aged 16-64 who had played digital games within the previous year, 79% played games online. Importantly for the present study, when playing on the internet, 35% of players still played always on their own, 23% played alone most of the time, and 14% played sometimes alone, sometimes with other players (ISFE 2012: 12). Newer similar statistics were not available, but multiplayer online gaming has surely become even more popular after 2012.

Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) in particular have gained substantial attention in linguistic research (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 243-244), very likely for their large game worlds and social dimensions of player-to-player communication. However, even the social aspect of MMORPGs may have been overemphasised. A study of World of Warcraft (WoW) and its accessibility (Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell and Moore 2006; Mäyrä 2008: 137-138) found that players spent most of their time playing solo rather than in player groups, and only higher-level players spent more time with groups. They describe it as characteristic of WoW to play "alone but surrounded by others, rather than playing together", and it is the presence of other players, rather than tight social organisation into teams, which possibly makes social online play appealing.

3 SINGLE-PLAYER VIDEO GAMES IN INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

This chapter explores the research field of digital games and informal language learning. First, the Finnish context of playing games and the role of the English language in Finland are presented. Second, the general theoretical framework of the present study, games as an informal second language learning context, is presented. Third, several features of games beneficial to language learning are discussed based on earlier research and a focused framework on the significance of game texts, partially derived from the data of the present study, is introduced.

3.1 Video games and English in Finland

English is seen and heard extensively in the Finnish living environment, and it can be seen as a second language in Finland for its wide and frequent use. For young people in particular, English has become part of their daily lives, and they see English skills as very important for everyone in Finland. They also learn English significantly also outside the classroom, in contrast to older generations. (Leppänen 2009: 74, 91, 112, 149)

In the video game industry, English is the default language. If games are translated or subtitled, they are often limited to French, German, Italian and Spanish in the European releases. In Finland, it is common to translate or localize only children's games, casual games, or popular sports and party games. In these games, nearly all content is translated, and unlike in television, few games have Finnish subtitles. Even Finnish game studios aiming for the global market rarely provide Finnish translations in their games, and the players do not expect it either. The marketing materials, game package covers or manuals may be provided in Finnish, if the game has any, as games are increasingly often bought from digital stores. Also research has shown that Finnish children and youth use English actively on the internet and in computer games (Leppänen 2009: 103), and games and gaming are arguably one of the main contexts where young Finnish people encounter English (Piirainen-Marsh 2008: 136). Finnish gamers are thus very used to English in games from early age.

Digital games are a very common pastime in Finland in general. In the Finnish Player barometer study (Pelaajabarometri) of 2015, 60% of Finnish people played digital games at least once a month, and 75% played digital games at least occasionally. The average digital game player in Finland was 38 years old, but younger players played games more actively: Over a half of players under 20 played a digital game for entertainment daily, and of players aged 20-29, the target group of the present study, over half played at least once a month, but daily less than a third. The most popular genre in all age groups up from 10 was puzzle games, explained mostly by the popularity of *Solitaire* and *Candy Crush.* Mobile devices have become the most popular platform of playing, followed then by computers and gaming consoles. There also

emerged three general types of playing in the barometer: 1. mainstream console playing of sports, action and adventure games, 2. casual mobile and browser playing, and 3. more devoted, hobbyist playing of RPGs and multiplayer online games in particular. (Mäyrä, Karvinen and Ermi 2016: 4, 7-9, 27-30)

3.2 Second language learning in games as an informal context

The research field of *second language acquisition* (SLA) studies learning languages other than the first language (i.e. mothertongue) or languages, which are often divided to second (L2) or foreign languages (FL) (Ortega 2009: 4-5). A foreign language usually refers to a language learned but not generally spoken in an area, whereas a second language is used more widely and it usually has an official status. Based on the situation where English is closely related to gaming in Finland, it can be generally seen as a second language for gamers at least in that context (see section 3.1), so the present study will treat English as a second language. Furthermore, language *acquisition* and *learning* have in some approaches been seen as distinct processes, where acquisition has referred to 'picking up' language like a mothertongue, and learning to more conscious studying. However, it is now more common not to differentiate between the two (Ortega 2009: 4-5). Thus generally, learning will be used and the two terms will be interchangeable in the present study, and other ways will be used to describe the nature of the learning process in more detail when needed.

In this section, the general linguistic research framework of the present study is presented. Out of the numerous approaches in second language learning research, the present study is based on a fairly recent, ecological perspective on second language learning and theory on language affordances. This view is then narrowed with more known background of informal learning along with incidental learning, which further describe the kind of process that learning language from games for entertainment is seen as. Finally, the present study is situated in the research framework of games in language learning in the area of game-enhanced learning, where informal learning from games for entertainment is studied.

3.2.1   Ecological perspective on second language learning

The ecological perspective on language learning sees language learning happening as relations between an active learner and different linguistic content in an environment full of potential opportunities. Each learner uses the tools provided by the environment differently and to different extent depending on the learner's abilities and needs, and learning happens when the learner actively searches for and uses these opportunities. Applying this to the informal context of games, each player has an individual experience in relation to the game, and learns language not as their main goal, but when it is necessary for their needs as players. This perspective was chosen for the present study, because it suits well the context of games as a highly varied language learning environment with endlessly many possibilities for individual learning experiences, and it gives a very open view to the processes, methods and goals of learning.

The ecological viewpoint was introduced to language learning research by van Lier (2000), building on the sociocultural theory of second language learning to unite views of cognitive and social learning processes. The ecological perspective sees language as not only words, but holistically as emerging from a semiotic system of different meanings. Language learning is not only gaining knowledge through simple transfer of input to the passively receiving learner's brain, but rather relations between an active learner and their linguistic environment. This interaction does not only facilitate learning, but is learning in itself, and essentially, learning a language means learning to use it and "live in it". (van Lier 2000: 245-246, 252-253)

A central concept of the ecological perspective is *affordance*, defined by van Lier (2000: 252) as "a particular property of the environment that is relevant – for good or for ill – to an active, perceiving organism in that environment". Van Lier based the term on a viewpoint of perceptional psychology on organisms learning to live in their environment through finding necessary elements and tools in their surroundings, and using them in the way that is useful to them. A common example of an affordance is learning to live in a forest, where a leaf can provide safety, nutrition or different things to different creatures. This means that the leaf or its properties do not change or cause further action, but it affords different possibilities in relation to the creatures that perceive and use the leaf (van Lier 2000: 252; for more detailed definitions, see

Menezes 2011: 61). Affordances can also be used to describe the possibilities of gameplay to different players, and the way a player learns to *see* the game world and what actions are possible (Gee 2007: 25, 69), such as recognising items that can be interacted with and realising different ways to use them, for example throwing a box at an enemy or using it to climb higher.

Regarding affordances, the importance of a *perceiving* and *active* learner is emphasised. Affordances are not available for any learner, but to those who actively interact with the environment and other learners to take the meanings they need or have the ability to use (van Lier 2000: 246). As each learner has different needs and skills, the same linguistic input may be useless to one learner but vital to another, but if the learner misses the opportunity for learning, the input is nonetheless not used for learning. Also, according to Menezes (2011: 60-64), learners' views of affordances can give researchers more insight to the roles of perception and agency in language learning. She describes how perceptions of foreign or second languages affect their use, and the relation between a language and the learner is a type of affordance. For example, a language user may see one language as not suitable for a certain use like songwriting, and uses another language instead. Through out-of-school activities, learners can find more places or 'niches' for language learning more suitable for them, as resources in a classroom may be insufficient for successful learning (Menezes 2011: 63).

In ecological SLA research, studies of language as a semiotic social practice conducted in natural environments, such as out-of-school contexts, are favoured over isolated acquisition of linguistic structures (Menezes 2011: 59-60). Many case studies have focused on the range of affordances present in different activities around playing video games through multimodal data, but with focus on either massively multiplayer online games or MMOs (e.g. Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 247; Rama, Black, Van Es and Warschauer 2012) or on the social activities and interaction around other multiplayer or single-player games (e.g. Kuure 2011). However, the ecological perspective does not only focus on interaction between people, but includes interaction with the environment in total. For example, Thorne, Fischer and Lu (2012) studied the linguistic ecology and complexity of the in-game and out-of-game texts in the MMO game *World of Warcraft*. Even in an MMO, game texts and external materials and

discussions constitute a significant part of the linguistic environment encountered by the player.

The present study thus aims to use the ecological research perspective to understand the solo player's perspective on gaming and language learning. For learning in an informal situation, players must have some other need for learning language than learning itself to make them seek and use opportunities for learning. Therefore, other significant goals of playing than social interaction are investigated to find out what motivates the language learning of solo players, along with other opportunities they find significant for their language learning, discussed more in section 3.3.

3.2.2   Informal and incidental second language learning

The ecological perspective may be applied to all second language learning contexts, but in the present study, learning from games is studied in non-educational contexts and with non-educational goals of playing. Thus, games are seen as an informal language learning environment, where incidental learning may occur through active use of affordances present in the environment. In this section, the concepts of informal learning environments and incidental second language learning are explained and discussed.

Informal learning can be simply defined as learning which happens outside any curricula of educational institutions and programs, including formal school curriculums and non-formal education such as courses for voluntary learning. However, informal learning may physically take place in these contexts, but is not included in their curriculum. Informal learning thus refers to the intentions and contexts of learning. Schugurensky (2000: 2-3) further distinguished three forms of informal learning based on two categories: intentionality and consciousness. The first form, *self-directed learning,* refers to learning which is both intentional and where the learner is aware of learning at the time of learning, such as doing extensive reading on an interesting topic or practicing a useful skill. In the second form of informal learning, *incidental learning*, there is no pre-decided intention to learn, but the learner becomes aware of the learning directly after it happens, for example encountering new knowledge while reading the

news. The third form, *socialization*, occurs neither intentionally nor consciously to the learner, although the learner may become aware of it afterwards.

As a more detailed framework for defining language learning in different out-of-school contexts, including informal learning, Benson (2011) identifies four dimensions of the phenomenon: location, formality, pedagogy and locus of control. Location includes terms like 'out-of-class', 'out-of-school', 'extracurricular' and 'extramural' learning, which may be independent or directed studying after classes. Formality refers to the level of organisation and institutionality of learning. Pedagogy has to do with the contrast between 'instruction' and 'self-instructed', 'non-instructed' and 'naturalistic' learning, where self-instruction includes use of a type of learning material and a clear intention to learn, and naturalistic learning is non-intentional. Locus of control includes the terms 'independent', 'self-directed' and 'autonomous' learning, and essentially is about the learner or someone else making the major decisions about learning and teaching. For example, the learner may want less control through using more formal self-instructed materials, and shift to more informal ways of learning when they are more confident in their learning.

Benson (2011: 11) also argues for a type of '*self-directed naturalistic learning*', in which "the learner sets up a naturalistic learning situation with the intention of language learning, but once engaged in the situation, switches the focus of attention to communication, enjoyment or learning something other than the language itself." This approach can describe playing situations in which the player is aware of the learning opportunities provided by playing, but is not focused on them during gameplay. Based on the ecological perspective, learning happens when the learner needs it and uses the opportunities provided by the environment. Learning in an informal environment may thus be self-directed when needed, but incidental up to that point; or vice versa, first self-directed so that the setting for learning is there, but then the focus is on playing and learning is more naturalistic. In the present study, initial emphasis is placed on incidental and unintentional learning from games, but forms of self-directed and intentional learning may be discussed as well when relevant.

In second language learning research, the concept of informal learning branches out to several frameworks of research. Particularly the concept of incidental learning has been used with varying consistency (Hulstijn 2003: 350, 357). In the SLA field, incidental learning of grammar has been studied only to small extent, whereas a great deal of empirical studies on incidental learning have been conducted on learning vocabulary (Hulstijn 2003: 349). In some L2 learning literature, the term incidental learning has been used mainly in the area of vocabulary studies, and some have even expressed that incidental learning only appears in vocabulary learning and perhaps rarely in learning of grammar (Hulstijn 2003: 357-358). Also in studies of incidental learning from games, vocabulary is strongly represented and supported by empirical studies (e.g. Sundqvist and Sylvén 2012), whereas the incidental learning of other language skills has not been found in studies to great extent, even more so in other contexts than social multiplayer gaming.

As English has a great role in various informal contexts in Finland (see section 3.1) and other countries as well (e.g. Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012: 303), learning it in informal contexts has been studied as its own phenomena. These contacts with English outside the classroom are specifically called e*xtramural English (EE) activities* as an umbrella term for 'out-of-class' or 'out-of-school' English, 'unintentional' or 'self-directed naturalistic' learning of English (Sundqvist 2011: 107). As these terms are varied, they may include a variety of learner intentions, autonomy and voluntariness, where learners may intentionally seek learning opportunities, or encounter English for other reasons (Sundqvist 2011: 107). Thus, EE is not tied to a single view on the inner language learning processes (Uuskoski 2011: 15-16). In many studies EE has in practice meant studying young learners' use of media, such as games, books, music and internet, and also contact with other language users, often comparing the different activities and their connection to English proficiency (e.g. Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012, Uuskoski 2011). However, in the present study the focus is on video games and related activities, and other media will be discussed only in relation to gaming.

3.2.3   Game-enhanced second language learning

Games and learning is a multidisciplinary research field, which includes different perspectives and forms of learning different subjects and skills (Whitton 2014: 4-5).

Focusing on language, the design and use of digital games in learning or teaching a second or foreign language (L2) is broadly referred to as *digital game-based language learning* (DGBLL), which originates in the field of *computer-assisted language learning* (CALL) (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 243-244). Within DGBLL, there are more focused and describing frameworks for research, one of which is presented in this section to focus on incidental language learning from games for entertainment.

Based on research from games studies and educational gaming, Reinhardt and Sykes (2012: 32-33) created a taxonomy for research and practice on *game-mediated* second/foreign language learning and pedagogy (L2LP), presented in Table 1. Their framework presents four perspectives from the two distinctions between *game-enhanced* and *game-based*, and between L2 *learning* and *pedagogy*. Game-enhanced L2LP refers to using vernacular games (games for entertainment) either in learning 'in the wild' or as a pedagogical tool, whereas game-based L2LP uses games purposed for learning (learning games), and focus is either on the game designs' effect on learners or on pedagogical use. In this framework, the present study is situated in the *game-enhanced learning* perspective (marked with italics in Table 1).

Table 1: Guiding questions for game-mediated L2LP research and practice. From Reinhardt and Sykes (2012: 33), italics added for the present study's perspective

	L2 learning focus	**L2 pedagogy focus**
Game-enhanced: working with vernacular games	*How does game-mediated L2 learning occur 'in the wild'?*	How can vernacular games be pedagogically mediated for L2 learning and teaching?
Game-based: working with educational and L2 learning purposed games (i.e., synthetic immersive environments)	How do specific game designs afford particular L2 learner behaviors?	How can game-based environments be designed to incorporate and/or complement L2 pedagogical uses?

In the taxonomy, the perspective of game-enhanced research focuses on the L2 learning affordances provided by games for entertainment (vernacular games), also seeking possible applications of the knowledge to educational contexts. The perspective seeks the potential in games as learning environments inside and outside of formal L2 curriculums. Game-enhanced L2 learning research applies second language learning

theories to game environments, and seeks connections between different contexts, configurations, and game elements and language learning. For instance, some research "examines gameplay as an individual cognitive phenomenon", whereas other research "emphasizes the importance of emergent social interaction, both within the game and around it in attendant discourses" (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 34-36).

In the present study, the focus is on game-enhanced learning from games for entertainment and thus data on educational games and game-based learning is only included when it provides relevant comparisons to games for entertainment or game-enhanced learning.

3.3 Features of games and playing beneficial to language learning

Different approaches have been used to study various aspects of games and language learning, including genres, game elements, learning principles and learner's perceptions (Cornillie, Thorne and Desmet 2012: 248-250). Genres and game elements create different opportunities for language learning through exposure to language, the actions players carry out and the different environmental characteristics of games. Studies on perceptions of learning focus on the learner-player experience, their intrinsic pleasure from play, and their perceptions of the learning environment and of themselves. In this section, a synthesis of different perspectives is formed with focus on most relevant aspects to language learning in solo gaming: motivations for playing and language learning, textuality and language in games, and interactivity and language learning strategies.

3.3.1   Motivations for playing and language learning

In the present study, focus is on motivations to play, rather than on general learning motivations (e.g. intrinsic/extrinsic motivation) or other language learning motivations. Motivation has certain meanings often associated with games. Whitton (2014: 70) distinguishes two meanings of *motivation* in the literature on games and learning: one is the initial motivation to play, and the second, commonly called *engagement*, is the

"sustained" motivation to continue playing. Whitton (2010: 42) describes being highly engaged as similar to the state of *flow*, from Csikszentmihalyi's well-known flow theory.

In a study of vocabulary learning strategies used while playing (Bytheway 2015: 521) no separate motivational strategies were used, as the gaming context provides the motivation. Games thus "appear to be interdependent playing/learning contexts that provide gamers with a need to learn vocabulary and ways to learn vocabulary". The present study also assumes, not only limited to vocabulary, that motivations to play lead to a motivation to learn when language is needed to reach a certain goal in playing. These kinds of individual motivations of players have been studied towards different types of play, but not as much in relation to language learning. Based on previous typologies of player types, Yee (2006) created an empirical model of player motivations in online games. Through factor analysis of players' motivations for play and later elaboration and validation (Yee, Ducheneaut and Nelson 2012), Yee found three emerging main factors with ten subcomponents, described below:

Achievement:
- **Advancement**: Progress, Power, Accumulation, Status
- **Mechanics**: Numbers, Optimisation, Templating, Analysis
- **Competition**: Challenging Others, Provocation, Domination

Social:
- **Socializing**: Casual Chat, Helping Others, Making Friends
- **Relationship**: Personal, Self-Disclosure, Find and Give Support
- **Teamwork**: Collaboration, Groups, Group Achievements

Immersion:
- **Discovery**: Exploration, Lore, Finding Hidden Things
- **Role-playing:** Story line, Character History, Roles, Fantasy
- **Customisation**: Appearances, Accessories, Style, Colour Schemes
- **Escapism**: Relax, Escape from Real Life, Avoid Real-Life Problems

The subcomponents fell under the three main motivations: Achievement, Social and Immersion. These motivations do not suppress each other, so a player could be motivated by different aspects, and the model is based on the player's perspective. Different motivations also affect a player's participation in different aspects of gameplay. In the later validative analysis of Yee's model (Yee, Ducheneaut and Nelson 2012), also the relationship between player behaviour and their motivations was

analysed, finding that for example Achievement-oriented players were not motivated by game goals with no direct rewards such as Exploration, and Social-oriented players were less interested in doing Quests designed to be played alone. When considering language learning, social players may thus not use the opportunities provided by quest texts, such as elaborate vocabulary, when they focus their time on socializing. Solo players may then be more focused on the texts in the designed experience and interact more with the game's non-player characters, also having a more controlled experience.

In the present study, *progression* (included in Achievement in Yee's model) and *immersion* arose as most significant dimensions of the gameplay and language learning experience in the data, and will be used to describe the main motivations for *solo* playing and language learning, with less focus on social motivations. These two main motivations are below described in more detail and in relation to language learning.

Progression will be used in the present study to describe a primary goal in playing, being able to play and usually finish a game (in contrast to Juul's (2005) *games of progression*, describing a kind of a game structure). Advancing in a game may mean proceeding from one level or stage to another, learning new skills and strategies, completing the game fully and seeing as much of its content as possible and reaching achievements. Progression requires that the player somehow knows or learns *what* to do and *how*; otherwise the player happens to get forward through chance or trial and error, which is usually much less rewarding than the feeling of control and achievement. Players thus need to develop a *game literacy*, which means understanding the specific multimodal language of games, including jargon and terminology, but also common symbols and mechanics in order to play efficiently (Gee 2003). Games usually aim to help players just enough to create increasing challenges without frustration, creating a well-balanced game and a difficulty curve which enables a state of flow. Gee (2003) has also described these various ways in which games teach the player to play, including giving information 'just in time' when the player needs it and within meaningful situations.

Many games, mostly story-heavy ones, also require reading more than the distinct gameplay instructions for completing the game. Whitton (2014: 31) describes how

adventure games in particular involve problem-solving environments, where closer interaction with the story, characters and objects is needed to advance in the game and complete it. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013: 194) as well give an example of an adventure game where the story is important to gameplay: "You cannot play *Blade Runner* without paying attention to the story, as at any turn you wouldn't know what to do next." This way story, often delivered through language, can be essential to progression, and this kind of games are discussed more in the next section on narrative games.

Immersion can refer to the motivation behind play, but also significantly to the gameplay experience. Immersion is a widely used concept by game researchers, designers and players, which has been defined in different ways, some of which are 'presence', 'absorption' and 'engrossment' (Ermi and Mäyrä 2005: 4-5; Whitton 2014: 78-79). Ermi and Mäyrä (2005: 7-8) present a game-specific model of immersion with three dimensions variedly presented in different games: sensory, challenge-based and imaginative immersion (SCI-model). Sensory immersion refers to the audiovisual sensations the player is focused on when playing, which is often the most visible type of immersion to non-players, but often not the most significant to players themselves. Challenge-based immersion relates to the flow-like balance between the game's challenges and the player's abilities, which is in the present study associated with progression and achievement. Imaginative immersion means the player's absorbance into the game world and identifying with its characters and stories.

