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Acquiring English Through Video Games: The Influence of the Gaming Environment on Student's Language Skills

BACHELOR'S THESIS

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Čestné prohlášení

Tímto prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci zpracoval samostatně pod vedením Mgr. Lindy Valešové, Ph.D. na základě použité literatury a zdrojů, které jsou řádně uvedeny v bibliografii.

V Olomouci, červen 2026 Hlobil Jiří

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

I hereby declare that during the writing of this bachelor's thesis, the Gemini language model (developed by Google) was utilised as a supportive drafting and editing tool.

The AI technology was used solely for grammar and language correction and structural guidance.

I am aware that I am responsible for the entirety of the content of my thesis.

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Název práce v angličtině:	Acquiring English Through Video Games: The Influence of the Gaming Environment on Students' Language Skills
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce zkoumá vliv hraní video her na osvojování anglického jazyka se zaměřením na rozvoj slovní zásoby a komunikační navyky hráčů. V teoretické části je stanoven rámec osvojování druhého jazyka (SLA) a aplikuje hypotézu afektivního filtru Stephena Krashena a zónu nejbližšího vývoje Lva Vygotského na prostředí videoher. V praktické části této práce jsou analyzována data získaná prostřednictvím kvantitativního dotazníkového šetření. Empirické výsledky odhalují vysokou a téměř jednomyslnou preferenci jak anglického audia, tak titulků. Data navíc ukazují, že hráči inklinují k receptivním jazykovým dovednostem a kontextuálnímu učení slovní zásoby. Zjištění nakonec demonstrují, že videohry přirozeně vytvářejí prostředí s nízkou mírou stresu, které je efektivní pro osvojování jazyka.
Klíčová slova:	video hry, osvojování druhého jazyka, extramulární angličtina, digitální hry, neformální učení, dotazník
Anotace práce v angličtině	This bachelor's thesis examines the impact of playing video games on English language acquisition, focusing on the development of vocabulary and communicative habits among players. The theoretical part establishes the framework of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), applying Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to the environment of video games. In the practical section of the thesis, data collected through a quantitative questionnaire are analysed. The empirical results reveal a high and near-unanimous preference for both English audio and subtitles. Furthermore, data shows the players are inclined toward receptive language skills and contextual vocabulary learning. The findings demonstrate that video games naturally establish a low-stress space effective for language acquisition.
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Introduction

The global landscape of entertainment and communication has undergone a radical transformation in recent years, with video games emerging and becoming a dominant cultural and economic force. Video games are no longer just a niche hobby because after a period of decrease, the PC (personal computer) and console gaming market has entered a new phase of significant growth. In the following years, such a trend is expected to continue with sales increasing by 7% year-to-year (Newzoo, 2026). This massive expansion is not merely financial; it is a fundamental shift in how (especially younger) generations can interact with technology, and by extension, with the English language. In today's world, English is undoubtedly the primary lingua franca of the digital sphere making this growth important because video games serve as one of the most prominent environments for language encounter, practice, and acquisition.

For contemporary learners, video games represent an important source of informal contact with English through which acquisition is possible. As James Paul Gee (2003) argues, even though video games function as a form of entertainment, it is not their only purpose; they operate as "semiotic domains". These domains consist of numerous modalities, such as oral and written language, images, sounds, or symbols and their purpose is to communicate certain types of meaning. For players to comprehend such meanings and successfully navigate through the game, they need to properly interpret all the modalities. This is essential for English acquisition because the video game environment provides rich context the players need to understand in order to succeed within the game.

The internal processes of language acquisition happening in these multimodal domains can be further understood through the hypotheses of Stephen Krashen (1982). He highlights the importance of meaningful exposure, and studies the affective filter and its negative impact. One of the purposes of this thesis is to highlight that video games provide an immersive experience during which the affective filter stays lowered. That is mainly because the purpose of video games is not to teach language; since the focus is shifted from the linguistic aspects, language acquisition is incidental, therefore smoother, and more effective.