The present study focuses on the imaginative aspect of immersion, focused on the story. In their assessment of the SCI-model, Ermi and Mäyrä (2005: 11) found that imaginative immersion is strongest in story-based games and genres, namely role-playing games and plot-driven adventure games. Moreover, immersion in gaming may often have more refined prerequisites than better visuals, such as consistency, meaningfulness and playability (Ermi and Mäyrä 2005: 4). The immersive and authentic qualities of games in particular may benefit learning. Whitton (2014: 41) describes how the fictional but realistic world of an adventure or a role-playing game "creates a setting in which challenges make sense and become meaningful within the context of the game". Thus learning that happens while playing is not built around "abstract and

unconnected tasks" but rather as a continuum of actions which are all meaningful and part of an end purpose (Whitton 2014: 41), unlike a lot of formal learning experiences. The narratives and believable worlds of games can provide greater motivation for overcoming difficult challenges, because they result in meaningful outcomes for the player, such as seeing the resolution of an compelling storyline.

3.3.2 Narrative video games

In the present study, narratives are seen as very significant for both motivations of immersion and progression, as stories are usually delivered through language, and immersing in them can motivate the player to overcome challenges, or even be necessary for progressing in the game. Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013: 196-197) use the general term *narrative video games* to refer to "any games in which stories play a significant role." To clarify, *text-based games* would refer more to text adventures, with few or no visual elements (Giant Bomb 2018), whereas *story-based games* can be used as an alternate term to narrative games.

Games which provide the most varied input and opportunities for language learning are the most useful for studying learning experiences. Games vary greatly in their nature of textuality and representation, which can described as a hierarchy of abstract, iconic, incoherent, coherent, and staged games (Juul 2005: 130-133). Abstract games can be described as "the least focused on creating fictional game worlds", whereas other games and genres, mainly adventure and role-playing games, are more textual, as they create complex narrative game worlds (Ensslin 2012: 42-47). Also Reinhardt and Sykes (2012: 36) say that adventure and role-playing games include "more narrative and language use than other game genres" in their content, which, along with possible multiplayer interaction, makes them a plausible environment for language learning.

In many adventure games, the story is essential to progressing in the game, a quality common to many role-playing games and action-adventure games as well (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 194). Mindless clicking is not as efficient as actually following the story, which in more complex games is often delivered through different textual means. As for different game types, strategy games are often given as an example of a genre where stories are not part of the gameplay (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith

and Tosca 2013: 196). It is true that the story may not essentially affect gameplay in itself, but it is not non-existent or insignificant either. A story may be provided as a meaningful context for events, and gameplay actions can have significant narrative impact, even though following the story is not necessary for playing. This applies to other genres as well, such as action and war games with a framing backstory provided along with, although not so much amidst, the gameplay, and even abstract games may be situated in some context of staged representation (Juul 2005: 130-133). The actions taken and choices made can be then further interpreted as part of the bigger narrative, as "fictional worlds prompt players to imagine that their actions take place within a meaningful narrative frame" (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca 2013: 194-196). In the present study, although the presupposition is that narrative games, such as adventure and role-playing games, provide most opportunities for language learning, other games where texts are otherwise significant for gameplay or include elements of story-based genres can also be studied based on the views of the players.

Games are also an interactive media, where the player has an active role in creating the individual game experience and narratives. The player's choices affect the order of game events, whether some parts are played at all or whether the player does something the game designers had not anticipated or thought possible. Salen and Zimmerman (2004: 383) describe two types of game narratives: *embedded*, meaning pre-designed narrative content similar to linear media; and *emergent*, which arise from the game rules and system through play even in unexpected ways. Further, Reinhardt and Sykes (2012: 39) describe that games are social literary practices which "afford narrative experiences", a view in which the designed narratives of games interact with those designed by players. This interaction between players, such as self-directedly role-playing different character stories, can then enable different forms of second language learning in the playing context. However, most single-player games still focus on pre-designed, embedded stories and language use, which can be analysed and discussed, although individual gameplay and its further interpretations may vary greatly from player to player.

3.3.3 Language in solo gaming

Video games present a multimodal textual ecology so varied that there is not *one* language of video games but many (Ensslin 2012: 47-52). Game language thus cannot

be easily generalised and described simply, but game studies with a linguistic focus try to closer describe variety, complexity and specific features of language in and around games. In this section, game language is described more generally, and different types and examples of game texts are described in the next section.

Games provide language learning contexts with exposure to diverse language and opportunities for meaningful language use (Bytheway 2015: 510-511). Made by and often also aimed for native-level language users, games for entertainment provide an *authentic* language learning environment, that is not modified for pedagogical purposes and that players find meaningful. Players can see games as a genuine activity of native speakers, and games are genuine cultural products with cultural discourses that can help language learners develop their critical cultural awareness (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 35). Online multiplayer games in particular provide a population of native or expert speakers that interact with the learner for the purpose of playing (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 35), which also applies to player communities formed around other than multiplayer games as well.

Gee (2008: 36) argues that games are good at providing *situated meanings* for words, introducing new vocabulary together with their context and possibilities for action such as problem solving. Furthermore, situatedness in games is also realised through the actions of the player being the actions of the game character, in the game world's context (Whitton 2014: 45), which creates opportunities for deep learning through action, not only abstract studying. Game language also presents different forms of language variation, including accents, registers and domains, for example in dialogue between characters of different backgrounds and vocations. On the other hand, some commonly discussed problems with the language of games include the appropriateness of either the content of the game, or the linguistic complexity and the vernacular nature of the language, which along with the uncontrolled structure of gameplay make particularly the use of games in educational contexts more challenging (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 35).

Although the social language use in multiplayer games has been studied extensively (e.g. Rama, Black, Van Es and Warschauer 2012), fewer studies have focused on the

language of game texts themselves. Thorne, Fischer and Lu (2012) examined the linguistic complexity of quest texts in the MMO *World of Warcraft* (*WoW*) and texts on three popular *WoW*-related websites that players use actively while playing. They found that the quest texts and texts on some of the websites were polarized, with the most simple and the most complex phrases of the readability scale being the most frequent. For example, both short sentences like "Hurry!" and complex structures with sophisticated vocabulary like "My hatred for the elves burns, but I do not wish ill upon their children, so we must police our own" were most frequent in quest texts (Thorne, Fischer and Lu 2012: 290-292). Also Bytheway (2015: 510) described that *WoW* texts "include both every-day high-frequency language (e.g. *instead*) and more formal language (e.g. *afflicting*)". As a player, this phenomenon can be seen in other games than *WoW* as well, although *WoW* is an example that has been studied most.

Also in studies on language learning, *WoW* has been well represented. For example Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012) found that playing *WoW* was related to learning vocabulary, whereas single-player games was seen to have a smaller effect. However, the game which presented single-player games was *The Sims,* which Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012: 191) admitted has less demanding types and amounts of language compared to *WoW*, and translations for *The Sims* are more often available, so the learning result cannot be generalised to many other single-player games as a comparison to multiplayer games.

Ensslin (2012: 89-96) has made an attempt to describe game language more in general, also focusing on structures. Different *pragmatic speech acts*, meaning linguistic structures with specific functions, are presented in game texts with different frequencies: *directives* (e.g. commands, requests, suggestions) and *representatives* (e.g. statements, descriptions, conclusions) are much more common than *commissives* (e.g. promises, threats), *expressives* (e.g. expressions of feelings, 'oh dear!') and *declarations* (an utterance that is an action in itself, e.g. 'I declare a war'). They manifest as different grammatical structures in game texts, such as imperative forms ('keep on going'), modal and auxiliary verb constructions ('you must follow the trail') and interrogatives ('why not try that next') for directives, and will + verb ('when the line is full, the blocks will

disappear') for representatives. These two speech acts are more common in games as they are needed to "communicate rules, enable gameplay and construct gameworlds".

The language used by gamers is its own jargon or slang, which varies between expert jargon and more general language. Ensslin (2012: 66-71) describes that this 'ludolect' features several characteristics, most saliently the specialist vocabulary both in games in general as well as in individual games and genres (e.g. avatar, level-up, boss, party, mage, goblin). In addition, gamer language in communication includes more hyperbolic and emotional forms ('best game ever!'), abbreviations and emoticons than general language use. These are very significant in multiplayer games and in player-to-player communication, but very familiar to and used by solo players as well. Finally, some word formation processes are more common in gaming language, such as acronyms (e.g. FPS, NPC) and affixation (usually changing the word class, e.g. 'spoil' + 'er').

In addition, when engaged in gameplay, players often utter expressives as 'response cries', such as laughter or expressions of surprise or disgust (Ensslin 2012: 89-96). More importantly, in a multilingual gaming context, players use different languages side-by-side while participating in playing as players or as observers. This *code-switching* between languages is used to express various choices and interpretations of gameplay and to move between the real and the game world (Piirainen-Marsh 2008: 138), for example when commenting the game characters' speech and actions through imitating their expressions. Many Finnish gamers are accustomed to mixing English in their speech about games, whether they play multiplayer or single-player games.

3.3.4   Types and examples of game texts

Games include a variety of multimodal texts that are specific to games or have particular significance in gameplay. Along with story-telling, texts also describe actions such as battle details (Juul 2005: 135), and have important gameplay functions. Next, central textual elements relevant to single-player games will be described mostly based on Ensslin's (2012) textual analysis, with more specific examples from the player-created concept wiki on the gaming-related website Giant Bomb (2018). In the present study, *texts* generally refer to both written and spoken language.

There are some textual elements common to most games, mainly *interface* elements such as menus, rules, descriptions, and credits. Menus in particular often use visual symbols and icons, but more intricate rules often require more linguistic forms of expression, such as *tutorial* sequences or instruction *manuals* (Ensslin 2012: 47-52). In Giant Bomb (2018), numerous elements of the interface and game design that provide instructions, hints and other guidance are distinguished: for instance, tutorials may be playable, optional, textual or none of these. Physical or digital manuals may along with instructions include background knowledge, and *diegetic* manuals are styled as though they were real documents from the game world. The game interface can provide brief descriptions and pop-up tips, or more extensive quest tracking most common in RPGs for keeping track of different game tasks and providing information and backstory to the player. Quest tracking may be a separate *quest log*, or presented as a part of the game world, like a character's diary. Before the gameplay there may be a separate *mission briefing*, and later a *story recap* may be included, allowing the player review earlier plot. In-game *encyclopedias* may include vast amounts of gameplay information, background knowledge or real-life trivia. Even *loading screens* are often used to provide gameplay tips, lore or humour to the player. *Important text* means the way in which many games highlight important names and terms with different coloured, all-caps or otherwise emphasised text. It helps players familiarise themselves with the game concepts, navigate in the game world, and solve puzzles more easily.

Other, *in-game texts* depend largely on the game and its genre. The in-game texts of a complex game world, such as the fictional cities in the *Grand Theft Auto* (*GTA*) series, use a plethora of written and spoken texts and discourse genres to create a realistic, life-like playing environment, whereas fantasy and science fiction game worlds like *Skyrim* or *Mass Effect* may, along with 'real' text genres, use quasi-realistic texts and fictional languages to create a believable and identifiable, although other-worldly, environment for the player (Ensslin 2012: 47-52, 134). These are often described by players as *lore*, which are texts found in various forms within the game that flesh out the game world. (Giant Bomb 2018). Lore includes different *reading* such as books, newspapers and emails, as well as voice recordings and audio logs, and also *monologues* given by a narrator or a character. Lore may include hints or be necessary for the game's completion, or optional, like a collectable for enthusiasts, or there just for giving backstory or creating atmosphere.

Three in-game texts which have a particular role in games are cutscenes, dialogue trees and subtitles. *Cutscenes* are non-interactive cinematic sequences used in games to provide backstory, advance the plot, or inform the player of their objectives, and they have become more significant parts of storytelling in modern games, despite them cutting the gameplay and games being critiqued for their excessive use (Juul 2005: 135; Giant Bomb 2018). They may include either written or voice acted narration or dialogue with optional subtitles. *Dialogue trees* are an interactive way of letting the player choose from a list of responses in game dialogue, possibly resulting in different outcomes in the conversation and the story (Giant Bomb 2018). Usually they are a list of sentences spelled out exactly as the character will say them, sometimes they are presented as more subtle or general types of reactions, such as positive, neutral, or negative, and the character speaks correspondingly. They are most common in RPGs and visual novels, but appear in other genres as well. However, at some point the dialogue may become limited to *repetitive chitchat*, when characters keep repeating the same things.

Subtitles in games are used for displaying dialogue, translating different languages than the main language, and aiding the hearing impaired with descriptions of sounds, and they are particularly useful for understanding dialogue drowned by ambient noises or distance, or that is otherwise difficult to hear (Giant Bomb 2018). They can usually be toggled on or off at will, and in games with no voice acting, where they are the only form of dialogue or narration, the time they are visible may also be adjusted. In contrast to other media, subtitles are often provided only in English or few other languages, so for many language learners, they have more significance in providing the written form of spoken language rather than translating English into their native language. Games also commonly include *invented languages* and different *accents* of English including Scottish, Indian and Italian accents, which can be seen in many of them having their own player-created entries in the Giant Bomb wiki (2018).

The language of video games extends outside of the games themselves as well, to *out-of-game texts*. *Paratext* refers to the texts surrounding the primary text, here video games (Genette 1997, cited in Ensslin 2012: 59). It includes texts included with the game and related texts outside the product from game creators or the gaming

community, such as texts within the game box or download page; advertisements and reviews; external websites, wikis, and discussion forums, where players can seek and create srategy guides, hints or walkthroughs for assistance; and *YouTube* videos or *Twitch* streams of playing the game, like *Let's Play* videos, playthroughs and speedruns, which vary from purely instructive to entertaining, and players may watch them in addition or as an alternative to playing the game themselves. Gaming language and discourse is also *intertextual*, often referring to other texts, themes, cultural products and media, and games are also referred to in other media and discourses about gaming (Ensslin 2012: 52-54).

3.3.5   Significance of language in games for solo playing

The present study is based on a view that a need to understand game texts while solo playing games for entertainment simultaneously creates a need for language learning. To illustrate the connection between various game texts and the motivations to play and to learn, four descriptive categories are used to summarise and describe the gameplay functions of various game texts described in section 3.3.4. Game texts and their functions are then broadly situated on a scale of progression and immersion as two goals and motivations of playing discussed in section 3.3.1. These categories and motivations, formed based on both literature and data of the present study, are presented in Figure 1. As the social motivations of play are not focused on in the present study, player communication in- or out-of-game is not considered as its own type of text, but possibly included through these categories when relevant.
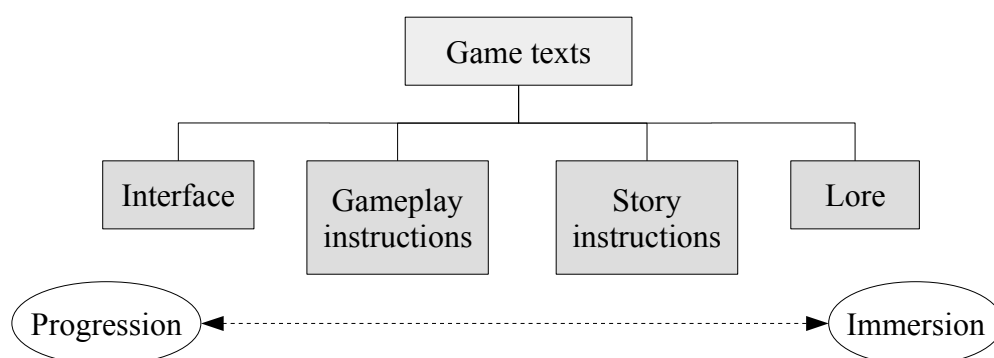

Figure 1: Functions of game texts in respect to progression and immersion

The four functions of game texts are interface, gameplay and story instructions and lore. These categories attempt to describe the function and significance of various linguistic

game elements for playing and enjoying the game. The interface and lore elements described in section 3.3.4 are both divided into two more specific categories. First, **Interface** here refers to the menus, buttons and other essential tools and controls for playing the game, for example "Start game", "Jump", "Build house". These are essential for playing and understanding them is the first step of forming some '*game literacy*', i.e. learning what game-specific terms and elements mean (Gee 2003). Second, **Gameplay instructions** tell the player what to do and how. They may be instructions for game controls, "Press A to jump", different functions, "Pull lever to open door", or ways to progress in the game, "Go to Death Mountain", "Talk to people to get more information", strategy guides or walkthroughs. Gameplay instructions in general are necessary to play the game successfully, and they may vary from single words or phrases to lengthy tutorials or texts with detailed explanations of game functions and effects.

Third, **Story instructions** are parts of storytelling that tell the player what to do and why. They are not direct gameplay instructions to the player, but mainly in-story instructions to the character, such as "Only you can kill the dragon, please help us!". These two types of instructions may be similar and closely intertwined, but also very distinct at times. For example, "Kill the dragon by striking it to the heart with the magic sword" is in-story, whereas "Kill the dragon by targeting its heart with Z and pressing A" reminds of it all being in a game. Following some instructions may be optional to gameplay, like side-quests, but has some effect in it, like gaining experience points or an achievement. Fourth, **Lore** here means the background story of the game that is not entirely necessary for gameplay, but provides more understanding of the game world and its characters and creates a more immersive experience, for example "Our people lived in peace for hundreds of years, until the war began ten years ago". Lore may also include jokes, intertextual references and other 'extra' content which has no gameplay meaning as such.

The placement of categories in relation to the two motivations of play is a broad one, suggesting some basic relationship between some texts and goals of play. Importantly, individual texts in games may represent many functions at the same time, and a text type in one game may have a different role in another game. For example, texts

commonly associated with the interface or instructions may be styled very immersively, and some stories are very focused on gameplay and expressed through its mechanics.

3.3.6   Interactivity and language learning strategies

It has been said that because of the interactive nature of games, there is no game without a player, and playing games requires active participation from the player (Ermi and Mäyrä 2005: 1, 3). In Ermi and Mäyrä's (2005: 5) research, interactivity was seen by players as the main difference between games and books or movies, and this also plays for the immersiveness of games as a medium. For learning, this relates to the active role of the learner, where the players have their personal needs for learning and support, direct their attention to different parts of the experience, and they use different strategies for learning.

Games provide instruction to players in different ways. Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber and Van Eck (2010: 33-34) present a list of nine events of instruction, originally by Gagné from 1965, but with added examples of elements used in games (Table 2). The model includes external and in-game guidance provided by games, creating a supportive learning environment to the player (Whitton 2014: 40).

Table 2: Nine events of instruction in games. Adapted from Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber and Van Eck (2010: 34).

Nine events	Examples of nine events from games
Gain attention	motion, cut scenes, noise, health meters
Inform of objective	documentation, cut scenes, speech
Recall prior knowledge	environmental cues, obstacles
Present instruction	all of the above arranged according to goals, situated learning
Provide guidance	cutscenes, character speech, walkthroughs, partial solutions
Provide practice	refining skills, multiple attempts
Provide feedback	speech, sounds, motion etc., game advancement, new information, immediate feedback for every action
Assess performance	advancement through the game, overcoming challenges
Enhance retention and transfer	early skills brought back in more complex forms

The interactive design of video games provides instant feedback and creates a safe environment for practice through repetition. Most good video games provide information when the player needs it and is ready for it, whether just before it is used or on player's demand (Gee 2008: 36), and repetition and practice are often an integral part of gameplay (Bytheway 2015: 510). Games are also very successful in providing scaffolded feedback, which is gradual, meaningful, at a suitable level and provided in suitable amounts to the player, and encouraging with low-stakes failure (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 47). Making mistakes is an "inevitable part of the gaming experience" instead of a problem, and players get more practice and learn to change their strategies from the feedback they receive through playing and failing (Whitton 2014: 39). Many have argued that education and pedagogy would benefit from adapting the type of feedback used in games, instead of often seeing mistakes as a failure, rather than as part of the learning process (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012: 47; Whitton 2014: 39).

Language learning strategies are direct and indirect processes consciously chosen and used by learners to manage their learning. Learning strategies may support explicit learning, such as using flashcards for words, or implicit learning, for example aiming for more exposure to language through reading more, and a diverse use of different strategies leads to more learning. Players consciously use a variety of language learning strategies in playing, even when the purpose of play is not to learn. In a study of vocabulary learning strategies in playing MMORPGs, players were observed or they reported purposefully using 15 strategies (Bytheway 2015: 514):

1. interacting with players
2. playing in English
3. reading in-game information/pop-ups
4. looking up words in dictionaries/Google
5. noticing frequency/repetition of words
6. requesting/giving explanations
7. equating image/action to word
8. recognizing knowledge gap
9. receiving/giving feedback
10. noticing in other contexts
11. guessing from context
12. using word to learn word use
13. observing players
14. selecting words for attention
15. adding to existing knowledge

Players elaborated on different ways of using these strategies, such as not interrupting gameplay for looking up words but rather checking them afterwards, or spending more time to read information to find hints (Bytheway 2015: 515). Some of these strategies are more prevalent in multiplayer games, but can be applied in solo playing as well, through online or real-life interaction with other people before, during or after play, for example watching players talk in *YouTube* videos rather than watching people's chats in multiplayer games. Many of these strategies can also be used to learn other language knowledge and skills than vocabulary. Studies of vocabulary learning strategies have often not taken language learning contexts into account, although they affect the effectiveness and learners' choice of strategies (Bytheway 2015: 512). Comparing to previous research, Bytheway (2015: 521) concluded that some of these strategies have been used also in formal contexts, whereas some, such as *noticing frequency/repetition of words*, have not. Strategies were used autonomously by players to manage their learning (Bytheway 2015: 521-522).

Active learning includes applying previous knowledge to experiences in a meaningful context, and modifying actions accordingly, so planning and reflection can be essential parts of the learning process (Whitton 2014: 41-42). Modern games may be very hectic for reflection, but nevertheless Whitton (2014: 44) has summarized several intrinsic and extrinsic *game reflection mechanisms*, which allow player reflection in different moments during and after game (Table 3):

Table 3: Intrinsic and extrinsic game reflection mechanisms (Whitton 2014: 44)

	Reflection mechanism
Within game (intrinsic)	Required moments of pause/waiting Failure and replay Support resources (e.g. hints, helper) Character dialogue
During game (extrinsic)	Reflection moments, reviewing recent activity and failure points and looking at what was done from an outside perspective Cut scenes and recap Comments from others (virtual or in real time) Watching others play
After game (extrinsic)	Debriefing Reflective diaries Production of game artefacts (e.g. fan fiction, additional levels) Game critique Helping/mentoring others

Some of these are intrinsic to games, such as naturally occurring pauses or encouragement for reflection in gameplay, and others are extrinsic, which may be included in ordinary gameplay but somewhat more separate from it, such as cutscenes, or may be specifically applied to support more learning, such as a playing diary. Players may apply these mechanisms without any external guidance to support their or others' gameplay, and the same mechanisms are very relevant to educational uses and learning research. In the present study, these kinds of moments and activities are seen as possible opportunities for language learning, which players may themselves notice and use in their playing.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

This chapter describes how the present study was conducted, beginning with the aims and research questions, followed by descriptions of the methods of data collection, the target group and participants, and the methods of analysis.

4.1 Aims and research questions

The general aim of the present study is to investigate single-player games and solo gaming as an informal language learning environment, and to analytically examine and elaborate the commonly reported language learning experiences of many players. The present study attempts to achieve this aim by answering the following main research question:

What kinds of opportunities for learning English do single-player games and solo playing provide?

Four more detailed aspects of the various learning opportunities are examined through the following subquestions:

1. How do single-player games and solo playing motivate language learning and what significance does language have for solo playing?

2. What kinds of games and qualities of games provide significant opportunities for language learning?

3. What kind of language varieties and skills do games provide opportunities to learn?

4. How do players use the language learning opportunities provided by games?

The questions aim to shed new light on the still fairly new area of gaming research with a focus on a less-studied area of research, language learning in single-player gaming. The present study aims to answer these questions through small-scale qualitative interviews of playing young adults, and the questions are designed to allow for different points of view to arise through the data. The questions were also formed through theory-guided and data-driven analysis, in that initial research questions were formed based on knowledge of the theoretical framework, but the final form of the questions was refined

based on what was found and deemed most significant in the collected data. Rather than providing absolute or generalisable results of the phenomena, the answers present the participants' personal views and experiences, which can be used as an exemplary starting point for further studies.

4.2 Methods of data collection

Interviews are a common method in qualitative research, and they allow for flexibility and interaction in collecting data and understanding the data in many different ways. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008: 36) explain, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires leave more room for interpretation, and some aspects that the researcher had not thought of may arise from the participants themselves. As these qualities were desirable for the purposes of the present study, a semi-structured, themed interview was chosen as the main method of data collection. Also, rather than doing textual analysis of the language and the possible learning opportunities in games, the point of interest was on the learning opportunities which are noticed as affordances and used by the players, which is why the players' perceptions were seen as valuable and worthy of closer inspection. This way also a more holistic, ecological view of the natural learning environment is taken over studying isolated acquisition of linguistic structures (Menezes 2011: 59-60). The present study originally included the collection of extensive qualitative data through two sets of interviews and a diary-type questionnaire from seven participants, out of which only the first set of interviews is used as data in the present study. Based on the richness of the data gained from the first interviews, the decision was made to limit the present study to the more in-depth analysis of the first interviews. Also, based on the initial reading of diary data, which the second interviews were meant to elaborate, the further data collected did not significantly add new perspectives to the current research questions.

The interviews were structured with a list of questions related to five themes (Appendix 3): Background, gaming, language learning, grammar, and learning from games. The themes of background and gaming provided knowledge of the players' language learning history and general gaming habits. The latter part of the gaming theme, language in games, was to learn about the English in the games played by the

participants and to investigate the opportunities for language learning and use in those games. The next two themes focused on the general views of language and grammar learning, which could affect the participants' views of learning from games, also focusing on past learning experiences from different contexts. Finally, the last theme combined learning and games, asking for views and experiences about the topic and comparing it to other informal or formal ways of language learning. As the interviews were semi-structured, the questions could be further elaborated or modified, new questions added and their order changed depending on the course of the interview. Ultimately the interviews were fairly structured, and nearly all the same questions were asked from each participant. The questions were as specific as possible, however leaving room for interpretation where suitable, so the answers to many questions could greatly vary in content and length between participants.

The interviews were conducted in spring 2014, and they took 30-70 minutes each depending on the interviewee. The interviews were fully recorded and later transcribed word-for-word for the purposes of content analysis. The transcription style was modified from Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006) and Kalaja, Alanen and Dufva (2011: 67), and the used transcription symbols are explained in Appendix 4. The data collection was conducted in Finnish. The interview excerpts presented in the analysis are English translations of the original Finnish excerpts, which are included in Appendix 5. The data collection was piloted by interviewing two people of the target group, and the questions were then adjusted based on their feedback and observations made during the pilot. The results from the pilot study were not included in the final results.

4.3 Target group and participants

The target group of the present study is Finnish young adult learners of English as a second language who play single-player video games in English. Their mother tongue is Finnish and they have learned English since primary school. The age range was set to 18-28 at the time of data collection and thus people born in 1986-1996. This was to limit the group to young adults, so that the participants would still have some relation to the experience of learning English at school. Studying younger learners might have

provided more current learning experiences from school and on a less advanced level of English, but adults were chosen for their expected ability to more freely, openly and elaborately reflect on their previous and current learning processes. Their playing is also more self-directed and less limited by other people such as parents. Their age group has also been able to play digital games since childhood and thus possibly have the experience of learning English from games before school, but it was not self-evident for them to be digital natives from childhood. University students were selected mainly for the ease of data collection, but because of their socio-economic background, they may have had somewhat better access to digital devices and various language learning opportunities in their childhood and education compared to others in their age group.

The target group was represented in the age group 20-29 of the Finnish Player barometer of 2015 (Mäyrä, Karvinen and Ermi 2016: 27-29), where the most popular genre overall were puzzle games (42,5%), followed by adventure, action, shooting, and strategy games (27-35% each). Notably, role-playing games (22,4%) were more popular within this age group than ages 10-19 or over 30, so in this age group, there may be more devoted, hobbyist players of RPGs than in other age groups. Also, although multiplayer gaming was already popular when the data was collected, it was not yet as hugely popular as it is today, so this slightly older group can provide some retrospective insight to solo playing when it was still a more significant part of mainstream gaming culture.

The participants were gathered via sending the study invitation (Appendix 1) to mailing lists of student associations and video game related courses at the University of Jyväskylä. There was no need to limit the number of applicants, since the target was 6-10 participants and the final number of interviewees was seven. Friends of the researcher were informed not to participate, because interviewing them might have been difficult or their answers biased. There were some other requirements to participation told in the study invitation which were largely added because of the data collection methods, but which also may have affected the type of players and game types represented in the study into the direction of intensive and narrative gaming: The participants had to be active players of video games (at least 5h/week) to limit the target group and so that the data would be sufficient. Also the games they played had to

include English in contexts other than menus and the user interface, and more English than single words, to ensure that there is enough linguistic material in them for the purpose of the study. For the entirety of the data collection, the participants were also asked to be ready to express their views and experiences about playing and commit themselves to the study. The participants gave their consent for the use of data for research purposes (Appendix 2) in the beginning of the interviews.

The participants were seven 20-28-year-old university students. Two of them were German language majors, one of which also studied English as a minor subject, and the other participants were students of other fields. Only one of the participants was female and six were male, but the gender of individual participants will not be underlined to not draw any unfounded generalisations from their answers based on their gender. For reasonable comparisons between experiences of players of different genders, there would have needed to be more participants of each gender, so gender did not become a point of focus in the present study. The participants will be referred to in the analysis with letters A-G, each letter designating a certain participant in the order of the interviews.

Overall, the participants were fairly advanced learners of English with somewhat broader experience of language learning than average. They had formally began studying English in grades 1-3 at primary school (age 7-9), most from grade 3. Their recent average of school grades in English were between 7-10 on a scale from 4 to 10, the average grade from their descriptions being 9,1. In matriculation exams, five had received L or E (9-10/10) and two had got C (7/10). They self-assessed their current English skills verbally as between quite good to excellent, with better comprehension skills (reading and listening) than productive skills (writing and speaking) and better written skills than oral skills in general. The participants had learned English from various media and contexts along with formal education and games, such as books, television, music, and internet forums or websites.

All the participants had also studied other languages than the obligatory foreign language (English) and second language (Swedish) in school or through self-studying. The most common additional language was German, which all the participants had at

some point studied, and other languages mentioned were French, Japanese, and Russian, Spanish, Latin, and Chinese with one or two mentions each. Many of them had also been abroad many times or for longer periods of time such as in student exchange, and some of them had relatives or friends abroad with whom to use other languages.

Five of the participants had begun playing video games before primary school at ages 3-6, and two began playing in primary school at ages 7-10. Six began playing games in English from the beginning or soon after, but one had first played games almost only in Finnish until secondary school. Four participants explained how they began to play more as a hobby or with better English comprehension in secondary school, and all of the participants played almost entirely in English since secondary school.

At the time of the interviews they estimated they play approximately 6-25 hours per week, depending largely on the workload of their studies and with more emphasis on longer playing sessions during weekends, so their playing can be described mainly as rather intensive, hobbyist playing rather than as casual or occasional. They played mainly for entertainment and relaxation. Other reasons mentioned were the stories, competition, feeling of control and success, habit, escapist detachment, or discussing games. One mentioned playing for maintain language skills and one for learning other skills and knowledge.

Six participants said they typically play single-player role-playing games (RPG), whereas one was focused on war-themed shooters and action games. Other genres the participants liked to play were more varied, including adventure games, indie (independent) games, sneaking, horror, strategy, sport or arcade games and some multiplayer games (e.g. MOBA or Multiplayer Online Battle Arena). The participants' preferred genres and example games as described by them are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Genres and example games played by the participants

	Typical game genres	Example games or game series
A	Plot-based RPG	*Avernum* and *Avadon* (by *Spiderweb Software*), *Dishonored, Mass Effect*
B	Action, war, shooter	*Medal of Honor*
C	Indie, RPG, MOBA	*Faster Than Light, Witcher, Mass Effect, Baldur's Gate II, Dota 2, Left for Dead, Dishonored, Dark Souls*
D	Action, adventure, RPG, sneaking, point-and-click	*Final Fantasy X, Last of Us, Metal Gear, Deus Ex, Resident Evil, Persona 3, Catherine, Assassin's Creed, Monkey Island*
E	RPG, (occasionally shooters)	*The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, Pokémon, Final Fantasy, Ratchett and Clank*
F	RPG, horror	*Fallout 3* and *New Vegas, Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* and *V: Skyrim, Grand Theft Auto, Dead Island*
G	RPG, adventure, strategy, sport	*Knights of the Old Republic 2, Dark Souls, Dark Messiah of Might and Magic, Grim Fandango, Monkey Island*

4.4 Methods of analysis

In the present study, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were chosen to guide the analysis based on themes and to allow emerging themes and observations to arise from the data, based on the following general descriptions and guidelines in Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006), and Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 93, 101-102): Thematic analysis is one of the techniques used in content analysis, in which the data is divided, organised and grouped according to certain themes and topics, which can be the same of different as in the themed interviews, and the occurrences of themes can then be compared. Thematic analysis emphasises the different views on each theme presented in the data rather than focusing on the quantities of phenomena within the data. The exact process of thematic analysis may vary, and for instance the data may be reduced, grouped and categorised to find similar meanings and content, or it may be described based on themes and meaningful entities that are combined into a whole through themes, concepts or narratives.

As Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 95-98) and Saaranen-Kauppinen and Puusniekka (2006) describe, themes guide the thematic analysis to some extent, but the data is also allowed to guide the analysis and emerging themes may be taken into analysis. In *data-driven* or

inductive analysis, there are no predefined classes or theories that the data is divided into in the analysis, but all the classes and theories are based on the data itself. However, background knowledge may affect the analysis and the interpretations of the data may not be objective and separate from the theories related to them. In contrast, *theory guided* analysis recognises the influence of previous knowledge and allows its use in the analysis process. The theories are not tested by the data, but the data can provide new viewpoints to them. The theories may then guide the presentation of data, without restricting it solely to them. Furthermore, Eskola (2001) describes how data-driven analysis can be used when no single theory is not used but several smaller theories are combined and added in the process, and used as frames for interpreting the data. The present study followed this kind of a selection process, resulting in a partially data-driven and partially theory-guided analysis.

For the analysis of the present study in practice, the theming was initially based on the interview questions and their general themes, and after the initial analysis, reorganised around the most significant overarching themes found in the data. The data was thus first reduced, grouped, categorised, and coded with a data-driven approach, until larger themes arose and began to form a view of the data's most significant findings. At this phase, the research questions were revised to correspond to the focus of the findings and only the relevant data was selected to be included. Finally another round of theming was made around newly-formed themes from these findings, so that each theme was gathered and grouped from the interviews for more detailed comparison and closer analysis. The interview data for each individual theme was divided with grouping or coding into smaller themes, which could then be qualitatively and quantitatively described as a coherent whole and discussed in relation to research literature and previous findings. The scope of the analysis thus varied from broad to narrow several times during the analysis. Eskola's (2001) examples of theory-guided thematic analysis were also used as a guideline especially for the latter process of theming and analysis in the present study. Data of the present study will be presented through the main themes outlined by the research questions: motivation, features of games, language skills and learning strategies in short. Subthemes have been formed to further divide the larger themes into suitably-sized parts, and to collect findings related to certain topics together.

5 OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING ENGLISH PROVIDED BY SINGLE-PLAYER GAMES AND SOLO GAMING

In this chapter, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed. The main structure of the chapter closely follows the research questions outlined in section 4.1, and each research question includes more detailed sections based on the findings from the data. The emphasis is on single-player gaming, but multiplayer gaming, other language learning contexts and media may occasionally be discussed as well when relevant and when brought up by the participants.

5.1 Significance of language for playing and motivation to learn

In this section, the motivations for playing and learning language while solo playing expressed by the study participants are presented and discussed. First, the role of English in their gaming is presented, and second, the two main perspectives to the role of language in games, progression and immersion, are discussed. The third perspective present in Yee's (2006) model, social motivation, was mentioned in the interviews in a minor role, but will be discussed in relation to social language learning strategies in section 5.4.3.

5.1.1   Role of English

All participants had begun playing games in English in childhood, three of them before school (age 5-6), three in primary school (age 9-11) and one in secondary school (age 13). All of them now played games almost exclusively in English, and three participants described how English is the "default" or "dominant language" of gaming, or the "only language that has any role in games" they play.

The participants also described how other language options than English are rarely available, and within game characters' speech, other languages are often limited to individual words or phrases or replaced by English accents. Four participants mentioned Finnish dubbing or translations in games, but did not like using them. Somewhat

surprisingly in a small group of participants, two had used German subtitles in some games to practice German, and two more thought of playing in German to practice, but felt that playing in English was easier. Another participant had tried to find games with French or Swedish language options when preparing to matriculation exams with no success, and one had tried Spanish subtitles in one game just for fun. One sometimes played Japanese games, where it was possible to choose the original voice-acting along with English subtitles. In multiplayer games, two participants used Finnish with Finnish players, and one of them also used English and sometimes heard different languages from other players. One participant used English with online friends in discussing games, and another spoke Finnish along with some English phrases with a spectator in the same room.

Six participants explained different personal reasons for playing in English, even if the options are limited to begin with. Four participants felt that Finnish sounds stiff or badly translated in games, whereas English sounds more impressive, natural and atmospheric, or is better in delivering the original jokes. For instance, one had played *Sly Cooper* games in Finnish as a child, until the Finnish voice-acting began to sound "awful" so she switched to English, and another had heard his friends use Finnish translations in *Dota*, which made him cringe. Three participants had chosen English because they wanted to play in a language they know and understand well, and as children when they knew less English they played mostly simple games with less language. One reasoned that the language is so advanced in some games that it is difficult enough in English. Another did not want to buy German versions of *Pokémon* games while in Germany, because the familiar names of the *Pokémon* would have been in German as well, but rather bought the games from the Netherlands as English versions.

Five participants described how English is the main language of leisure particularly in media, so they have been exposed to it more than other foreign or second languages and it has been easier to learn and use in games as well. One also said how English "does not feel like a foreign language any more", so it is natural to play in English as well. This is well in line with Leppänen's (2009) findings of Finnish people, youth in particular, learning English significantly outside school and seeing it more as a second rather than foreign language in their daily life. All in all, the role of English in their

gaming compared to other languages was overwhelming, and English was more like a second language than a foreign language to most of them particularly in the gaming context. English was the language that they saw as most suitable for gaming, so playing video games provides affordances for learning English in particular, rather than Finnish or other second or foreign languages in their context. This way, the perceptions of learners on language affect their use of different languages, as described by Menezes (2011: 60-64).

5.1.2   Progression

All participants but one described that they play games which require knowledge of English to play them successfully. In these games, namely role-playing or adventure games, English is needed to understand what happens in the game and to know what the player needs to do, what to say and where to go. They expressed that they "need to" or "have to" understand English in general or in various gameplay situations. The one other participant played mostly war games, and he saw language as simply being a part of the game rather than something that affects actual gameplay greatly or having much significance for progression to him, although language was important to him as a means of delivering the plot, related to immersion (see next section).

The six participants emphasised the role of language in games with narrative content the most as generally knowing "what they need to do". According to them, good language skills were needed for knowing the next goals, what to do and where to go; and understanding the tasks in quests and knowing what characters want from you: who to kill, who to talk to and what items to get them. Here a connection between various game texts and the aspect of progression was clear, as participants could give specific example situations. Although games utilise various non-verbal means of communicating instructions to players such as map markers, many are provided only in a textual form, such as tasks expressed only in dialogue, reviewable mission briefings or descriptions of previous events, and valuable hints and descriptions for effective playing styles. One participant described the role of language as an "instructing element in games" and "a means of communication", and he also expressed how speaking "the same language with the game" makes playing the game easier to understand, which can be seen to refer not only to English, but especially to Gee's (2003) game literacy, where not only

understanding language in general, but the language of the game and its genre is essential for learning to play.

After knowing what to do, also completing many game tasks in practice requires interactions with language. These include finding task-related information in books, or using a certain item based on a pun, like using a petrified monkey as a monkey wrench in *Monkey Island 2*. The importance of dialogue was highlighted by four participants in role-playing games such as *Skyrim* and *Fallout*, where the player needs to talk different game characters to accomplish various tasks and making choices between different dialogue options. This requires careful understanding of the meanings of different options, as some lead into favourable outcomes, whereas others may cause an unwanted conflict, affecting gameplay significantly.

> (1) there you have to talk with people so - - it might go very different ways with the character so that, if you accidentally say something wrong, to some character they may, either begin to hate you or, suddenly you are best friends, - - so that way it affects very much - - the playing, (E)

Some participants also described the need to understand what is happening in the game, what "is going on", to be able to play the game. This may refer to understanding the context of game events so that the player can make the correct choices in dialogue or other situations. In this way, some aspects of narrative and immersion, discussed in the next section, are closely related to progression as well. Some games, such as text-heavy *Spiderweb* games, are so based on mostly textually presented stories and choices that playing them without knowing English would be very difficult. Overall, the descriptions of narrative games by Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013) were thus very present in the participants' views, in that stories and narratives have great significance for playing.