Building on these foundations, this bachelor thesis examines the practical influence of these theories. While the theoretical potential of video games is documented, there still remains a need to further investigate how the acquisition is perceived by the learners themselves. The primary motivation behind this thesis is to bridge the gap between academic principles and the

subjective reality of those who play video games and use them as a source of English outside of formal education. By analysing the perceptions and habits of a target demographic, this work aims to determine the value of video games and whether the players of video games themselves agree that playing is beneficial for their linguistic development.

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the perceived value of video games on the English language proficiency of Czech speakers. To achieve this, specific research aims have been established:

1. To analyse the impact of video games and different genres on linguistic skills, such as vocabulary acquisition or reading comprehension.

2. To evaluate the role and value of multimodality that the gaming environments provide.

3. To provide a subjective comparison between the effectiveness and practicality of traditional school-based learning and game-based acquisition.

1 Theoretical Framework

1.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition is a diverse field that studies the processes behind the development of proficiency in a language other than the native one (Saville-Troike, 2006). The scope of the discipline is wide and explores the mechanisms happening during the linguistic growth. Saville-Troike (2006) notes that both formal learning and informal acquisition are parts of SLA and both may occur during the study of non-native language. To better understand how interactive media, for the purposes of this thesis it is video games, support this process, it is essential to build a theoretical foundation. This chapter lays out an overview of the key elements that are part of SLA and focuses on the differences between conscious and subconscious acquisition.

1.1.1 The Acquisition-Learning Distinction

One of the most fundamental concepts introduced by Krashen (1982) to understand second language acquisition is the distinction between two systems of developing fluency in a second language: acquisition and learning. He characterizes language acquisition as a subconscious process. This means that the individual is not consciously trying to learn or gain knowledge and is not focusing on the mechanics of the language. Instead, the process of acquisition naturally occurs. This theoretical perspective is relevant to the study of video games and their role in language acquisition. It can be argued that in a gaming environment, the primary focus is typically on the game itself, not formal language, and rules. As Krashen (1982) further emphasises, "language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication" (p. 10). In this sense, video games where communication is crucial for success, function as a catalyst for language development. It occurs in the background and is not part of the conscious experience.

Building on this distinction, Krashen (1982) affirms that the primary driver for our fluency is acquisition and the role of learning is more limited. He states that "learning has only one function, and that is as a monitor, or editor" (p. 15). This implies that the conscious gain of grammatical knowledge does not help with better initiation within the spontaneous speech initiation within the studied language. Instead, the value of learning is in correcting the language produced solely by the system of acquisition. To further understand the monitor function and to ensure its effective use, Krashen (1982) lists three major conditions: adequate amount of leeway

and time, deliberate focus on linguistic precision, and knowledge of the grammatical rules. These three necessities are supposed to ensure successful learning process and while traditional classrooms offer precisely those conditions, there is no room to provide environment for spontaneous fluency.

The theoretical distinction between language acquisition and learning is further clarified by the work of Sundqvist (2009), who explores the concept of extramural English (EE). She defines this type of English as one that learners "come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom" (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 1). She also emphasises that that an activity is considered extramural even if there is no conscious desire to learn English. However, even if there is an intent to acquire English, it is not ruled out of this concept. Nevertheless, she directly mirrors Krashen's definition of acquisition. It is a subconscious process in a natural environment, where the language is acquired through mere exposure.

1.1.2 Input Hypothesis and Its Parallels with other Theories

To broaden the knowledge of language acquisition, specifically the progression from one stage to another, Krashen (1982) introduced the Input Hypothesis. It is a mechanism explaining the progress of language acquisition.

Krashen (1982) explains his hypothesis via four main points. The first point suggests that the input hypothesis is not concerned with conscious learning and should be associated with acquisition only. In the second statement, Krashen states that in order to become more proficient, one needs to understand language that is a step above their current competence. The concept is known as i + 1 (where "i" represents the current competence and "1" is the subsequent developmental stage). The third statement follows up on this and explains that in order to gain knowledge (+1), there needs to be enough comprehensible input. Finally, through the fourth point, the author emphasises that language skills "emerge over time, on its own" (p. 22) because of the comprehensible input. They are not being taught directly but even without concern about linguistic rules, the natural input provides enough information for language acquisition.

Arguably, in the environment provided by video games, comprehensible input is omnipresent, thus suggesting that video games are a good medium to acquire language. Video games do not only provide language that is a step above their current competence (+1) but also additional guidance that may be necessary for the language to really be comprehensible. These cues, for example multi-modal visuals or sound effects, which come with the text provide

enough context to understand the language without translation. As noted by Plass, Homer, and Kinzer (2015), such multi-modal cues are important because they enhance comprehension. This is an application of Krashen's (1982) claim that language skills emerge naturally through exposure.

This idea of a gaming environment providing auxiliary assistance aligns with the psychological findings of Vygotsky (1978). He introduced the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), which he defines as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, development does not need to be independent, and a "more capable peer" can be present to help. In the context of video games, the environment and the game's software serves as the extra guidance Vygotsky mentions. Through UI hints, progressing difficulty and other tools, the game provides supporting environment that keeps the player within the bounds of ZPD. This allows the player to grasp the given input and understand the language that is a linguistic stage right beyond their current capabilities.

Expanding upon the necessity of input and support is Long (1996), who highlights the importance of interaction during language acquisition. As summarised by Benati and Schwieter (2022, p. 2), Michael Long's key argument was that input is effective only when language "negotiation for meaning" is present. The process of negotiation for meaning needs to occur during communication that is not fully comprehended by everyone. To resolve such issues, Long (1996) proposes that communication needs to be broken down (less complicated vocabulary) and repeated, or rephrased. Only then can full clarification be achieved. Benati and Schwieter (2022, p. 2) support the idea of Long (1996, p. 451), because negotiation for meaning "connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in a productive way". To break this down, it is implied that selective attention needs to be triggered in moments of uncertainty. Acquiring language becomes effective only in cases where the learner is actively participating in the resolution of communicative issues.

In the context of this thesis, this theory is additionally supported by the claims of Gee (2003). He presents what is called "Situated Meaning Principle" which posits that "signs" such as vocabulary, actions, and items have a "meaning situated in embodied experience" (Gee, 2003, p. 108). The author also recognises that such principle is often absent during traditional education, as it is highly dependent on generalizations and non-specific scenarios that make the learning process too passive (Gee, 2003, p. 86).

Following this logic, it can be reasoned that video games provide a superior environment for language acquisition compared to traditional classrooms or more passive media such as movies, where language uncertainty is not really resolved because the movie simply continues to play. Within the video games environment, as Gee (2003) suggests, language is tied to situated meanings and thus allows the player to play progressively. In video games, language is treated as a tool, and full understanding is required because it can lead to long-term consequences. This is parallel to Long's (1996) theory as it can be argued that communicative breakdowns may be needed in order to succeed in video games.

1.1.3 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The concept of the Affective Filter was initially introduced by Dulay and Burt (1977). However, it is Krashen (1982) who integrated the concept into a formal hypothesis. Acknowledging their work, Krashen explores the details in the relationship of the filter and language acquisition.

In his work, Krashen (1982, p. 31) emphasises that three main variables are associated with success in second language acquisition: "motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety". He states that for language acquisition to be most effective, motivation and self-confidence need to be high, whereas anxiety should be low. When these conditions are met, the affective filter is low, and the input is naturally processed well (Krashen, 1982).

Following such logic, it can be argued that video games provide the right environment for language acquisition, because the criteria for a low affective filter are met. In the first place, motivation is naturally high, because the player is driven by desire to progress and do well. Secondly, the strengthening of self-confidence can be explained by what Gee (2003, p. 74) describes as "Identity Principle". Fundamentally, it is a concept that proclaims the player takes on a virtual identity. Heavy investment in the identity allows players to bridge the gap between their real-world selves and their digital personas. Confidence should be naturally high, because the player is communicating through their character – their virtual identity. Furthermore, high confidence can be connected with lack of anxiety. Gee (2003, pp. 62–63) uses a term used by psychologist Erik Erikson to explain the absence of anxious feelings: "psychosocial moratorium". In the author's view, it is a learning environment specific due to its lowered real-world consequences. This is precisely the type of environment that video games can offer. In comparison to formal school setting, Gee (2003, p. 63) claims that there is often a "prohibitive

cost of caring". This indicates that video games allow for experimentation without the fear of permanent failure.