Participants also described different games where knowledge of English is not necessary for playing. These include games with very little English content and simple plots, such as *Mario*-like platformers or various online (browser) games, which have English only in menus or controls. Other games include more English, but can be played regardless, including action-heavy games like *GTA, Dark Souls,* various war games, where progression is rendered "fool-proof", and strategy games like *Civilization,* where the plot is not significant for gameplay. In classic *Pokémon* games, most of the

gameplay consists of battles with easily memorised attack sequences. Furthermore, being familiar with the TV series makes it easier to understand the game mechanics without reading the English descriptions, which in newer games of the series are also presented in colour codes, lessening the need for language skills.

> (2)   You don't need so much [language], and it really does not depend, the progress of the game situation does not depend on, whether you understand it, yourself anymore that, it is made so, fool-proof the, the progression usually that, you don't need to understand anything, it of course depends on the game, (B)

Even role-playing games, which most participants deemed most reliant on language, have some aspects where language is not as necessary through multimodal means of gameplay. Battle mechanics in the games may be fairly simple, and many quests are simple tasks of going from one place to another, which do not require much thinking, so a large portion of play time may be spent not interacting with language. In games like *Skyrim,* the player ultimately has a lot of room for choice whether they want to advance the plot, or to spend time playing outside cities, not talking to all people or reading extraneous books. *Skyrim* and other games also have map and quest indicators, which show where the player needs to go to advance in a quest, so progression by following them is possible, although possibly not as enjoyable or as easy to understand. Also being reliant on someone else to constantly tell you what to do would result in being only a "mechanical actor" and not "actually playing yourself". Also in *LucasArts*-style adventure games, just "blindly trying out every option" would be "frustrating in the long run". Knowing the language is to them a way to a better and more real playing experience.

> (3)   you can, put like this kind of arrow and then it shows on the map, that where it is - - (so), I guess, I guess, like just with that concept, you can go ahead, but then I don't know if like how ((laugh)) how enjoyable it is, (E)

> (4)   if like you did not know English. And then like, you wanted to play those games so then, you would need someone there all the time to, translate into Finnish when, or to tell you what you should like do, so you would, you would just be like, a kind of a. mechanical actor, (C)

Four participants described a specific experience of having difficulties in playing when they were younger because they did not yet know English well. When they did not understand some instructions or an essential word in the dialogue of a character, it slowed down their playing, until through trial and error or by accident they found out

what they needed to do. The beginning of their playing games in English games was partly characterised by trial and error.

> (5)   when I didn't understand at all what was wanted then there, in some, places I could not go, forward until, when accidentally, I found out what to do, (E)

> (6)   then there were things just like this that, if a game character, wanted something or had to, achieve something, and, a word was new to me, so then, I just mainly had to guess that well, what, does that guy now want - - so kind of like a, problem that slowed down, progress, it has been, that time in the beginning (G)

Two other participants explained more generally that when younger and not knowing English well, they might have missed a lot of the plot of the game, making the game more difficult to follow, but never forming an insurmountable challenge for playing. One of them said to have always chosen to play games in a language he knows well. Only one participant described not having had any problems in playing caused by lacking language skills. In addition, at a later age the other participants have no longer had language-related difficulties in playing, as they have learned more English. They now feel that they understand most of game language very well, and when they encounter an unfamiliar word, they may check it in a dictionary if needed or understand its meaning even if they cannot translate it, or just try and see what happens with no dire consequences. English no longer affects their game progression or the gameplay experience negatively at their level of proficiency.

> (7)   nowadays you could really say that it does not make it more difficult so. so anything that, I encounter, in the game world you do understand and, if nothing else then some, word is easy to look up somewhere what its meaning is (G)

5.1.3   Immersion

The participants of the present study found language very significant to games from the aspect of immersion. To the question "how significant is English in a game?", all participants emphasised the role of story and plot. They described language as a tool for delivering or accessing the plot of the game, through which language provides the "motivation and explanation" for the player's actions, or in a less intricate script, more of an "excuse" for the characters' actions. Other games emphasise the plot over other elements of the game, forming the main playing experience. Language also provides most of the additional information about the world, backstory and details, which makes it a very significant part of playing narrative games.

(8) it [language] is a tool for delivering the plot. so that way you kind of get, a motivation and an explanation for, why you have to do, exactly what... yeah. so it is kind of this, explaining, feature in. games. (G)

(9) it [English] is, a very important part for like, specifically for deepening the world. - - all knowledge that, or most of the knowledge that you get from the world comes like, through the language, (C)

Without good language skills, it would be difficult to get into the story, and the game would easily be boring and less enjoyable. Two participants had shied away from playing in other languages than English and one had only changed the language of the subtitles and not the voice-acting, because understanding the game was more important to them than learning a new language. Understanding the story is closely related to being able to play, as the player has the need to understand the story context in order to make good (dialogue) choices in the game, which was discussed in the previous section. For immersion, two participants described having difficulties in the past because of lacking language skills. One participant explained that when he was ten years old and did not know English very well, he missed most of the plot in games, but it did not prove a challenge for his playing. Also good comprehension of different English accents and contextual understanding of popular culture references can be significant to the playing experience with certain games, which was noted by Reinhardt and Sykes (2012) in that to players, games are a genuine cultural products which can develop their cultural awareness. For another participant, the lack of subtitles for voice-acted dialogue had made following some games more difficult. In *Assassin's Creed,* he had had trouble following the significant plot and had felt anxious as he had not understood what the characters were trying to do. Also popular culture references in *Viewtiful Joe* had been difficult to understand from dialogue as a novice language learner, which hindered his playing experience, although the game was not as plot-driven.

The story and plot stood out as very important parts in a game to the participants personally. They described their preference to story-based games, namely role-playing and adventure games, for the stories or an interesting combination of settings and themes. Two participants stated that the story of the game is one of the most important parts of the game, to one of them sometimes even more important than playability. This affected their choice of games to play next. One also liked to replay old *LucasArts* games just for their story and witty dialogue, another as a child replayed games with a dictionary to understand more of the game texts. Two players also showed interest in

spotting popular culture references and parodies in games such as *Fallout* and *Viewtiful Joe*. Thus the possibilities to find individually interesting 'niches' for learning (Menezes 2011: 63) are very good in games, which provide great variety in themes, stories and types of play.

(10)   the plot of the game in general, the dialogue and all so, it is, sometimes to me almost more important than the playability, (D)

(11)   there are some, references, always, to movies, series books, all popular culture, and, personally I like to, spot some references as well in the games (F)

Also when discussing the effect of games on language learning, the participants emphasised the importance of the story their interest in it. For example, one participant noted that even though a RPG like *Mass Effect* can be played with less focus on the story, understanding the backstory makes the game more enjoyable. Three participants felt that narrative games, where the plot is significant for playing, are better for language learning specifically because they require more thought and language use from the player. The player needs to understand cause and consequence in games where quests are acquired and many problems are solved mainly through talking, whereas games with only menus or shooter games do not demand use of language skills. One participant simply said that for learning the intricacies of the game, it is worth learning the language used in it. Another described that for learning language through games, it is best to be interested in understanding what is happening in the game world and the motivations of game characters. When comparing learning from games to studying in a classroom, motivation may be more frail when playing games. One participant described how an annoying plot twist may cause the player to stop playing and move on to another game altogether, whereas a formal context demands the learner to keep on coming next week even if there is less motivation to continue. As another participant said, a game needs to be hooking enough for it to be useful for learning.

(12)   on the other hand in *Mass Effect* it [plot] has a little smaller role but it is, it is not fun to play if you don't understand the background. (A)

(13)   at least they [games] can increase the study motivation, in my opinion at least that if you want to learn, learn like, the game's, the intricacies of the game then, it is worth learning, learning the language that is used in it. (B)

Game stories can also be extremely motivating. When the plot is interesting, one participant specifically tries to learn as much as possible about it. In role-playing games,

this means finding background story and additional information scattered around the game world for example in books, papers, computers and in dialogue. This participant felt that he had learned English best through "really digging into the game content". Another participant also felt that the world of a role-playing game can be immense, riddled with manifold plots and references to previous games of the series, and described that through language the player can gain much more from the game, but she used other resources than the game itself to learn about it. As an example, she had begun playing *Skyrim* and had wondered what a proper noun, *Tamriel*, meant, so she had quickly went to find its meaning (a continent in the game world) on the Internet. She had also afterwards used online resources to understand the complex story on her "free time" outside playing, as she had not played previous games of the series before. She knew that she might find the same information from the texts in the game world, mainly books, but felt that there were just too many books everywhere, and rather read books in real life than within a game.

(14) you pay quite a lot of attention to those, little things and try to, keep them in mind that what, was the background of this again, and, that way I have maybe learned, English, through the game, best that, I have just begun, to really dig into that content. (F)

(15) the, story is so complex that I have like in my free-time, looked into, okay what is this thing, but so, it would probably come up if I read all the books that are in the, game but, I don't really feel like doing it when there are books everywhere and then, ((laughter)) if I, if I want to read then, maybe I'll take a real book, and not just - - sit on a computer and play some, role-playing game and just read books (E)

Language variation in games, which will also be described in section 5.3.1, also has a role in creating immersion for the players. Four participants explicitly expressed different aspects of immersion through language, such as the appropriateness of language to the game, the role of English in relation to other languages, and different varieties of English in creating immersion.

Three participants discussed the suitability of language for the context of the game world and in relation to immersion. For example, role-playing and fantasy games like *Skyrim* and *Final Fantasy* use somewhat archaic language, which suits medieval fantasy contexts well and creates an appropriate atmosphere, whereas hearing modern language in a medieval tavern would "destroy the immersion". One participant highly appreciated an English translator of many Japanese games, Alexander O'Smith, for using well-suited archaic language, and greatly valued well-written games with more fine use of

language. As an opposite example, he described the dialogue in a reboot of *Devil May Cry*, where the language felt very inappropriate in its immaturity and reliance on profanities:

> (16) D: there was this one scene where, the main character walks to the boss enemy and says *I'm your prom date you sack of shit,* and then after a while they are just shouting *fuck you* at each other. Like (they were) some fifth graders,
>
> I: Okay, so, the, use of language in those games is somehow inappropriate or,
>
> D: Well, it was simply stupid. (D)

Four participants discussed the role of English compared to Finnish in immersion. They found English most suitable for gaming when it is the original language of the game, and thought that it sounds more "natural" and "impressive" than Finnish translations of text or voice-acting, which sounded more "stiff" and less good, for example in the names of game items, or the original jokes may be delivered less well in translation. One of them also found it difficult to imagine how archaic English could be successfully translated into Finnish, and said that English as a language brings its own atmosphere to playing.

> (17) English it, now somehow feels, much more pompous to begin with, it sounds somehow more natural, for example some, names of items, there may be some, *sword* of some, *magnificent, hell or something* ((laughter)), but - - it sounds so stiff, in Finnish, if you put it like - - some, big, big and mighty sword [suuri ja mahtava miekka], it sounds somehow, no not good, no not good it doesn't have the same feeling, (C)

Another participant explained how while playing and discussing the game with her partner, she mixes Finnish and English together (called *code-switching*, Piirainen-Marsh 2008), but it feels "stupid" to her, and she would rather learn the translation of the word into Finnish when discussing about it in Finnish. When she feels motivated, she goes to check the word, but when she is more focused in playing the game, she just reads the words as they are on the screen. When immersion in gameplay is less strong, language use becomes more conscious, and when the immersion is stronger, language use happens without thinking.

> (18) I try to. translate them into Finnish in my head, I, to me it is almost like, I almost, I feel kind of stupid while, talking about some *potions* or the like but then when - - I focus on the playing then, I just, read it what it says on the screen. (E)

One participant also discussed the role of other languages in games than English or Finnish in immersion. When playing *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* in German for practising the language, he also felt that the language suited the game context of the cold war quite well. In Japanese games like *Final Fantasy XII*, he sometimes likes to listen to the original Japanese voice-acting instead of the English translations, and also likes to compare the two.

Some participants described whether the English in games was natural or somehow different from authentic language use. One described that the English in games is very "correct" language which is unlike the language used "in England and talking with real people", for example because of the lack injection words such as "you know, like". He felt that it leaves the impression of someone reading their lines from paper, which could also be described as a very inauthentic situation. Another described some particular situations where the dialogue is very unnatural, such as explicit and monotonous descriptions of game mechanics to a mute player character, like in many *Legend of Zelda* games; or "parrot exposition", where characters ask for details through awkward repetition, and extensively discuss relatively simple concepts, like in the *Metal Gear* series. A third participant gave *Pokémon* as an example of fairly standard English, as the game is made for younger children, as compared to *Skyrim* where the archaic language is fitting to a fantasy world.

Immersion in games was thus most important to the participants for its story and imaginative aspects, meaningfulness and consistency described by Ermi and Mäyrä (2005). Also the significance of a meaningful context for player's actions and the individual tasks in a game was part of a good playing experience for them, creating a more authentic environment for using and learning language as described by Whitton (2014).

5.2 Language learning opportunities provided by types and qualities of games

In this section, various qualities of games are discussed in relation to language learning opportunities, beginning with broader game genres and types, followed by the general game features of narrativity and interactivity.

5.2.1   Genres

All six participants who played narrative games emphasised role-playing games as the most suitable genre for language learning. They described various ways in which knowing language well is needed to play them: First, the plot is essential to gameplay; second, the tempo of the game is slower because of more dialogue and character interaction compared to action-based games; third, they have more complex language where details are sometimes essential; and finally, players need to understand goals, make meaningful choices, and express opinions through language. Particularly in text-based RPGs, like *Spiderweb* games, language is necessary for playing, whereas more action-based RPGs, like *Pokémon*, *Dark Souls* or even *Mass Effect*, do not necessarily require language, but knowing it makes playing the game easier or more enjoyable. In addition, the participants pointed out that many RPGs present different interesting and motivating themes, and they include different texts, side plots and background knowledge, which the player may investigate if they want to.

> (19)   maybe the best for learning in my opinion are - - games with a little slower tempo - - *Fallout*, *Elder Scrolls* series, for example - - there you encounter so much English that there, you inevitably learn something. (F)

Two participants described that in general, games which have a lot of language that is also essential to the plot and playing are good for learning, as the player is exposed to language, and when the game is interesting and hooking, the player is also motivated to learn language in order to play. Although only one participant specifically mentioned adventure games, many of the attributes of RPGs mentioned above also apply to them. Adventure games also require language to play them successfully, as for example the player often needs to bring a character some certain type of item, and with language skills, the player does not need to blindly guess what it is. In addition, indie games and

old games more often have only written text, whereas bigger productions and most modern games have voice-acting and spoken dialogue.

> (20) I: what kind of, games are good for language learning in your opinion?
>
> G: well, I would say that these kinds of, adventure games. role-playing games those games where you really have to, think about the language. and kind of, think of the, cause and effect relationships, why some character, reacts in a certain way, to some action, (G)

The participants gave some individual examples of game genres which they saw as less effective for language learning. Strategy games like *Civilization* may include a textually presented plot, but it has no real effect on the actual gameplay, which is focused on a game mechanic such as building. Also war games may have a plot and text in mission briefings, but during gameplay, progression is possible without understanding the language in instructions or dialogue. Another participant described that in shooter games, problems are mainly solved through pulling the trigger, instead of talking like in more narrative games. Overall, fast-paced action games like *GTA* and *Call of Duty* were not seen as very good for language learning. Another often mentioned type of games was simple games with not enough language, such as platformers, casual online games of just "clicking around" and most games played as a child, which were fairly simple, which had no elaborate story and only had language in menus.

> (21) I: what are the games like where in your opinion, one could learn English?
>
> E: maybe more like, story-based ones, and then, probably role-playing games, because, well, there is usually a plot in shooter games too, but, - - there things are solved more like - - by pulling a trigger, that, maybe, in these games with a plot there is, more need to talk with people (E)
>
> (22) in those games where there are only menus you really don't understand, learn anything at all. (A)

The participants described how the language in games varies greatly between different games and genres. Thematic genres especially affect the vocabulary: Sci-fi games include everyday, straightforward language with scientific and technological high tech vocabulary; games of the fantasy genre may include more archaic, finer English with certain structures and vocabulary, suited for court behaviour or such, and the language has to suit the environment to create an appropriate atmosphere. Also games with a historical setting have historical English accordingly, or even British English sounded more historical to some participants as compared to the everyday, more American

English. Games situated in the real world like *GTA* can include a large variety of everyday language according to the participants. Game themes were seen as both positive and negative for language learning, in that they can be very motivating and have special vocabulary not encountered elsewhere, but the usefulness of which was questionable. They saw that learning language from games may be biased and not as versatile and generally useful as language learning in formal education. Many participants emphasised the specialness of game vocabulary in themed games, whereas one also saw that most of the English in for example sci-fi games is rather ordinary.

Multiplayer games, which three participants had played along with single-player games, were described as partly good and partly bad for learning compared to single-player games. One participant emphasised that multiplayer games could provide opportunities for interaction and collaboration which can benefit language learning, whereas two others described how the competitiveness and aggressiveness of players leads to a negative atmosphere for learning. Players do usually use English in multiplayer playing with people from all over the world, but three participants felt that often the language used is inappropriate, with incorrect forms and excessive use of swear words.

The participants also described their experiences of learning games and compared them to games for entertainment. All but one participant had played some learning games, and three had played language learning games. They had positive experiences of games which were entertaining enough, in that either they were modified learning versions of a game for entertainment, like *Rayman 1*, or a game with an interesting plot and gameplay, like *Mean City*. Other experiences were more simple learning games with crosswords and other vocabulary exercises. Three participants believed that learning games could be useful or more efficient in learning language than 'ordinary' games with no specific thought to language learning, as they can for example provide interactive feedback based on language use. One participant also noted that most learning games are for children, so there are no good learning games for advanced language learners who then move on to play 'real' games. However, also three participants argued that motivation to play and learn suffers from an explicit focus on learning, which will also be discussed in section 5.4.2.

5.2.2   Narratives

The narrative aspect of games was seen as particularly significant for language learning from games, and all participants explained there being a close connection between language and the plot. Of course, modern games use multimodal ways, such as images, videos and movement to deliver meanings, but to the participants, language was the main and most essential tool in delivering the plot. That is also reflected in how they assessed the ability to play games without knowing English as most difficult in story-based games and the easiest in games with the simplest plots. The participants described some prominent features of story-based games, emphasising great amounts of dialogue and talking with numerous game characters to advance the plot and the game. They also mentioned long text boxes and logs describing current and previous events as tied to more narrative games. They strongly focused on textual elements when freely describing games of narrative genres, instead of game mechanical elements such as unlocking new abilities or solving abstract puzzles, which was, however, understandable as they knew that the focus of the interview was on learning English.

Five participants said that stories and narratives are very important to them in games. They choose games based on well-written and interesting stories, and replay their favourite games to relive the stories and witty dialogue. One preferred war games with stories, whereas another contrasted games with a well-tuned story to "mindless shooting". One compared games to books, where he wants to see the story, but in games he can actively uncover it. For language learning, four participants described how they saw narrative games as particularly good for learning. They argued that games need to be interesting and hooking enough, so that the player has the motivation to put more effort in learning, when advancing requires understanding the language. Even a language learning game, *Mean City* as an example, feels much more motivating when there is an interesting plot to follow, so narrative goals or frames described by Salen and Zimmerman (2004) and Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013) can be essential for motivation in some games. Two participants were very motivated to learn as much as possible about the game worlds and backstories, reading materials either in the game world or online. One of them felt that it had probably been most beneficial to his English learning to really delve into the game content. Participants also simply saw a connection between narrative games having more English and thus being better for

language learning than games with less language, just as noted by Ensslin (2012) and Reinhardt and Sykes (2012) about complex narrative worlds and games with most language.

In games, the amount of storytelling and language encountered varies between games and within one game. In action-based games like *GTA* there is relatively less language, but in narrative games, the tempo of the game is slower as the player is expected to talk more with characters, and the dialogue and storytelling provide the most language. These games more often let the player discover the story on their own, through optional or eavesdropped dialogue and reading texts and books not necessary for the main story, leaving more room for varied playing experiences.

Further, the participants described other ways in which the player can choose how they play the game, and how much they encounter language in the process. Some games, like *Pokémon* or *Metal Gear*, are scripted to follow a certain order, where in some parts the story is advanced in extended sequences of dialogue or cutscenes, where the story is "forced" onto the player, and in other parts the gameplay focuses on action with less dialogue. On the other hand, RPGs such as *Skyrim* and *Fallout* let the player very much choose what to do: The player may prioritise following the main plot, talking to everyone in cities and finding every side quest, or just wander around, run in the forests killing wolves and highwaymen if they feel like it. This also affects how many and varied language learning opportunities they encounter while playing, which will also be discussed in section 5.4 on strategies.

One participant in particular described how playing open-world RPGs like *Skyrim* is possible in numerous ways, so the player can disregard the pre-written stories and do whatever one wishes. Sometimes it was also important to play for escapist feelings of being someone and somewhere else, like a conquering Viking warrior. Narrative games can thus also provide a platform for emergent player-designed stories and not only pre-designed ones, as described by Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith and Tosca (2013), and Salen and Zimmerman (2004) among others.

5.2.3   Interactivity

In this section, the possibilities for language learning provided by interactive elements of video games are discussed. The ways in which players used these and other ways to affect their own learning are discussed in section 5.4 on learning strategies.

Two participants emphasised that games give an opportunity to use and learn language in practice. They described that through playing, the player is exposed to language more and more often, and in continuous interaction with a foreign language small things like individual meanings of words accumulate into greater knowledge. Playing games is also "real" language use, where there is no need to stop to think about grammar rules, but the focus is on what the language is used for. These views present an image of language learning through games as an authentic activity, which provides opportunities for learning situated meanings through action, as described by Gee (2008) and Whitton (2014), although without the aspect of actually identifying and acting through the game avatar as the player character. One participant also described that in general, learning language and grammar is "learning to live via using the language", which describes the ecological perspective on language learning very closely like van Lier (2000).

   (23)   then it becomes specifically what I said (that you do) it, as real language use you don't
          stop to think what is this grammar rule or what does this word mean. But you just, really
          use it, (D)

When comparing games to other media such as books and movies in language learning, four participants described games as a more interactive media, where the player needs to take an active role and can variedly affect the course of the game. Two participants compared that in games, the player needs to actively think and understand the language themselves, whereas in typical movies, the viewer can just less actively follow the visuals, and one of them also compared games being like social gatherings in that regard. One participant expressed that games with interaction and feedback are most suitable for learning, when the player can notice how well they have understood the instructions. Another participant considered that the interactive nature of games may make the playing and language learning experience more intensive and memorable than in other media. These observations were similar to those in Ermi and Mäyrä's (2005) study on the difference between games and other media, and that interactivity also adds to immersiveness of games.

(24) if there is some basic, basic movie then it is quite clear what, is happening on the screen
even if you don't understand everything that they say, and then, but in a game you have to
think it yourself, know what's what and how it works, (C)

(25) the interactivity might make it a little more intensive experience, a more interesting
experience, that it might be a little, more memorable, (D)

However, four participants, who mainly or solely played single-player games, also felt that there are less opportunities to use language in single-player games than in multiplayer games, as the games themselves do not use player-produced language, and language skills needed are mostly limited to the receiving end. Several participants seemed to strongly link the concept of using language into production of language, so they said that they do not "use" language in single-player games, although later describing the use of comprehension skills. Furthermore, two participants did not think that games were not very different from other, non-interactive forms of media for language learning, and one of them described single-player games as a "passive"way of learning, compared to using language in multiplayer games.

Four participants described specific situations where language was needed in playing. Making dialogue choices in role-playing games, based on understanding the language, emerged in three interviews. The game then gives immediate feedback to the player's choice through the other character's reactions. One participant had also noted in *Skyrim* how after rising to a higher position in the game, people started greeting her character in a different way, which had caught her attention while playing. This is an example of a game giving practical, linguistic feedback on the player's actions. She said that in general, things that are out of the ordinary or repeated continually in games, invoke curiosity in the player to look more closely, such as the greeting *harbinger*, the meaning of which she then wanted to know. There may also come a need to focus on language, for example from discussing the game with someone and needing to translate a word. While playing alone, the focus is on playing instead of language.

Two participants gave examples of language learning games where the player had to solve word-related puzzles, like choosing all the homonyms or putting words in a correct order. They had found these tasks enjoyable when they were part of an interesting plot or an otherwise fun game. A puzzle solution in an adventure game may also rely on language, as a *monkey wrench* in *Monkey Island*. Another participant said

that the benefit of learning games is interactivity, and how they let the player affect the game through language and in their ability to give direct feedback to the player. It could be then argued, that these kind of games do not need to be learning games, but this element of interaction and feedback is present in other games as well. However, games do not always require language skills, as players can use visual cues or trial and error to advance and see what happens for feedback as well, but usually they want to ensure their success with language.

The most often mentioned way to customise playing for language learning was using subtitles, whether they were in English or in other languages. Most often they are available in English, but sometimes only for parts of the game such as menus, or entirely unavailable. Other language options are rare, limited in choice and up to the player's own motivation to seek them, whereas English is easily available in both speech and writing, as discussed in section 5.1.1.

Participants mentioned some other ways in which games let the player interactively make choices and customise their gameplay. One participant described how role-playing games like *Skyrim* in particular let the player make significant choices about the story and goals of the game, for example focusing on the pre-written plots, or ranging freely and creating their own stories as discussed in the previous section on narratives; and playing thoughtfully or absent-mindedly. More detailed examples from other participants include being able to choose whether to speak to all characters, read all texts or watch all cutscenes in the game; letting the player seek information themselves or showing it to them directly; and giving the player visual guides and opportunities to review instructions when needed. Games can also be replayed, for example to understand more of the language and story, or to try different solutions to problems. Games can thus interactively provide various multimodal and optional means for repetition, feedback, instructions, and other information depending on the player's needs, like described by Gee (2003, 2008) and Hirumi, Appelman, Rieber and Van Eck (2010). The ways in which participants had used these opportunities will be discussed in section 5.4.1.

5.3 Language skills learned and used in gaming

In this section, the focus is on the participants' views and perceptions on language varieties and language skills which games give opportunities to learn and use. The communicative skills are discussed in four categories: comprehension, which includes both listening and reading, production, vocabulary, and grammar. The skills were either explicitly expressed as learned or as needed and used in playing by the participants, or the learning or use was mentioned indirectly in the interviews.

In general, video games along with other media had been a very significant part of the participants' English learning altogether and keeping their English skills at a higher level. All participants felt they have certainly learned English skills from games, even if some of them could not distinguish or remember what exactly they have learned, because language skills have developed on the side of playing, rather than through conscious effort or focus on learning. The role of attention on learning will be discussed more in section 5.4.

5.3.1 Language variation

In this section, several aspects of language variation in games as described by the study participants are discussed. These aspects include: regional varieties of English, standard or non-standard English, difficulty and complexity of language, spoken and written genres, story-focused or action-focused language, historical varieties, and domains and registers of language.

Out of the different regional varieties and accents of English in games, two participants mentioned American and British English. To one of them, American English seemed to be the "standard" variety in games, whereas British English sounded more historical to him as it was often used in historical game settings. The other participant had noted that he learned American English from games like *Fallout* in contrast to the British English taught at school. One participant mentioned Scottish and Jamaican English as examples of how other varieties may be spoken by certain game characters presenting those people. Three other participants mentioned different English accents in games, two of

them speaking about them generally, and one mentioned how instead of speaking their native languages, for example Russian and Chinese game characters typically use very stereotypical accents of English.

(26)   very rarely for example, if there is a Russian character they speak Russian or a Chinese characters speaks Chinese but they always speak that English with the, generic accent, (G)

Overall, the participants described game language as very versatile, and largely depending on the game as fairly ordinary or as extraordinary. Some participants did have difficulties in describing the "style" of the language in games in more detail, if they did not have a specific aspect of variety in mind, whereas those participants who studied languages or showed special interest in English were more prepared to provide elaborate examples. For a kind of a "default" variety of language in games, one participant described language in role-playing and adventure games mainly as standard, grammatically correct language, with some accents for variation. The grammatically correct language was noticeable in voice-acted dialogue, where usual filler words such as "you know, like" were missing, giving an impression of a script being read aloud rather than having a natural discussion. Another participant noted that standard language was used in *Pokemon*, as it is mainly aimed for younger children, whereas games for adults used more varied language. If games for children require standard English for clarity, perhaps games for older players can present a more varied image of English.

(27)   it is kind of grammatically, correct. that there are very few, like... if you would speak with someone, so there are none of these filler words, *you know, like*, and so forth. so it is very kind of... in a way like, you get the impression that there someone is actually reading the, script, and uttering the lines as they are on the paper. (G)

Some games the participants played were action-based with less language or focus on narrative, and most games they played as children and some casual online games were so simple they have language mainly in the menus, but at the other end of the spectrum were games with more challenging language. Two participants described English in some games as fairly difficult and of advanced level, where they encountered more complex language and new vocabulary. For example *Fallout* uses challenging scientific terminology in the dialogue which is essential for the game missions, so there may often come a need for using a dictionary despite having a good grasp of English, and archaic language in fantasy role-playing games is difficult as it is less familiar. Three participants also kept to using subtitles after having difficulties in hearing or

understanding voice-acted dialogue, one of them also specifically because of difficult accents. Thus although most games prove no problem to advanced English learners, others can continuously provide a suitable challenge to learn more.

> (28) in some games the English is then of the kind that, part of the words you may not have necessarily heard before at all, that it is - - a lot more difficult English, so you don't necessarily understand it, even yet at this point despite having used English, very much. (C)

As there are versatile spoken and written texts, they present a diverse variety of textual genres. The texts in games can then range from game-specific genres for gameplay purposes, like menus, to quasi-realistic (seemingly real-like) and very realistic genres, like books, messages and radio programs can often include linguistic variety similar to real life. Some participants briefly described the more functional language in games. Menus were mentioned as something of less importance for language learning, when there was no more language in the game besides them. One participant described that particularly war games have mostly action-focused language, consisting of commands and instructions, which could include high frequencies of *directives* described by Ensslin (2012). Another participant was annoyed how in some games, dialogue is designed to be more functional than natural, focused on explaining game mechanics, repeating central concepts noticeably. These games may provide a very simple story to give a reason for the characters' actions, whereas other games have a more intricate script. Also, two participants noted in modern games voice-acted dialogue is the norm, whereas in old or indie games, voice-acted dialogue is more rare. This difference may affect the way dialogue is written to begin with, to fit the technical and financial limits, or to provide an in-depth story. Other examples that participants mentioned in the interviews were texts like logs and descriptions of game mechanics, which certain genres may generally be more related to than others.

> (29) if there is a script then it is however, made a little absurdly, like this *Metal Gear* series is known of, how characters can talk a lot about some simpler things, or then they use this kind of parrot exposition, someone says something, then someone takes an individual word out of that sentence and repeats it. Like, to ask for clarification on the topic, (D)

> (30) many conversations are somewhat, one-sided, there is usually this assistant involved, some kind of elf or the like, fairy, and then it is all the time talking about something like, press A, to jump or the like, so, it is a little monotonous to listen to in many people's opinion, that text, is anyway used very much used mostly to explain game mechanics the plot is not very complex in them so, the dialogue is not very special either, (D)

As discussed previously in section 5.2.1, game type and genre affect the language greatly. The role of the theme for describing the language of games was heavily emphasised in many interviews as well. Four participants described historical language, which includes periodic vocabulary and manners of speech, such as the use of the pronoun *thou* or the titles *lord* and *lady*, and features of language more commonly encountered in literature than everyday speech. They associated archaic language with fantasy role-playing games, where an immersive environment is created with suitable English and where modern English would break this immersion. Also various fantasy sub-themes, like dragon hunting or alchemy using plants and herbs, affect the vocabulary of the game, but they are varyingly significant to gameplay as main plots or as extraneous activities. A juxtaposition between modern, everyday English and archaic English was present in many participant's expressions, in that archaic English was seen as salient, extraordinary and different, and modern language as more common, but unsuitable for historical settings. Modern or colloquial language, on the other hand, is common in real-life settings like in *GTA*, or in sci-fi settings in many role-playing games, like in *Fallout*. In these games the vocabulary and language can be extremely versatile, including food, vehicles, social media, and celebrities, and they can incorporate several intertextual references to popular culture. In sci-fi games, mostly everyday language is accompanied by specialised scientific and high-tech vocabulary.

(31) role-playing games, they include, so it is kind of, archaic, and then also has a little more, more frills. - - those, sci-fi games and so forth, they may, on the other hand, have more like, modern, which is very appropriate, like, hmm, going straight to the point, kind of, (C)

(32) whether we are talking about some, dragon we are going to kill, let's say in *Dragon's Dogma*, there it varies accordingly, or are we then talking about some, modern trends like in *Grand Theft Auto* five which, offers a little of everything between heaven and earth, from *Facebook* to video games, from celebrities to drug use... it depends so much on what the game is about. (D)

When asked about possible negative effects of gaming on language learning, many participants said that the English in games may be non-standard and unsuitable. Four participants felt that either immaturely written dialogue in some games like *Devil May Cry,* or more importantly, other players in multiplayer games, use more swear words than are suitable in "real" language use outside of the gaming context. Two participants were explicitly worried about this possibly giving a "distorted image" of English use to players. However, one participant felt that in *GTA*, cursing is something that "belongs"

to that game's colloquial language, rather than being only a negative feature, so normally improper language may be justifiable in some games and contexts. Two participants also considered that when the game makers or players are not native or expert English users, the language in games may at times be unreliable, not correct or standard English. One of them resourcefully compared games to Wikipedia, as "reliable most of the time, but not scientifically acceptable", and the other described language in multiplayer gaming as bad English, since it uses abbreviations or non-standard twisted words, which the learner might then memorise in their wrong form.

> (33)   if there is, like a lot of swearing then, it might, give a somewhat distorted image that, okay maybe swearing is, a really normal thing in English so for example, throwing the word *fuck* around, would be normal, what it, really, is not, (E)

> (34)   in a way there is no, guarantee that, the English, or the language that is used in the game, is, necessarily, so called correct language, usually it is... but, it is like *Wikipedia*, usually reliable but, scientifically, not acceptable, (G)

Finally, despite most of the participants describing game language as extremely versatile, four participants raised the concern of games providing biased language focused only on certain situations, themed or specialised vocabulary, and depending on the game, one-sidedly literary or colloquial English. Also games with very little language were seen as fairly useless for language learning. They felt that learning language only from games is insufficient and often not very useful, whereas school and education prepares learners for real-life contexts and general language use, and learners should not think they know enough English from only gaming. One participant did defend certain games for having all kinds of language, so finally the variety of language encountered depends greatly on the game and the individual player's experience of games. Their responses reflected the general criticism of the appropriateness of language for educational use (Reinhardt and Sykes 2012).

> (35)   the language in games can be quite, one-sided monotonous, so it, is not very, versatile like linguistically, it is focused on certain situations. So if, if you cram only them then, it doesn't go a long way. (B)

> (36)   of course it depends a little on the game how useful it then is... well, one can learn, just, everyday, English from games in my opinion... for example, in this *Fallout*, something just... - - what one can often, encounter in newspapers or, in television and... just, so, all kinds of language. (F)

5.3.2   Comprehension

All participants distinctly described needing comprehension skills for playing, and they either described comprehension in general without distinguishing between reading and listening, or mentioned both fairly equally, so that if they first emphasised one, later they also discussed the other as significant. Reading written game texts was mentioned by six participants, and as a particularly important language skill for playing by three participants. For example, one participant explained that most of the game language is in written form, even more so with subtitles for dialogue, and another preferred text-based games where there are long text boxes to read and no spoken English. As for listening comprehension, all participants mentioned spoken English in voice-acted game dialogue and other characters' speech, and three of them emphasised listening as a significant skill in playing. Four mentioned specifically learning comprehension skills from games. One participant explicitly said that he has learned English reading and listening comprehension skills from games, and another described as a way to learn language how the game requires active thought and comprehension from the player. Two other participants said that through replaying the same game again, they have gradually understood and learned more of the language.

> (37)   I have many times replayed, a game again and thought that in the next playthrough I will understand it better (D)

Three participants described that many games deliver plot and more in-depth lore particularly through various in-game texts, and understanding the language is significant for gaining the most out of the game. One participant felt that he had learned the most English through digging as much information and content as possible. One participant also described that within one game series there are many references to earlier games, which can be found and enjoyed through understanding the language, and she had used the Internet to read up more information about *Skyrim*, instead of reading all the books in the game world where the information could also be found. Two participants described the intertextuality of games and other media in various references. One of them specifically mentioned that contextual knowledge along with good English comprehension skills are needed while playing some games to picking up and understanding pop culture parodies and references in the game dialogue.

(38) the, world is so, huge and there are like, really many, many different plots going on, and then just kind of. some really, little things like references to earlier games and, so, you get a lot more out of it if you like, understand the language, (E)

Three participants mentioned the particular need to understand the game dialogue and respond to the game characters. One gave an example of needing to understand which item a character is requesting from the player, or tediously trying to give each item. Two participants described how dialogue and particularly the dialogue options need to be understood well, so that the player does not accidentally anger another character or get some other unwanted result. Although dialogue in modern games is usually voice-acted, dialogue options and optional subtitles provide it in written form, so the player is not reliant only on listening. Three participants chose to use subtitles as a written support to ensure understanding the dialogue, as they felt that their listening comprehension was not always enough for hearing faint voices or understanding different English accents or popular culture references.

(39) if there is no written, then, at least I like to put subtitles on, so that it, ensures that, I understand for sure (C)

However, sometimes there are no subtitles in cutscenes, in the midst of gameplay action or in the entire game, and listening comprehension is more important. One participant had had trouble particularly in making out what was said in the voice-acted dialogue in certain games where subtitles were not available.

(40) It, has been difficult to make out of the voice-acting that for example in these *Viewtiful Joe* games there are a lot of, pop culture parodies but there are no subtitles at all, - - similarly this for example *Assassin's Creed*, it is, a very plot-driven game, but there were no subtitles so it was a little difficult to follow, when you couldn't always quite make out the, use of language, (D)

Two participants described how they had used German subtitles with English voice-acting as an extra addition to a familiar game they could use to expose themselves to another language. As long as the spoken dialogue was in English, which they had a good grasp of and could use to ensure understanding what is said, along with having played the game before, changing the subtitles into German had no negative effect on their playing.

(41) I: you said that you had, sometimes put on German subtitles so how has it, affected playing,

D: Well it did not really affect it at all when there was, the voiceacting on anyway, I had, played these games already a few times, so, so I knew everything that they were saying, it didn't, it didn't make it much more difficult, (D)

Participants described that earlier they had more often played games where comprehension was not necessary, such as games with text only in menus, but now most and particularly narrative games that they play require it. Other games, like action-heavy or simple games do not require comprehension of language, or some sequences in narrative games include mostly battles with simple mechanics and less need for language, as discussed also in section 5.2. Also many participants had had an experience of not understanding some essential concept or instruction in a game and then become stuck or confused about what they need to do. Understanding the language is thus important for both knowing what to do and enjoying the game, as discussed in section 5.1. However, nowadays they have nearly no problems in understanding the English in games. One speculated that if he would now try a game in another language like Russian, he might understand a word here or there. He and another participant said that first learning some language at school makes it easier to develop the skills further through media, and the other described that the basic language skills learned at school are enough to get "into" the game and understand it.

(42)   just... basic, English, skills you don't need to be, particularly acquainted with any, specific, vocabulary or such that, quite much, what you learn in school is enough to manage, so that you understand everything in the game and... then... so that you can get, into it. (F)

5.3.3   Production

Participants had more limited experience of using or learning productive skills from gaming, as they played mostly single-player games. To five participants playing was mostly a solitary activity, and as previously discussed in section 5.2.3, four felt that they do not much "use" language while playing single-player games, referring to the use of productive skills. One stated directly that most games give no possibility for producing own text, and another said that single-player games provide opportunities for more "passive" learning, whereas multiplayer gaming is active language use. He said that the chats and other means of communication would be beneficial for learning language, working in a group and communication skills, but he himself did not play multiplayer games.

(43) I rarely, write or speak, because I, really, really don't play multiplayer games, (so), it is more like receiving, (E)

(44) Producing own text is rarely needed, as many games simply give no opportunities to do that, (D)

Two participants had spoken English while playing online with other players, although one used mostly Finnish, and a third had had game-related discussions in English with online friends outside of the playing situation in chats or discussion forums. One participant watched other players' *YouTube* videos and read forum discussions, and said she prefers consuming online content over producing it. They thus had some experience of community-supported individual playing as described in Whitton's (2014) models of collaboration.

(45) I just somehow don't, like to participate in like forum discussions or, go and comment on some *YouTube* video - - Internet then, but I quite, much don't like, produce content... I enjoy, enjoy the content, (E)

As for using English while playing alone, two participants said that they might react out loud by swearing in English, whereas another noted that he does not usually even swear as he does not become irritated from playing. When discussing games with someone in the same room, one of them said she does not translate all English words or "inside" phrases from the game, while otherwise using Finnish. This code-switching happened more when the focus is on playing, but otherwise she attempted to speak only Finnish and translate the game texts, because not using the Finnish equivalents of words felt stupid to her. Another participant said that since the game is entirely in English, he also thinks in English and automatically reacts to the game in English.

(46) I usually, usually speak if like, someone is like watching, - - but then if I'm like, playing alone then I might just, maybe swear at most, (E)

(47) while playing alone I don't really, swear or anything else because, I don't, really lose my cool while playing, (F)

(48) usually when the game is in English then if there are some, *inside*, phrases then, I don't usually. begin to think them in any other language, (E)

Some productive skills were present indirectly in the examples. For example learning spelling and pronunciation (discussed in next section about vocabulary) is useful for production, but most single-player games do not provide opportunities to actually practice them. Another example was fill-in-the-blank tasks in the learning game Mean

City, although the words to be filled in sentences were already provided as options to choose from.