1.2 Video Games as Learning Environment

While the previous section forms a linguistic and psychological foundation upon which this thesis is built, it remains essential to examine the specific characteristics of video games in greater detail. To understand why video games represent a unique and important asset for language acquisition, the following section will examine the value of the active environment of video games.

1.2.1 Active Learning

To better comprehend how the environment of video games can help with language acquisition, it is important to realize that traditional methods of teaching may no longer align with habits and expectations of younger generations. This disparity is emphasised by Prensky (2001, p. 2), who calls today's learners "Digital Natives". This label suggests that the rising generations are fluent in the digital language of computers, video games, and the internet in general.

To further illustrate the generational gap, Prensky (2001, p.3) expands on his idea by classifying previous generations as "Digital Immigrants". The core of his argument posits a discrepancy between the needs of one generation and the pedagogical fundamentals of the other. As a result of this gap, digital natives often lack engagement and find traditional learning methods too slow-paced and passive.

This need for a more dynamic and engaging environment is precisely what the interactive nature of video games can offer. Gee (2003) argues that quality games support active and critical learning, which requires the players to be engaged. He specifically calls this the "Active, Critical Learning Principle" and describes that "all aspects of the learning environment are set up to encourage active and critical, not passive, learning" (Gee, 2003, p. 207). This implies that video game players are not merely observers but rather a vital and active part of their own development. To enhance the process of acquisition, players need to directly interact within the gaming environment, making choices that may have immediate consequences.

1.2.2 Spatiality and Video Games Experience

Murray (1997, p. 79) utilises the term "spatial environment" to point out the primary distinction between video games and other forms of media. As per the author, digital environments are special because they present space. While literature, music, and other forms of media are linear and their space is only portrayed by sounds, verbal descriptions or images, the environment of video games is far more detailed, and players can actually move through this space. With this logic, it can be said that video games offer space that can not only be observed but also actively explored.

For a language learner, this spatiality can be transformative. Instead of working with one-dimensional linear space, language is actually embedded within a navigable world. Squire (2006, p. 19) reinforces this concept, viewing these environments as "designed experiences, in which participants learn through a grammar of doing and being". By combining ideas of Murray (1997) and Squire (2006), it becomes evident that the gaming environment is a functional space where language acquisition can be achieved through active participation.

1.2.3 Social Interaction and Communication

In addition to characteristics introduced thus far, it is necessary to mention that while the term "spatial environment" (Murray, 1997, p. 79) defines the structure of the environment well, it does not focus on the social aspect as much. It is crucial to realize the importance of social properties because digital environments function as social landscapes where language acquisition is supported by the need to interact, communicate, and even achieve collective goals (Thorne, Black, and Sykes, 2009).

This social dimension is further embedded in the concept of "third places." Such places represent social environments that are distinct from the typical environments like home or work and are a neutral space in which communication is vital (Oldenburg, 1999). This informal mode of socialization was additionally studied by Steinkuehler and Williams (2006), who argue that video games, MMOs (Massively Multiplayer Online Games) specifically, have the capacity to function as third places. To better grasp the idea of MMOs serving as a third place, it is best to define the term. Steinkuehler and Williams (2006, p. 886) say that "MMOs are graphical … videogames played online, allowing individuals, through their self-created digital characters or avatars, to interact not only with the gaming software but with other players". This definition of MMO suggests that in order to navigate through the game, communication is essential. However, it is imperative to note that the importance of communication is not exclusive to

MMOs only. As Reinhardt (2019) highlights, the sociality of gaming is present in more genres; and the gaming industry in general is built on communication and interaction. This aligns well with an argument from Gee (2004, p. 73), who believes that sociality of the digital world is organized within "affinity spaces". He also claims that affinity spaces are not only about the game itself but about the entirety of game-related social spaces that surround it. According to Gee (2004, p. 77), affinity spaces are built around a "common endeavour", where people connect because of their shared passion. Consequently, if we take these arguments into account, it is irrelevant whether the player engages in a single-player game or a multiplayer title. In either case, the player is part of a large social landscape: an affinity space.