5.3.4   Vocabulary

All participants said that they have learned vocabulary from games, and it was the most often mentioned language skill to have and still be learned from games. Four said they have learned thematic vocabulary of special domains, such as technical, scientific, biological or historical vocabulary, for example related to computers, mutants, and alchemical plants. Two described having learned colloquial language, and one of them elaborated that he had learned English proverbs and metaphors from games, such as "drunk as a skunk". Three said that they learn particularly difficult or advanced vocabulary or phrases from games. In the first interviews, the individual examples of words learned or encountered by the participants were *harbinger, juniper, potion, magnanimous,* and *monkey wrench*, which was also an example of synonymy and word play, as the wrench needed was actually a petrified monkey.

> (49)   I have learned expressions of colloquial language, and, then just basic vocabulary... but really, versatile so colloquial language and then, something like just, scientific language and, everything in between. (F)

> (50)   there may come very long kind of, stretches of dialogue which are like really important for, the plot and there, likely there also come kind of, phrases, and then, some certain word is used in a certain context so I have learned something from there for sure, (E)

The participants described various ways of learning vocabulary incidentally or through conscious strategies, including use of a dictionary and subtitles, deducing meanings from context, repetition and replaying. These will be discussed more closely in section 5.4 on strategies. One also gave an example of a learning game with fill-in-the-blank tasks he found enjoyable, and another noted that learning games often seem to focus solely on vocabulary.

All participants paid attention to vocabulary in games, but to varied extent. Generally, they mentioned vocabulary as the feature of language that most draws their attention, rather than grammar. Six participants have had trouble with game vocabulary before learning more English, one of them still encounters new and difficult vocabulary, and only one said to have never had trouble with vocabulary, They said they had to guess

words or use a dictionary more often, or learn the meanings slowly through replaying, but now they have less trouble with vocabulary – and as one participant said, now he learns less language from games than before, only individual words and phrases. One had become very motivated to learn new words and expressions from games after learning some words not taught in school, and began to find out as much as possible from games.

> (51) in upper secondary school, for example from Fallout I learned, some of those, like American English words, which, then, I could use, along with British English, and, as I recall I managed to find a word that even my teacher did not know... - - I got interested in the, language, maybe, a little, and, a little more, than before and, I began to pay attention even to just those, individual, words that sounded sowehow, special, found out what they are (F)

Another did not usually pay attention to vocabulary, but she wanted to reduce her mixing of English and Finnish (code-switching) in discussions about the game, so she checked words usually just to translate them for discussions. When playing alone, she usually did not check new words to translate them but dismissed them, and in addition, she would not translate any "inside" phrases from the game. Overall, she and three others checked words if they were difficult, particularly interesting or salient, or important for playing.

> (52) I try to. translate them into Finnish in my head, I, to me it is almost like, I almost, I feel kind of stupid while, talking about some *potions* or the like but when I am really, really like focused on the playing then I can (like), oh darn I don't have any *potion*s (this), - - then, I just, read it what it says on the screen. (E)

> (53) for example now that, like, juniper, juniper berry, - - if I had not, had to, use it then, like, in a conversation with someone I probably wouldn't have paid any attention to it anymore so it would have just been (like) okay a word I don't understand and, now it's gone, (E)

5.3.5   Grammar

Five participants said that they have learned English grammar from games, whereas two participants said that they do not think they have learned or now learn much grammar from games. Three participants mentioned learning sentence structures, word order and prepositions in particular. They described that games provide example phrases of grammatical structures that they could then recall when producing language themselves. They also noted that a different grammatical structure, word order or preposition could change the meaning of a sentence entirely. One of them said that he first had learned grammar at school and then noticed them in games, whereas another said he had first

noticed a structure in games and then had had it taught at school. This noticing of structures outside school provided repetition, which helped them little by little learn and remember the structures and grammar rules.

(54) the grammar rules have just little by little stuck in my mind that, if I think that, should this phrase be expressed like this or this then I recall that, well in that, movie or in that game, it was said like this, so I guess this is the correct word order, (D)

(55) maybe the best way has been through these certain examples, for example many times while playing some certain, line of dialogue, phrase, has stuck in mind, and it can then be used as an example, in some situations for example while thinking just that, should I use *of* or *for* here or, what, (G)

(56) grammar, yeah so you learn it for the very first time at school, but then like, exactly that that, you can keep it in mind it requires that like, you encounter, encounter it more often, and, then remember that ((snaps fingers)) oh yeah this was this, this thing, (C)

Two participants mentioned archaic English as an aspect of grammar, as it has some uncommon expressions such as the pronoun *thou.* One said he has learned archaic English from games, and the other described it as less familiar, and because of that still somewhat difficult. Finally, one participant said to have certainly learned grammar from games, but could not give any specific examples.

The participants said that they do not usually actively pay attention to or use grammar while playing, but many do notice grammar in some situations. Two participants said that they need grammar for understanding game texts accurately, and one said that basic grammar skills in general are very important and should be well internalised, as they are more difficult to check while playing than words in a dictionary.

(57) you have to like pay, attention to the other person's grammar, that like, what it says in the text so, then if you don't pay attention to the (actual) grammar then it might go like, so that you don't understand what it really means. (C)

(58) I consider grammar to be the most important skill because, then one can always look up those, words in a dictionary if one hasn't, spotted something. (B)

Another participant did not remember any misunderstandings caused by language, as she has probably just dismissed it and "clicked ahead to see what happens". She also remarked that even learning games rarely focus on grammar but more often only on vocabulary, so also in other games the vocabulary may be easier to notice. One participant said he just pays more attention to the story and vocabulary than grammar. Another participant described that games are a more interesting and a "real" learning

situation, where the player is not focused on grammar rules but on using the language, and learning grammar without noticing it. This is a very good description of authentic informal and incidental learning of language from games.

Four participants said that they would notice incorrect grammar in the game text or other players' speech, and one gave an example of another player's bad English lessening their credibility (authority) in an argument and seeming embarrassing. Another participant felt that non-native game makers' or other players' use of incorrect grammar might be harmful for a language learner, who might remember only the wrong forms. Three participants also said that in producing own language in gaming or other contexts, some focus on grammar is important for being understood, although producing perfectly correct grammar is not necessary for them.

(59)   if, someone else spoke very bad English, but, if... just, normally playing I think of the situation then I don't, really. pay any attention, to grammar, (F)

(60)   there someone starts to, shout that, why are doing that, - - then when, the person tries to answer to, what they're shouting, and the person answers with very, stiff English so then, they are like, (that), well at that point you feel some second-hand embarrassment that, oh no now, - - the argumentation does not work. If - - some basic grammar is lacking then, like... there is no credibility to that, (C)

5.4 Ways of using language learning opportunities provided by gaming

In this section, different strategies related to playing and language learning mentioned by the participants are discussed. They are conscious direct or indirect strategies the participants expressed to have used or that can be used to learn language in the playing context. Some are more general strategies which apply to all learning, whereas some are more relevant to gaming in particular. The strategies are discussed in three categories: encountering language, motivation and paying attention to language, and social strategies.

5.4.1   Encountering language

The initial and fundamental choice to encounter English also discussed by Bytheway (2015), playing in English, has been discussed in section 5.1.1. The amount of the

participants' playing in general varied greatly in the participants' playing habits, and for the intensity of their playing they could all be described as hobbyist players. These may have an effect on the learning opportunities encountered, but were not discussed further as a specific point of interest, as the group was very similar in this regard, and the aim was to find more specific situations where learning may occur.

Five participants described how games are good for encountering language, in that the player can see and hear language, vocabulary and structures in games and get repeated exposure to language along with other formal and informal learning contexts. Two participants explicitly said that video games are good for being exposed to or consciously exposing oneself to language. They described exposure as the main way of games having a positive effect on language learning, and that it is inevitable that players learn language when they are regularly in contact with it while playing. Participants emphasised the importance of the amount and significance of language for the usefulness of different games for learning, as discussed in section 5.2.1 on game genres.

> (61) it is in a way just like this kind of exposing, so, like Juhani Tamminen has said that a
> person learns what he does. and if he is... daily, weekly, in contact with some, foreign
> language, so inevitably, some kind of, nuggets of information will always stick in one's
> mind that, which word means what and, so forth, (G)

Participants also described various individual ways in which they can affect the amount of language encountered while playing, usually not as conscious language strategies, but as choices in gameplay which then provide more, or less, opportunities for learning. Within games with significant amounts of language, five participants talked about the choice of reading or listening more or less instructions, game texts and dialogue while playing, which corresponds with the strategy "reading in-game information/pop-ups" in Bytheway's (2015) study.

Three participants said that if the player needs advice or forgets what to do, the mission instructions, hints and quest logs are a useful resource to use. One described the importance of understanding the instructions instead of resorting to trial and error, which supports considering the reading of instructions as its own language strategy in playing. Four participants mentioned the choice of reading various texts, such as books, logs and other lore in games, and two participants mentioned choosing to engage in dialogue with game characters. They expressed that if the player wants to, they may in

story-based games encounter a nearly constant stream of dialogue and a wealth of various texts full of extended story. One participant in particular described the great freedom of choice in open-world games like *Elder Scrolls: Skyrim*, where the player may choose to advance the story and seek all quests by talking to all characters, as the game most strongly encourages the player to do, or disregard them, run in the forests without talking to anyone for extended periods of time and use visual map markers to advance in the plot with minimum thought. This kind of difference in possible playing styles inevitably affects the amount of language encountered in playing, and also between various playing sessions.

(62) for example in *Elder Scrolls* if there is something like this that you can stop to talk with someone on the street... it really is, there is some kind of speech almost all the time, (D)

(63) there you can just jump all over the, mountains and, forests and, not meet, and not necessarily meet anything else but some, outlaws, - - but then, of course if you go to a city then if, it depends entirely on whether you want to, talk, with those people, (E)

The books and texts in games were described very positively by one participant, who really liked to search information in them and said he had learned a lot of English as a consequence, rather neutrally by two participants as additional knowledge, and partially positively, partially negatively by one participant, who felt that in *Skyrim,* understanding the plot added greatly to the game, but there were too many books to read, so she preferred seeking the relevant information summarised online, and reading real books instead of those in a game. Other participants did not mention the use of online resources.

(64) for example, well again in those, *Fallout* games, as there are, so many those in-game, sort of, little things those, different, books, papers computers where you can read, that background information, so... then, you pay quite a lot of attention to those, little things and try to, keep them in mind that what, was the background of this again, and, that way I have maybe learned, English, through the game, best that, I have just begun, to really dig into that content.

(65) because the, story is so complex that I have like in my free-time, looked into, okay what is this thing, but so, it would probably come up if I read all the books that are in the, game but, I don't really feel like doing it when there are books everywhere and then, ((laughter)) if I, if I want to read then, maybe I'll take a real book, and not just - - sit on a computer and play some, role-playing game and just read books (E)

Within the story-based genres, different games have varied freedom of choice in gameplay. One noted that some games provide texts and dialogue in fixed and often skippable cutscenes, whereas others let the player find the story exposition through

exploration, so the game itself may encourage very different playing styles. The participant also mentioned that in some *Metal Gear* games, skipping the cutscenes shortens the play time by several hours, but none of the participants mentioned whether they skip cutscenes or not.

5.4.2 Motivation and paying attention to language

In this section, the motivation and several strategies related to noticing and paying attention to language mentioned by the participants are discussed, some focused on vocabulary, some on grammar, and others on understanding language in general. These included noticing a knowledge gap, selecting words for attention, noticing word frequency, looking up words in a dictionary, deducing meanings from context, noticing grammatical structures and focusing on form, memorising example phrases, using trial and error, receiving feedback from the game, using subtitles, and replaying games.

All of the participants described games as a motivating factor to language learning. Games have motivated them to learn through the need to know language in order to advance or wanting to enjoy the game more, and these two aspects, progression and immersion, have been discussed in detail in section 5.1. In general, all the participants described learning language through games as something that happens unaware and "without noticing", or "on the side" and incidentally without the intention to learn while playing. Some had also consciously used games to learn, but normally their reason to play has not been to learn language. The participants described games as a self-directed activity which language learners themselves find interesting, as well as other media and language activities. They made comparisons to studying and reading schoolbooks as obligatory and tedious work, whereas games are voluntary and hooking. Also studying other languages like Swedish was described as not as motivating as English, because encountering and actively using English is so easy with games and media, whereas other languages require more conscious effort to learn. Three participants said that it is a benefit of games that playing does not feel like learning or that they "trick" the player to learn, as thinking of learning while playing would make it feel like work and lessen the motivation to play and learn altogether, whether it is playing a learning game or not.

> (66) the nicest of all would be if learning happened like without noticing, so it would not feel like, tha now I'm like, working, because, games are, to me, mainly that kind of a thing

> where, I don't have to work, although, of course I do - - I put an **effort** into it, but I don't think of it as like, work, it would maybe be like, like being **tricked** into learning, that way, would maybe be, like, ideal, (E)

Playing may also have negative effects on learning and motivation when it goes to extremes. Three participants said that players may lose motivation to study languages in school, if they believe they already know enough from playing. Four participants also said that playing excessively may result in being too tired at school or skipping school altogether, which affects learning negatively. One participant, on the other hand, said that when he had noticed he learned English from games, he became much more motivated to learn and began to pay more attention to language in games and other contexts, so the individual experience can greatly differ. The participants discussed motivation to learn much more than the players in Bytheway's (2015) study.

(67)   then one might, lose, motivation altogether that, well, why do I have to learn English now that I already know it quite well because I play games a lot, a lot on my free time (E)

(68)   when, I noticed that, I learned, something, from them then just... even out of curiosity because of that, I started to play them, (F)

As for using conscious vocabulary learning strategies, four participants described using vocabulary learning strategies of noticing a gap in their knowledge or selecting words for attention. They participants described having paid specific attention to new vocabulary, which they had then looked up or memorised to look up later. Two participants had recognised when language was particularly difficult for them, and possibly only knew the approximate meaning of a word or needed to check it in a dictionary. One described a particular need to focus on language when discussing the game with someone and needing to translate a word, while when playing alone the focus is on playing instead of language. One participant had paid attention to words or names that were out of the ordinary or repeated continually in games, which invoked curiosity to look more closely and look up what they meant, so that one participant had selected words for attention based their frequency in the game texts.

Five participants reported that they have used a dictionary for checking words and expressions from the game texts. Two said that when they had more difficulties with language altogether, they played with a dictionary practically next to them and learned many words that way. Two said that when the game has particularly difficult language,

it is easy to look up a word while playing or keep it in mind to check it later. One said she usually does not need to check words for playing as such, but when discussing the game she checks translations for them. Whereas many participants generally described usually understanding the game language (see section 5.3.2 on comprehension), three participants specifically mentioned deducing word meanings from context while playing. One emphasised how he never needs to check words or translate them in his mind, as he can easily understand their meaning from the context. Two said they have learned word meanings from the words being provided within a context in the game texts.

(69)   I really had, really a dictionary next to me so, when often there was, in the game some, expressions words I didn't understand then I looked them up, and then, that way I learned... surprisingly many new things. (F)

(70)   I have never, looked up any word but, like, I understand it. I understand from the context what it is. (A)

Regarding grammar, two participants said they have paid specific attention to grammar in games, noticing some structures they had studied at school in actual use and how they can greatly affect the meaning of a phrase. Three participants said they have learned grammar through remembering example phrases from game texts and then using the structures in other contexts. However, one participant also said that because of hearing "bad" English from other players, one might remember words in incorrect forms. Five participants said that they do not pay attention to grammar while playing, unless the grammar is incorrect and that way more noticeable. These aspects have been further discussed in section 5.3.5 on learning grammar.

Three participants described having used trial and error when they did not understand English in a game. They had to guess where they needed to go or what a character wanted, which caused them to be stuck in the game for a while, or they got negative reactions from characters as feedback from wrong dialogue choices. In general, one said that it is viable to dismiss an unclear part, and just click ahead and see what happens, whereas two others described how trying options blindly would be more difficult and frustrating than understanding the instructions provided by the game. In total, five participants discussed the active role of the player in games unlike in other, less

interactive media, how one needs to think about the choices one makes and understand their consequences also as a means for learning language.

(71)   there is some person, who wants something, and you have to bring that person that something, so you have to understand, what it is. You can of course blindly, try whether they want a mop or a wrench or whatever, but, that is then again, on the long run, frustrating (G)

(72)   in a game there is really that - - you have to act yourself, and you have to learn the thing, yourself, (C)

Although the learning itself may be incidental and not a conscious activity, the choice to expose oneself more to the language to be learned may be conscious. The use of subtitles is often a choice to aid gameplay which also exposes the player to written language, but can also be a more conscious choice by the player to focus on language as well. Five participants talked about using game subtitles in language learning. Four participants chose to use English subtitles for English voice-acting as an aid to comprehension, if something was difficult to hear or understand, such as silent voices or different accents. Three explained that with subtitles they can both hear and see the dialogue, which helps in understanding and learning vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. One had also consciously used subtitles to see the written form of a spoken word in order to check it in a dictionary. They said that in most games they have played English subtitles have been available as an option, but in games where they were unavailable one had previously had great difficulties in understanding game dialogue. Two participants also noted that in games subtitles are usually in English, which makes them better for learning than movies and TV shows, where subtitles are commonly in Finnish.

(73)   that way it was, actually quite, good, those, expressions that I did not know, to go and find out that, in the game, I had put the subtitles on, and then, I talked to some character, and then, I looked up in the dictionary how it, goes. then at the same time I could hear and see the text and, then, also, find out what it is in Finnish. (F)

With subtitle and voice-acting options, good knowledge of English can also provide easy opportunities for learning other languages. Occasionally or when possible, two participants had used German subtitles with English voice-acting to practice German. They kept the voice-acting in English so they could understand what was said and play as easily as with English subtitles, and one of them did this only with games he had played before. Two other participants knew that they could practice their German with

games, but had not tried it. One also sometimes used English subtitles with Japanese voice-acting to compare translations. One participant had wanted to find games in Swedish and French for practice, but had only found games where only the menu language changed and the game content remained in English. Another participant had tried Spanish voice-acting and subtitles in a children's game just for fun, but it probably raised her language consciousness about what Spanish sounds and looks like in general.

(74) sometimes I use the subtitles in German if possible. Like, if the speech is anyway in English (A)

Finally, two participants reported having learned from replaying the same game over again, and they said they gradually understood more of the game's language through repetition. One more participant also replayed games for their story and dialogue, so going through them again is pleasant, and one described how open-world games, *Skyrim* as an example, have worlds so vast and full of choices that the player can find something new each time they play. Some players might feel the want to skip previously heard dialogue on subsequent playthroughs, but this perspective was not present in any of the interviews.

Comparing the strategies used to the ones in Bytheway's (2015) study (see section 3.3.6), they were mostly similar and are mostly named here accordingly. To summarise, the eight most similar strategies out of 15 were playing in English, reading in-game information, recognising knowledge gap and selecting words for attention, noticing frequency/repetition of words, looking up words in dictionaries/Google, guessing from context, and noticing in other contexts. Three more strategies, receiving feedback, using word to learn word use, and adding to existing knowledge, were partly present in the data as well. Although focus was on non-social play, two social strategies were also used, which are discussed in the next section, so all but two strategies in Bytheway's (2015) study could be found. The first strategy, equating image/action to word, was not mentioned as a strategy used while playing, but was mentioned by two participants as a strategy used in general for language learning. Thus participants, who were advanced English learners, probably may have used the strategy in playing but did not mention it as it was possibly not that relevant, or it was already self-evident to them at the present. The other strategy, observing players, was not present in solo gaming or not mentioned regarding the gaming community. However, other strategies which were particularly

significant in the present study were motivational strategies, using subtitles for various reasons, and paying specific attention to grammar and remembering example phrases.

5.4.3   Social strategies

Regarding the social use of language in games, with focus on single-player games, participants discussed in-game interactions, out-of-game interactions and asking for help with language. Four participants discussed in-game interactions. Two participants had used English with other players while playing online, and one had observed the English of other players. He said that some of his player friends know English fairly little, and often lose their believability in arguments because of their inadequate grammar skills and stiff English. However, he also felt that many of his friends have become better English users after beginning to play. One did not play multiplayer games, but believed that they would provide opportunities for more "active" language learning than single-player games because of being able to use the language and learn communicative skills with other players. Another participant had a more negative image of multiplayer games, as he felt that the players there are teenagers who use bad and inappropriate English, which might then stick instead of the correct forms.

As for out-of-game interactions, one participant played alone, but had had game-related chat or forum discussions in English with online friends, and felt that it had been beneficial for his language learning. Another participant liked to watch other players' *YouTube* videos and read forum discussions. She also talked with her significant other in the same room while playing. When discussing games, she mainly used Finnish, but occasionally code-switched to English when she was too focused on playing to translate words or when using "inside" phrases from the game. Finally, only one participant said to have asked for help with language. When she had not understood the instructions in a children's game, she had asked her mother what they meant, although her mother did not know what she needed to do either.