1.3 Gamification vs. Game-based Learning

To clarify the conceptual framework of this thesis, it is necessary to distinguish between two terms that are frequently conflated: gamification and game-based learning (GBL). While both of these concepts apply game elements to achieve educational goals, there are some core differences.

Deterding et al. (2011) define gamification quite clearly: it is the utilisation of game-specific designs in activities that are not games themselves. This approach of gamification uses key components of video games and incorporates them in what is not considered a full-scale video game.

In contrast, game-based learning is characterized by the use of actual games, and it does not matter whether they are designed specifically for educational purposes or entertainment, as a learning environment. GBL creates a holistic environment where educational content and gameplay itself are inseparable (Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, 2015). In other words, the primary medium for learning is a game and not just a few of its individual elements used in non-game activities and the game serves as an actual medium for knowledge acquisition.

The psychological effectiveness of GBL dates back to Loftus and Loftus (1983), who recognised one of the biggest strengths of video games: they provide feedback and a challenge. They also specified that in order for the game to be sufficient, these challenges need to be neither too simplistic, nor too complex.

Building on these findings, Prensky (2001) defines GBL as a tool that combines the high engagement and entertainment part of gaming with educational content. According to him, such combination is important in order to maintain adequate amount of motivation. Furthermore, Shaffer, Squire, and Gee (2005) expand on his idea and argue that video games are functional

because they simulate social worlds. They explain the term "epistemic games," which means that players are able to function within a world that is authentic to a certain community. In the context of language acquisition through video games, this implies that learners do not simply memorize vocabulary. Instead, language acquisition is a byproduct of their engagement within the video game's environment.

By synthesizing all these perspectives, GBL can be defined as an approach where the target language is not the primary subject of study, but rather a vital tool used for navigation within a digital social world, thereby allowing the process of acquisition to occur.

1.4 Challenges and Limitations

The integration of video games into language acquisition offers a considerable number of advantages. Nevertheless, it is crucial to remain objective and address obstacles and limitations of this approach. While this thesis argues that video games and game-based learning are valuable, it is not a universal solution for language acquisition as it presents several challenges.

The first and perhaps even the biggest hurdle of language acquisition through video games (and GBL in general) is the time investment that is required to achieve observable results. Language acquisition through video gaming is a cumulative process. Sundqvist (2009) highlights the importance of time in her study on extramural English. She argues that extramural English (and it does not necessarily matter whether it is playing video games, reading books or other activities) needs time in order to be effective. Ergo, while it can be argued that video games offer significant support in terms of language acquisition, the gains are usually a result of long-term exposure to the video games environment. If there is no time investment, it cannot be expected that language will be acquired.

Another major obstacle that could occur is a cognitive overload. Gee (2004) explains that video games are often complicated and such complexity may divert the mental focus of video game players. Even though acquisition is a subconscious process, a steep learning curve of a video game could affect the focus on linguistic input thus making acquisition harder or impossible.

It should also be noted that video games are not a universal motivator. While video games are considered to be a useful instrument in terms of acquisition (Gee, 2003), this perception is not universal. Bourgonjon et al. (2010) argue that not all students consider video games useful, especially in cases where there is no clear correlation between the studied topic

(or academic goals) and the game. In these cases, video games would be perceived as a distraction rather than a tool to acquire language.

Furthermore, as immersive as the gaming environment can be, there is no guarantee that the players will be linguistically engaged. Even though it is widely argued that multimodality of video games supports acquisition (Mayer, 2009; Plass, Homer, and Kinzer, 2015), Linderoth (2012) provides a critical perspective. He challenges these views by saying multimodality often does the job for the player who then does not need to focus on the language. In his opinion, if the visual, audio, and other cues become too clear, the player can work around the language, thereby limiting the process of language acquisition.