Comparing to Bytheway's (2015) strategies, interacting with players and requesting explanations were similar to those found in the interviews, but observing players was not, and other strategies discussed earlier were not used socially as in multiplayer games. The social motivations for playing and learning language had a fairly minor role

compared to progression and immersion, as the focus was on solo playing, but some elements of socializing, helping others and collaborating were present in the participants' playing. Socializing online and in same physical spaces did have some significance in the participants' learning experiences as well. All in all, players described various forms of incidental and self-directed learning, including self-directed naturalistic learning (Benson 2011) which can combine the enjoyment from playing and the benefit of learning in a meaningful way.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study examined gaming young adults' views and experiences on language learning opportunities provided by single-player games. The study was conducted through seven semi-structured themed interviews of 20-28-year-old Finnish university students, and the data was analysed through qualitative content analysis, more specifically thematic analysis. The four main aspects considered in the analysis were the significance of language for playing, which provides motivation for language learning, the types and features of games beneficial to learning, the language skills learned while playing, and the ways of using the learning opportunities provided by games. The main findings are summarised next.

6.1 Findings

English was seen as the dominant and preferred language of gaming, with no other significant options for hobbyist gamers in Finland, so playing is a strong base motivator for learning English. From a more specific player perspective, two main motivations for learning language while playing emerged in the interviews: the need to learn language in order to advance and be successful in the game, described as progression, and the need to learn language in order to understand the story and enjoy the game more, described as immersion. These were the two ways in which language was most significant and visible to solo gamers, and they corresponded well to Achievement and Immersion in Yee's (2006) model of player motivations in online games. For the

participants, it was important to understand the verbal instructions of the game in order to know what they need to do, and some game tasks particularly in narrative games required more specific focus on language or elaborate dialogue choices. Many other games and some elements in narrative games also made it possible to play without understanding the language, but this kind of playing was not necessarily seen as enjoyable by the players. Further, language was very significant to the players for providing immersion, in that it delivers the plot of the game, motivation and explanation for action and greatly enhances the enjoyability of the game through elaborate world-building, details, references and jokes. They also noted how language variation, such as different accents and archaic forms of English, strengthens the immersion to game environments. The third, Social motivation in Yee's (2006) model, had a more minor role, although some examples of social learning around solo playing were mentioned.

Many participants felt that narrative games and mainly role-playing games best motivate language learning, as the player is more interested in understanding the events and plot of the game. They also include great amounts of varied language, which needs to be understood for playing, whereas many other genres focus their gameplay on other elements. Participants described the English in games as very versatile and varied depending on the game and genre. Themes and settings in particular affected the English varieties and vocabulary present in games, and games also have types of texts that are very specific to them. Game language may also be specialised and limited when compared to other contexts, so participants felt that learning language from other sources is necessary as well.

The most important skill needed for playing was comprehension, and reading comprehension of various game texts in particular. Earlier difficulties in playing caused by language were often solved with better comprehension and grasp of English. The most common and salient skill the participants said to have learned from games was vocabulary, which varied from everyday to complex and specialised words. In the present study, attention was also paid to grammar, and most participants did report having learned English grammar from games, for example preposition use and word order. Some players also used language with other people within a gaming context, and could practice their productive and communicative skills.

The direct or indirect language learning strategies used by participants while playing were related to encountering more or less English through choices focused on gameplay, such as choosing to interact with all characters in the game, or consciously focusing on language and using various strategies to learn language more effectively, such as using a dictionary. On one hand, participants emphasised the active role of the player and the need to consciously focus on language while playing, but on the other hand they felt that learning is best when it happens unknowingly, and playing needs to remain a voluntary activity for entertainment. As discussed in Yee, Ducheneaut and Nelson (2012), the different motivations to play also affect the individual player's behaviour in gaming and the chosen style of playing, and as discussed in the present study, these choices then also affect the amount of language encountered in playing. Their learning varied between incidental and self-directed learning, with a clear focus on enjoyment but with awareness of and the readiness to use the learning opportunities present in gaming.

6.2 Limitations

The present study was a small-scale study, but a multifaceted image of the phenomena could be formed and varied experiences arose even with a small number of participants. The interviews could have been more focused to facilitate the research process, but the broadness of data allowed unanticipated and interesting perspectives to emerge in the analysis. For instance, the strategies of learning grammar have usually not been associated with playing games, and the motivations of progression and immersion as overarching themes based on data-driven analysis. These various themes arose already in the in-depth analysis of the first interviews, which was possible because of the choice to focus on only part of the data. While outside the scope of this study, the unused diary and interview data could be used as a basis for researching new questions on related topics. In addition, the connection between certain kinds of game texts and the aspects of progression and immersion, discussed in section 3.3.5, was formed based on the analysis of the interviews, but not analysed in more detail for now. This experimental perspective on language affordances in gaming could be investigated in further studies, for example with closer focus on player motivation between playing and language learning, or in analyses of game texts. In addition, the possible differences in the experiences of different genders were not explored in the present study, as the small

participant group could not provide justified comparisons for the focus of the present study.

6.3 Topics for further research

The affordances in game-enhanced, incidental language learning could further be empirically investigated with focus on different contexts, game genres, structures, player motivations and configurations, as outlined by Reinhardt and Sykes (2012: 38). These findings which shed light on the informal learning experience could also be used in designing game-based and non-game-related learning environments. Of course, applying findings of informal learning in educational contexts is not a direct process, as what works in informal settings will not necessarily transfer to formal situations. What could be done is to take the general learning principles present in gaming and the design of games, such as those outlined by Gee (2003) or Whitton (2014), and develop the formal learning environments based on those beneficial principles which can be best applied to education. For instance, the significance of language for learners in different situations and the different needs and ways to learn language could be considered in all learning, and with adult learners in particular, their individual interests, views and experiences can provide valuable insight to customising the learning process and goals. Moreover, education could acknowledge the role of informal learning and encourage self-directedness in learners further, so that they get opportunities for authentic language use on their own terms.

Importantly, studies of player experiences of gaming and language learning are also valuable in their own right. The present study focused on single-player games and solo playing, which could be analysed with different methods and target groups, with special focus to the games, playing situations or players. The experience of and reasons for playing alone in a very social gaming culture could also be investigated further. As the variety of games, players, and gaming activities is nearly infinite with new possibilities coming with each technological advancement, the field of game studies has an endless resource of topics for research.

6.4 Conclusion

The present study provides an image of single-player and solo gaming as a valuable context for language learning, at a time when multiplayer gaming has become the centre of attention in research, media and education. Through learning English, the language of gaming, playing becomes easier and more enjoyable, so Finnish players have the motivation to learn the language of the game. Players use the learning opportunities provided by games versatilely and are ready to use conscious effort to learn language. As Bytheway (2015: 521) concluded on MMORPG games and vocabulary learning, single-player games as well appear as interdependent playing and learning contexts which provide a need to learn and ways to learn language. Playing can also support and motivate language learning in other contexts, as games provide varied and specialised language related to players' own interests, and players get feelings of achievement, which encourage to use language more bravely elsewhere as well.

The present study complements previous research with a less-studied focus on single-player games and provides multiple starting points for future research on language learning and gamer experiences. Young people spend a lot of their time playing games, and have significant experiences, learning and other, while playing alone or with others. Studies like this can thus provide windows to the daily life of different gaming generations in the rapidly changing digital world, and widen and deepen the knowledge of what gaming is and means in its totality to different people. Of course, games for entertainment can also be developed and designed more based on research literature, so that enjoyable experiences can also incidentally, but not necessarily or entirely unintentionally, offer various learning experiences and opportunities for practising different skills. Many games already are created with careful thought so that they become more than "just a game" or a mindless pastime, and hopefully games continue to strive for profound content which evokes thought and leaves a mark.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Study invitation

Kutsu gradututkimukseen videopeleistä englannin kieliopin oppimisessa

Hei sinä pelaaja!

Etsin osallistujia gradututkimukseeni englannin kieliopin oppimisesta videopelien kautta. Sinun ei tarvitse tietää mitään kielitieteestä eikä osata englannin kielioppia, kunhan olet valmis kertomaan näkemyksiäsi.

Tutkimuksessa on kolme osaa, joista jokaiseen tulee osallistua tässä järjestyksessä:
1. alkuhaastattelu
2. pelaamispäiväkirja
3. loppuhaastattelu

Pelaamispäiväkirjaa täytetään itsenäisesti omalla ajalla noin kahden viikon ajan, jonka jälkeen osallistutaan loppuhaastatteluun.
Molemmat haastattelut ovat yksilöhaastatteluja ja kestävät enintään tunnin.
Tutkimus toteutetaan maalis-huhtikuun aikana tai kunnes osallistujia on tarpeeksi.

Voit osallistua tutkimukseen, jos
- olet 18-28-vuotias yliopisto-opiskelija (pääaineella ei väliä)
- äidinkielesi on suomi ja olet opiskellut englantia koulussa
- pelaat videopelejä (tietokone/konsoli/internet/tms.) aktiivisesti (ainakin 5 tuntia /vko)
- pelaat videopelejä, joissa on englantia muuallakin kuin pelkästään käyttöliittymässä (valikot) ja enemmän kuin yksittäisiä sanoja
- olet valmis sitoutumaan tutkimukseen sekä kertomaan pelaamisestasi ja näkemyksistäsi.

Jos sovit kuvaukseen ja olet kiinnostunut, lähetä viesti osoitteeseen satu.s.eskelinen@student.jyu.fi niin saat lisätietoja ja voit sopia ensimmäisestä haastattelusta.

Satu Eskelinen, englannin kieli

Appendix 2: Consent for the use of data

Lupa: suullisesti haastattelun alussa, ehdot myös luettavissa paperilta

Olen ymmärtänyt ja hyväksynyt nämä ehdot:

- Tutkimuksessa kerätty aineisto (nauhoitetut haastattelut ja päiväkirjamerkinnät) tulevat vain tämän tutkimuksen käyttöön.

- Tutkimusaineisto säilytetään tutkimuksen teon ajan niin, ettei ulkopuolisilla ole siihen pääsyä. Tutkimuksen jälkeen aineisto tuhotaan.

- Litteroituja osia tutkimusaineistosta voidaan esittää seminaarissa ja siihen liittyvissä esitelmissä sekä kirjallisessa raportissa.

- Tutkimusaineisto ja tulokset käsitellään luottamuksellisesti.

- Tutkimushenkilöiden anonymiteetti turvataan kirjallisessa raportoinnissa sekä tutkimusaineistosta ja tutkimuksen tuloksista puhuttaessa.

- Tutkimuksen tulokset julkaistaan yliopiston kirjaston julkaisujärjestelmässä internetissä.

- Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista.

- Tutkimushenkilö voi halutessaan vetäytyä tutkimuksesta kesken aineistonkeruun ja perua itseään koskevan aineiston käyttöoikeuden myös jälkikäteen.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen on luottamuksellista eikä tutkimushenkilöitä voi tunnistaa aineistosta jälkikäteen. Äänitettyjä haastatteluja tai päiväkirjamerkintöjä ei esitetä sellaisenaan ulkopuolisille, vaan osia niistä voidaan esittää litteroituna (kirjoitettuna) niin, ettei niistä voi tunnistaa tutkimushenkilöä.

Appendix 3: Interview plan

Haastattelu 1:

Taustatiedot:

- Ikä, sukupuoli, opinnot (nykyiset ja aiemmat?), opiskeluvuosi
- Oppimistausta: montako vuotta englantia, tavallinen vai erikoiskoulu/luokka, muita englanninopintoja, YO- ja edellinen todistusarvosana, oleilu ulkomailla, vaihto, perhe tai muita läheisiä (mihin käytät/tarvitset englantia?)
- Muita kieliä, muuta olennaista

Pelaaminen:

- Kauanko olet pelannut videopelejä? Mistä asti englannin kielellä?
- Paljonko pelaat, tunteja viikossa yleensä / enimmillään?
- Mitä videopelejä yleensä / tällä hetkellä pelaat? Miten kuvailisit, tyyppi, genre, millaisia? Yksin/ kaksin/ moninpelejä, netissä? Millä pelaat? Ilmaisia vai kaupallisia pelejä?
- Minkäkielisiä pelejä pelaat? Mitä kieliä käytät pelatessa? Onko kielellä vaikutusta pelaamiseen, pelin valintaan? Onko helpottanut / vaikeuttanut? Onko ongelmia?
- Millaista englantia pelit sisältävät? Tyyli, sisältö, muoto, määrä? Miten merkittävä osa peliä? Millaista englantia käytät/tarvitset pelatessa, miten käytät englantia? (kielen osa-alueet)
- Miksi pelaat? Mitä saat pelaamisesta? Oletko pelannut oppiaksesi kieltä? Pelaatko tai oletko pelannut oppimispelejä?

Kielen oppiminen:

- Millainen mielikuva sinulla on englannin kielestä?
- Miten opit englantia? Millaista kielenoppiminen on? Miten opiskelet kieliä? (koulussa /nyt)
- Miten arvioisit omaa englannin taitoasi? Mikä englannissa on helppoa, vaikeaa (oppia)?
- (Eroaako englannin oppiminen jotenkin muista kielistä? Miten, miksi?)

Kielioppi:

- Mitä kielioppi mielestäsi on? Mitä kuuluu kielioppiin? Millainen mielikuva kieliopista?
- Mitä kieliopin osaaminen on? Mitä kieliopin oppiminen on? Miten tärkeää kielioppi on?
- Miten opit kielioppia? Miten opiskelet (tietoisesti) kielioppia?
- Mistä / miten koet oppineesi englannin kielioppia? Koulun ulkopuolella (lista)? Peleistä?
- Millaista opetus / kouluoppiminen on? Mitkä ovat hyviä tapoja oppia kielioppia?
- Välitätkö / kiinnitätkö huomiota kielioppiin kun käytät englantia? Minkä verran?

Peleistä oppiminen:

- Mitä mieltä olet kielenoppimisesta pelien kautta? Millaista, miten, mitä?
- Koetko oppineesi / oppivasi peleistä englantia / kielioppia? Millaista kieltä, millaisia asioita, rakenteita, eri osa-alueita, taitoja? Miten oppinut, milloin? Millaisista peleistä?
- Mitä mieltä ohjatusta/kouluoppimisesta tai muista koulun ulkopuolisista asioista oppimisessa? Oppimispeleistä? Miten (ei-oppimis)pelit eroavat?
- Vaikuttavatko pelit oppimiseen, miten? Myönteisiä tai kielteisiä vaikutuksia?
- Välitätkö englannin kieliopista kun pelaat? Kiinnitätkö siihen huomiota? Miten?

Appendix 4: List of transcription symbols

?	pause, rising intonation
,	pause, level intonation
.	pause, falling intonation
…	long pause
jo-	unfinished word
(joo)	unclear
(-) / (--)	inaudible word/words
Fallout / yes	product names and other language than Finnish in original speech
((nauraa))	transcription comments on actions or tone of voice
kyllä	said with emphasis
[joo]	explanation of what is referred to, or the original Finnish expression
- -	parts cut out of speech
I:	interviewer
A:	interviewee (A-G)

Appendix 5: Original interview excerpts in Finnish

(1)   siinä pitää jutella ihmisten kanssa nii - - se, saattaa lähteä hyvinki eri, eri poluille se ha-, sen, tietyn, hahmon kanssa että, jos vahingossa lipsauttaa jotain, jotaki tietylle hahmolle niin saattaa, joko ruveta, vihaamaan tai sitte niinku, sitte o, tai sitte yhtäkkiä ollaankin, parhaita kavereita, - - (että) siinä, siinä se vaikuttaa, sa- (taas) vaikuttaa tosi paljo, - - siihe pelaamiseen, (E)

(2)   Ei niin paljoo tarvii [kieltä], ja oikeestaan se ei riipu, riipu se pelitilanteen eteneminen siitä, että ymmärtääkö sitä, enää ite että, se on nii, idioottivarmaks tehty se, tota ni eteneminen yleensä että, ei tarvii välttämättä ymmärtää mistään, riippuu tietysti ihan pelistä, (B)

(3)   voi, pistää semmosen niinku nuolen ja sitte näyttää kartalla, että missä se on - - (että), kaipa, kaipa sillä, sillä niinku iha pelkästään sillä kom-, konseptilla, voi mennä, mutta en sitte tiiä että onko se niinku kuinka, ((naurahdus)) kuinka antosaa, (E)

(4)   jos niinku ite ite et vaikka osais englantia. Ja sitte niinku, sä haluaisit pelata niitä pelejä nii sitte, sä tarvitsisit jonkun koko ajan siihen, suomentamaan kun, tai kertomaan että mitä sun pitäs niinku tehä, nii sä oisit, siinä ois vaa ite niinku, semmosena. mekaanisena toimijana, (C)

(5)   ku ei it- ei ymmärtäny yhtään että mitä siinä haluttiin nii siinä sitte, ei joissaki, paikoissa päässy, eteenpäin ku sitte, vasta sitte ku vahingossa, keksi että mitä piti tehä, (E)

(6)   sillon oli juuri tämmösiä että, jos joku, pelihahmo, halusi, jotakin tai piti, saavuttaa jotaki, ja, sana oli itselle vieras, nii sitä, piti vaan lähinnä arvata että jaa, mikähän, tuo nyt haluaa - - että tavallaan semmonen, etenemistä, hidastava ongelma, se on ollut, sillon alkuaikona, (G)

(7)   nykysin vois kyllä sanoa että ei se vaikeuta että. että kaikki mitä, tulee vastaan, pelimaailmassa niin sen kyllä tajuaa ja, jos ei muuta nii jonku, sanan voi helposti kahtoa jostakin mikä sen tarkotus on (G)

(8)   se [kieli] on sen juonenkuljetuksen, väline. elikkä sitä kautta tavallaan saa, motivaation ja selityksen sille, miksi pitää tehdä, juuri sitä, ... joo. että se on tavallaan tämmönen, selittävä. ominaisuus siinä. peleissä. (G)

(9)   se [englanti] on, erittäin tärkeä osa sitten niinku siihen, justiisa maailman syventämiseen. - - kaikki tieto mitä sieltä, tai suurin osa siitä tiedosta mitä siitä maailmasta saa ni se tulee niinku, sen kielen kautta, (C)

(10)   pelin juoni ylipäänsä, dialogi kaikkineen ni, se, on, toisinaan mulle kyllä melkein tärkeempää kuin se pelattavuus, (D)

(11)   niissä on, jotain, viittauksia, aina, elokuviin, sarjoihin kirjoihin, kaikkeen populaarikulttuuriin, ja, itte tykkään, niitä viittauksiaki vähän bongata niistä peleistä (F)

(12)   *Mass Effect*issä taas se [juoni] on vähän pienemmässä roolissa mutta on se, ei sitä oo kiva pelata jos ei ymmärrä sitä taustaa. (A)

(13)   ainakin ne [pelit] voi kasvattaa sitä opiskelumotivaatiota, omasta mielestä ainakin sillä että jos haluaa oppia, oppia niinkun, sen pelin, pelin hienoudet niin, kannattaa opetella, opetella se kieli mitä siinä käytetään. (B)

(14) kiinnittää niihin, justiisa pikkujuttuihi aika paljon, huomiota ja yrittää, pitää ne mielessä että mitä, tässä, taustalla nyt oikei onkaan, ja, sitä kautta ehkä oppinukin, englantia, sieltä pelin kautta, parhaiten että, justiisa lähteny, sitä, sisältöä, kaivamaan ihan kunnolla. (F)

(15) se, tarina on niin monimutkanen nii on ihan niinku vapaa-ajalla tullu, selvitettyä että, että niinku okei mikä juttu tämä on, mutta siis, se kyllä varmaan niinku selkiäis jos niitä kirjoja lukis mitä siinä, niinku pelissä on mutta, ei sitä niinku, jaksa kun niitä on joka paikassa ja sitte, ((nauraen)) että jos mä, jos mä haluan lukea ni, ehkä mä otan sitte ihan oike-, oikeen kirjan, enkä sitte vaa, - - istu tietokoneella ja pelaa jotain, roolipeliä ja lue vaan kirjoja (E)

(16) D: siinä oli tämmönen yks kohtaus missä, tota, päähenkilö kävelee pomovastustajan luokse ja sanoo että *I'm your prom date you sack of shit*, ja sitte hetken päästä he ovat vaan toisilleen huutamassa *fuck you*. Niinku (ois) jotai viidesluokkalaisia,

      I: Okei, eli, se, kielenkäyttö niissä peleissä on jotenkin sopimatonta tai, (tai silleen)

      D: No, se oli vaan yksinkertaisesti typerää. (D)

(17) englanti se, nyt jotenkin tuntuu, paljon mahtipontisemmalta ihan aluks, se kuulostaa jotenki luonnollisemmalta, esimerkiks joittenki, tavaroitten nimet, siellä saattaa olla joku, *sword* of joku, *magnificent*, *hell or something* ((naurahdus)), mutta - - se kuulostaa niin tönkölle, suomenkielellä, jos sen laittaa, että - - joku, suuri, suuri ja mahtava miekka, se kuulostaa jotenki niinkun, ei ei hyvälle, ei ei hyvälle se ei siinä ei tuu semmosta samanlaista fiilistä siinä vaiheessa, (C)

(18) kyllä niinku, yritän, niin. kääntää niitä niinku päässä suomeks, mua, taas ku musta se on vähän niinku, melkein mua, itelle tulee semmonen tyhmä olo ku, puhuu jostai *potion*eista tai vastaavista mutta sitten ku - - keskittyy siihen pelaamiseen ni, sitte, sitten vaa niinku, lukee sen mitä mitä siinä, ruudulla näkyy. (E)

(19) ehkä parhaiten oppii mun mielest semmosista vähän, - - hidastemposemmista, peleistä - - *Falloutit*, *Elder Scrollsit*, esimerkiksi - - niissä, tulee sitä, englantia niin paljo vastaan että siinä, pakollaki oppii jotain. (F)

(20) I: millaiset, pelit on mielestäsi hyviä kielen oppimiseen?

      G: no, kyllä väittäsi että tämmöset, seikkailupelit. roolipelit semmoset joissa sitä kieltä oikeasti joutuu, miettimään. ja tavallaan, ajattelemaan niitä, syy ja seuraussuhteita, minkä takia, joku hahmo, reagoi tietyllä tavalla, johonkin toimintaan, (G)

(21) I: millaisia, ne, pelit on mistä mielestäsi, voisi oppia englantia?

      E: ehkä just enemmän semmoset niinku, tarinapainotteiset, sitte just, varmaan niinku roolipelit, ku, no, onhan noissa räiskintäpeleissäki, niinku, yleensä joku juoni, mutta, - - siinä on enemmänki niinku asiat - - ratkastaan niinku liipasinta vetäsemällä, että, ehkä ni, näissä niinku, juonellisessa, juonellisissa peleissä on, tai siinä on niinku enemmän tarvetta keskustella ihmisten kanssa (E)

(22) noissa, peleissä joissa pelkkä valikot on ni ei niistä oikein ymmärrä, opi, yhtään mitään. (A)

(23) sitte siinä tulee nimenomaan tätä mitä mä sanoin (et tehään) sitä, oikeana kielenkäyttönä sitä ei rupea miettimään että mikä on se tämä kielioppisääntö tai mitä tämä tai täs-, sana tarkottaa. Vaan sitä vaan, käyttää ihan oikeasti, (D)

(24) jos niinku on joku perus, perusleffa nii se on aika selvää mitä, mitä siinä ruudulla tapahtuu vaikka et ymmärräkää ihan kaikkee mitä ne sanoo, ja sitten niinku, mutta sitte peli-,

pelissä sun pittää niinku ite miettiä se, miettiä se homma että niinku mitenkä se, toimii, (C)

(25) se interaktiivisuus saattaa tehdä siitä vähän inttensiivisemmän kokemuksen, mielenkiintosemman kokemuksen, että se voi jäädä vähä, enemmän mieleen, (D)

(26) hyvin harvoin esim, vaikka jos o joku venäläinen hahmo puhuu venäjää tai kiinalainen puhuu kiinaa vaan ne aina puhuu sitä englantia sillä, geneerisellä aksentilla, (G)

(27) se on tavallaan kieliopillisesti semmösta, korrektia. että siellä hyvin vähän tulee tämmöstä, niinku.. jos jonku kanssa puhuis, ni ei tuu näitä täytesanoja, *you know, like*, ja nii eespäin. että se on hyvin semmösta... tietyllä tapaa niinku, joku, saa sen vaikutelman et siellä joku oikeasti lukee sitä, käsikirjotusta, ja lausuu ne repliikit semmosena ku ne on siinä paperilla. (G)

(28) osassa peleissä on niinku se englannin, englanti on sitten semmosta että se, osa osa sana, osaa sanoista ei oo välttämättä kuullu ollenkaan, et se on - - paljon vaikeempaa englantia, ni sitä ei ymmärrä välttämättä, vielä tässäkään vaiheessa vaikka englantia on kuitenkin käyttänyt, erittäin paljon. (C)

(29) jos on käsikirjoitus tehty ni se on kuitenki, vähän hullunkurisesti tehty, kuten vaik tää *Metal Gear* sarja tunnetaan, siitä miten hahmot jaksaa puhua jostain yksinkertasemmistakin asioista paljon, tai sitte käytetään tämmöstä papukaijaekspositiota, joku sanoo jotain, sitte joku ottaa siitä lauseesta jonkun yksittäisen sanan ja toistaa sen. Niiku, vaatiakseen selvennystä asiaan, (D)

(30) monet puheet on vähä, ykspuolisia, niissä on usein tämmöne avustaja mukana, jonkinnäköne haltia tai vastaava, keijukaine, ja se sitte on koko aika puhumassa jostain että, paina aata, hypätäksesi tai vastaavaa, ni, se on vähä yksitoikkoist kuunneltavaa monien mielestä, sitä niinku tekstiä, muutenki käytetään hyvin paljon lähinnä pelimekaniikkojen selvittämiseen niissä ei oo hirveen monimutkanen se juoni nii, ei sitte oo dialogikaa mitenkään hirvee, ihmeellistä, (D)

(31) roolipelit, niin ne sisältää justiisa, et se on niinku semmosta, vanhehtavampaa, ja sitten myös vähä, enemmän krumeluureja siellä. - - nuo, scifipelit sun muut, ni ne saattaa, niissä taas toisaalta niinkun, on semmosta niinku, nykyaikasta, niinku, kuuluis iha, kuuluu iha asiaanki, semmosta niinku, hmm, mennään suoraan asiaan, tavallaan, (C)

(32) puhutaanko siitä jostai, lohikäärmeestä jota ollaan menossa tappamaan, sanotaan jossain *Dragon's Dogma*ssa, siellä sitten, vaihteli sen mukasesti, vai ollaanko sitten puhumassa jostain niinku, nykypäivästä trendeistä niinku vaikka *Grand Theft Auto* vitosessa joka, tarjoilee vähän kaikkea maan ja taivaan väliltä, *Facebook*ista videopeleihin, julkkiksiin huumeitten käyttöö... se, seki vaihtelee nii että mitä se peli koskee. (D)

(33) jos, vaikka niinku kir- kiroillaan tosi paljon nii, kyllähän siinä, siinä saattaa ehkä, tulee jonki semmone, jonkinlainen vääristyny kuva että, että okei niinku, kiroileminen on, (engmut) englannin, englannin kielellä, ihan niinku, normaali juttu et vaikka se, *fuck* sanan kylvämine, ihan normaalia, mitä se, ei sitten oikeasti, oikeasti ole, (E)

(34) tavallaan ei oo mitään semmosta, taetta, että, se, englanti tai, kieli, mitä nyt siinä pelissä käytetäänkään, on, välttämättä, sitä, niinsanotusti oikeaoppista, kieltä, useimmiten se on... mutta, se on niinku *Wikipedia*, tä useimmiten luotettava mutta, tieteellisesti, ei hyväksyttävä, (G)

(35) se peleissä oleva kieli voi olla aika semmosta, ykspuoleista ykstoikkoista, et se niinku, ei oo kovin, moni-, monipuolista tällen niinku kielellisesti, se keskittyy tiettyihin tilanteisiin. Että jos, jos pänttää ainoastaan niitä nii, niillä ei vielä pitkälle pääse. (B)

(36) tietysti vähän pelistä riippuen että kuinka hyödyllistä se, sitten on... no, kyllä semmosta, ihan, arkipäivä, englantiakin mun mielestä peleistä oppii.. vaikkapa, tässä *Fallout*issa, jotain ihan... - - mitä voi tulla, monesti, lehdissä tai, telkkarissaki vastaan ja... ihan, siis, kaiken-, kaikenlaista kieltä. (F)

(37) monta kertaa pelannu, peliä läpi tota uuden, uudemman kerran aatellut sitte seuraaval läpipeluulla ymmärtää sitä paremmi (D)

(38) se, niinku maailma on semmone, valtava ja sit siellä on niinku, tosi paljon, paljon niinku eri, erilaisia niinku juonia menossa, ja sitte iha vaan ihan semmosia niinku pi-. semmosii tosi, pikkujuttuja sitte niinku viittauksia aikasempiin peleihi ja, et, siitä saa paljo enemmä irti jos niinku, ymmärtää sitä kieltä, (E)

(39) sitte jos ei oo kirjotettua, nii, ite tykkään ainakin laittaa tekstitykset päälle, että se niinku, varmentaa aina sen, että niinku varmasti ymmärtää (C)

(40) on, ollu vaikee saada ääninäyttelystä, vähän selvää että vaik nää *Viewtiful Joe* pelit niissä on paljon, popkulttuuriparodioita mut siinä ei oo yhtään tekstityksiä, - - samoin tää esim *Assassin's Creed*, se on, hyvin juonivetoinen peli, mut siinä ei ollu tekstitystä ni se oli vähän vaikee seurata sitä, kun ei saanu ihan selvää siit aina, kielenkäytöstä, (D)

(41) I: sanoit että olit, välillä laittanu saksankielisiä tekstityksiä nii miten se sitte on, vaikuttanut pelaamiseen,

D: No ei se ny kyllä vaikuttanut juuri mitenkään ku siinä oli kuitenki, ääninäyttely päällä, mä olin, pelannu näitä pelejä jo muutaman kerran, eli, eli tiesin kyllä kaiken mitä siinä oltiin sanomassa, ei se, ei se vaikeuttanu sitä hirveesti, (D)

(42) ihan... perus, englannin, taidolla ei tarvii olla, erityisen perehtyny mihinkään, tiettyyn, sanastoon tai tämmösee että, aika paljolti, sillä mitä koulussaki oppii niin, pärjää, ihan, että pelissä ymmärtää kaiken ja... sitten... että siihen pääsee, sisälle. (F)

(43) harvemmin sitä, niinku, tulee, niinku kirjoitettua, tai niinku, puhu-, puhuttua, kun mä en, en todellakaan, tai niinku tosiaankaan, niinku, harrasta moninpelejä, (tämmöstä ni), se on enemmänki semmost niinku vastaanottavaa, (E)

(44) Harvemmin nyt omaa tekstintuottamist tietysti tarttee, ku siihen nyt ei monet pelit anna yksinkertasesti mahdollisuutta, (D)

(45) mä en jotenki vaan, tykkää osallistua niinku foorumikeskusteluihin tai, käydä kommentoimas jotai *YouTube*-videota - - Internet sitte, mutta seki on mulla aika, lailla en mä sinne niinku, sisältöä tuota... nautin, nautin sisällöstä, (E)

(46) mä yleensä, yleesä puhe-, puhun jos niinku, joku on niinku kattomassa, - - mutta sitte jos mää niinku, yksin pelaan nii mä saatan, korkeintaan ehkä kiro- kiroilla, (E)

(47) ei tuu, pahemmin ittekseen pelatessa, mitään, kirottuakaan tai muutakaan koska, ei mulla mee, hermot oikeestaan pelejä pelatessa, (F)

(48) yleesä ku se peli on niinku englanniksi sitte jos siellä on jotain ihme, jotain, *inside*, fraaseja ni, ei niitä yle-. yleensä niiku lähe mikään muulla kielillä sitte miettimää, (E)

(49) oon oppinu puhekiele ilmauksia, jaa, sitten ihan perussanastoakin... mutta siis tosi, monipuolista että puhekieltä ja sitten, tämmöstä ihan, jotain, tieteellistä kieltä ja, kaikkee siltä väliltä. (F)

(50) saattaa tulla hyvinki pitkiä semmosii, dialogipätkiä jotka niinku on tosi tärkeitä sen, juonen kannalta ja siellä, ten, todennäkösesti tulee myös niinku, semmosii, fraaseja, ja

sitten, käytetään jotain niinku, jotain tiettyä sanaa tietyssä kontekstissa nii ihan varmasti oon kyllä oppinu jotain sieltä, (E)

(51) lukiossa, niin, esimerkiks siitä *Fallout*ista oppi, muutama semmonen, niinku amerikanenglannin sanan, mitä, sitten, pysty käyttämään, siinä sen brittienglannin ohella, ja, muistaakseni jostain onnistuin löytämään semmosen sanan mitä mun opettaja ei ees tienny... - - kiinnostu siitä, kielestä, ehkä, vähäsen, ja, vähäse enemmän, ku aikasemmin ja, rupes kiinnittämää huomiota just tommosiin, yksittäisiin, sanoihinkin mitkä kuulosti jotenki, erikoisilta, otti selvää mitä ne on (F)

(52) kyllä niinku, yritän, niin. kääntää niitä niinku s- päässä suomeks, mua, taas ku musta se on vähän niinku, melkein mua, itelle tulee semmonen tyhmä olo ku, puhuu jostai *potion*eista tai vastaavista mutta sitten ku on oikeesti, oikeesti niinku keskittyy siihen pelaamiseen ni sitte voi (sillee), voi hitsi mullei oo yhtää *potion*eja (tää), - - sitten vaa niinku, lukee sen mitä mitä siinä, ruudulla näkyy. (E)

(53) esimerkiks nyt se, niiku, kataja, katajanmarja, - - jos mä en ois niinku, joutunu, käyttämään sitä nii, niinku, niinku keskustelussa jonkun kanssa ni en mä ois varmaan, varmaan siihen niinku kiinnittäny enää mitää huomiota että se ois vaan (sillee) okei sana jota en ymmärrä ja, sinne sitte meni, (E)

(54) siinä on vaan hiljalleen jääny kielioppisäännöt mieleen että, jos miettii että, pitäiskö tämä lause ilmaista näin tai näin ni sitten muistelee sitä että, jaa se siinä, elokuvassa tai siinä pelissä ni, se oli tällä tavalla sanottu, niin kai tämä on sitten se oikea sanajärjestys, (D)

(55) ehkä parhaiten tämmösten tiettyjä esimerkkien kautta, esim pelatessa on monesti käyny ni että joku tietty, repliikki, lause, jää mielee, ja se on sitte semmone jota voi käyttää esimerkkinä, joissaki tilanteissa esim miettiessä justii että, tuleeko tässä käyttää *of* vai *for* vai, mitä, (G)

(56) kieliopi, joo siis se oppii iha ekan kerran siellä koulussa, mutta sitten niinku, nimeommaan se että, et sen saa piettyä mielessä ni se vaatii sitä että niinku, siihen törmää, törmää useammin, ja, sitten niinku muistaa että ((napsauttaa sormia)) ai niin joo tämä oli muuten tämä, tämä homma, (C)

(57) pitää kiinnittää niinku, toisen kielioppii huomiota, että niinku, mitä siinä tekstissä lukee ni, sitte jos sä et kiinnitä siihe (ite) kielioppii huomiota nii se saattaa taas mennä niinku, nii ettet et ymmärrä mitä se tarkottaa oikeesti. (C)

(58) tärkeimpänä taitona pitäisin sitä kielioppia siinä koska, sitte aina ne voi kuitenki ne, sanat kattoo sieltä sanakirjasta jos ei, jotakin bongannu. (B)

(59) jos, joku toinen puhuis oikein huonoa englantia, mutta, jos... ihan, normaalisti pelatessa miettii sitä tilannetta nii en mä, oikeestaan. kiinnitä kielioppi, huomiota yhtään, (F)

(60) sieltä joku alkaa, huutamaa että, miks sinä teet noi, - - nii sitten ku, se yrittää vastata siihe, siihen siihe, mitä se huutaa, ja sitte se vastaa sillee niinku iha, tönköllä englannilla ni sitte se, sitten ne on sillee, (että mo), no siinä siinä vaiheessa tulee semmonen pieni myötähäpeän tunne että, oi ei nytte, - - argumentointi ei toimi. Jos - - joku peruskielioppi se ei oo hallinnassa niin se, niinku... siinä, siinä ei tuu semmosta uskottavuutta siihe hommaa, (C)

(61) se on tietyllä tapaa juuri tämmöstä altistamista, eli, niinku Juhani Tamminen sano että ihminen oppii sitä mitä hän tekee. ja jos se on, tekemisissä... päivittäin, viikottain, jonku, vieraan kielen kanssa, niin siitä väistämättä, jää jotaki semmosia, tiedonjyväsiä aina mieleen että, mikä sana tarkottaa mitäkin ja, niin edelleen, (G)

(62) vaikka *Elder Scrolls*issa jos on tällästä et voit vapaaehtosesti pysähtyä kadulla puhumaan jonkun kanssa... kyllä se o, melkeen koko aika jonkinnäköstä puhetta siinä on, (D)

(63) siellä, voi vaan hyppiä pitki, pitkin, vuoria ja, metsiä ja, eikä tavata, ei, ei, eikä siis niinku välttämättä kohtaa, niinku, mitään muuta ku jotain, jotain niinku, lainsuojattomia - - mutta sitte, nii tietenki sitte jos menee kaupunkiin niin jos, se riippuu iha kokonaa siitä et haluaako haluaako niinku, jutella, niide ihmisten kanssa, (E)

(64) esimerkiks, no taas niissä, *Fallout*eissa, niin, ku siinä on, tosi paljon niitä pelin sisäsiä, semmosia, pikkujuttuja niitä, erilaisia, kirjoja, papereita tietokoneita mistä voi niitä, taustatietoja lukea, niin... sitten, kiinnittää niihin, justiisa pikkujuttuihi aika paljon, huomiota ja yrittää, pitää ne mielessä että mitä, tässä, taustalla nyt oikei onkaan, ja.. sitä kautta ehkä oppinukin, englantia, sieltä pelin kautta, parhaiten että, justiisa lähteny, sitä, sisältöä, kaivamaan ihan kunnolla. (F)

(65) ku se, tarina on niin monimutkanen nii on ihan niinku vapaa-ajalla tullu, selvitettyä että, että niinku okei mikä juttu tämä on, mutta siis, se kyllä varmaan niinku selkiäis jos niitä kirjoja lukis mitä siinä, niinku pelissä on mutta, ei sitä niinku, hir-, jaksa kun niitä on joka paikassa ja sitte, ((naurua)) että jos mä, jos mä haluan lukea ni, ehkä mä otan sitte ihan oike-, oikeen kirjan, enkä sitte vaa, istu tietokoneella ja pelaa jotain, roolipeliä ja lue vaan kirjoja (E)

(66) kaikista hauskinta ois jos se oppiminen tapahtus silleen niinku huomaamatta, että siinä ei tulis semmone, fiilis että nytte niiku, tekee työtä, koska, pelit on, mulle, pääsääntösesti semmone että, mun ei tarvitse tehdä työtä, vaikka, tietenki kyl mä - - näen **vaivaa** sen eteen, mutta en mä ajattele sitä niinku, työnä, se ois ehkä niinku semmonen, niinku **huijattas** oppimaan, sillee, oisi ehkä niinku, semmone, ihanne, (E)

(67) voi sitte, kadota, motivaatio kokonaa siihe että niinku, no, miks mun pitää nyt englantia oppia kun mä osaan sitä jo ihan hyvin koska mä pelaan vapaa-ajallani tosi paljo, tosi paljon pelejä (E)

(68) kun, huomas että, niistä, jotain, oppiikin niin ihan.. mielenkiinnol senki puolesta, alko pelaamaa sitte niitä, (F)

(69) mulla oli siinä ihan, oikeasti siis sanakirja vieressä että, kun monesti tuli, siinä pelissä jotain, ilmasuja sanoja mitä ei ymmärtäny niin katto ne, ja sitten, sitä kautta oppikin.. yllättävän paljo uutta. (F)

(70) mä en oo ikinä, tarkistanu mitään sanaa vaan, niinku, tajuaa sen. Tajuu siitä lauseyhteydestä mikäköhän toikin on. (A)

(71) on joku henkilö, joka haluaa jotakin, ja hänelle pitää sitten tuoda se jokin, niin täytyy ymmärtää että, mikä se on. Voiha sitä sokkonaki tietysti, kokeilla että haluaako se, mopin vai jakoavaimen vai minkä, mutta, se sitte taas, on pitkän päälle, turhauttavaa (G)

(72) pelissä on tosiaan se että - - siinä pitää ite toimia, ja pittää ite aina ite oppia se, homma, (C)

(73) sitä kautta oli, muuten oikeestaan aika, hyvä, niin, niitä jotain, niin, sanontoja mitä ei tuntenu, niin lähtee, ottamaan selvää että, niin siinä pelissä, oli laittanu tekstitykset päälle, ja sitten, puhu jolleki hahmolle, ja sitten, katto sanakirjasta että mitenkä se, menee. sitte siinä samalla kuuli ja näki sen tekstin ja, sitten, vielä, sai selville mitä se suomeks on. (F)

(74) välillä tulee just saksaks laitettuu tekstitys jos on mahollisuus. Niinku, jos se kumminkin se puhe tulee englanniks (A)