Lastly, there is the issue of linguistic transferability and how restricted the nature of the language in video games can get. Chik (2014) highlights that while language acquisition through video games can be successful, the language can often be too specialized. That means while gaining proficiency through video games is possible, it needs to be noted that the learnt terms can often be too unique and hardly applicable in real-life scenarios. Moreover, the author also mentions that while playing video games, there is no real structure and that can pose as an obstacle to language acquisition.

To summarise, identifying these challenging aspects is not intended to negate the value and potential of video games as a medium to acquire language. Instead, this chapter serves as a reminder that the influence of gaming environment is complex. It is essential to understand the boundaries of video games in order to use them effectively. Moreover, acknowledging the limits of video games is key for providing a balanced evaluation of the impact that video games have on language acquisition. The provided theoretical framework is a foundation for the following practical part of this thesis, which aims to empirically analyse all the mentioned factors.

2 Research Methodology

Following the theoretical foundation established in the previous chapters, which examined the principles of Second Language Acquisition, how video games function as semiotic domains, and Stephen Krashen's (1982) hypotheses regarding the affective filter and incidental learning, this chapter transitions these theoretical assumptions into empirical research. The core message of this chapter is to better introduce the methodological framework utilised to examine the subject matter. To ensure that a rigorous and transparent academic foundation is provided, the following sections will describe the design of the research, its characteristics, and the process of data collection.

Methodologically, this study uses a quantitative approach supplemented through a self-designed bilingual (English, Czech) questionnaire as a primary tool for data collection. This allows a systematic analysis of the respondents' answers and their subjective evaluations of language gain through video games.

2.1 Research Objectives and Questions

The empirical part of this thesis strictly follows what was earlier established in the introduction. The primary objective is to analyse the perceived value of video games on English language acquisition of Czech speakers. To better interpret the data, three specific research aims have been formulated, each directly paralleling the established research aims:

Research Aim 1: To analyse the impact of video games and different genres on linguistic skills, such as vocabulary acquisition or reading comprehension.

Research Question 1: How do Czech language learners perceive the impact of different video game genres on their specific linguistic skills?

Research Aim 2: To evaluate the role and value of multimodality that the gaming environments provide.

Research Question 2: What value do players attribute to the multimodal nature of gaming environments in supporting their English language acquisition?

Research Aim 3: To provide a subjective comparison between the effectiveness and practicality of traditional school-based learning and game-based acquisition.

Research Question 3: How do contemporary Czech learners subjectively compare the effectiveness and practicality of traditional classroom-based English instruction with informal, game-based acquisition?

2.2 Research Instrument

As mentioned previously, a self-designed bilingual questionnaire was constructed via Google Forms to gather empirical data necessary to address the established research questions. A questionnaire represents a consistent and flexible tool to gather data; its main value is the adaptability that allows the researcher to design in a way that it directly serves the specific objectives and context of the thesis (Gavora, 2010). To eliminate potential comprehension issues and ensure clarity, the questionnaire was intentionally designed as bilingual.

The questionnaire consisted of a total of fifteen questions methodically divided into three interconnected sections. The first section (Q1–Q5) focused on gathering background information regarding the respondents' demographic and language abilities. The second section (Q6–Q11) mapped the gaming habits of each participant (such as time invested in video games and genre preferences). Crucially, Q6 served as a screening question measuring weekly time spent playing video games. Those respondents stating they do not play video games were automatically brought to the end. Such mechanism was implemented to filter non-gamers and ensure better data clarity. The concluding section (Q12–Q15) aimed to capture the participants' self-assessment of their language abilities and the potential development tied to video games.

To measure the collected data with clarity, Likert-type scales were heavily utilised (ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*, and *Never* to *Always*). As noted by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), Likert-type scales are a valuable tool in research to measure degrees of agreement, attitudes, and subjective perceptions. They provide a structured and reliable quantitative blueprint of opinions with consistency and neutrality.

The questionnaire was finalised with open-ended questions (Q14 and Q15) to allow respondents to share their insights and enrich the empirical data.

2.3 Data collection and research sample

The process of data collection was initiated in March 2026 and remained active for a total of 83 days, after which the questionnaire was closed for further responses. To gather a sufficient number of respondents within the target demographic, a non-probability sampling method was utilised, specifically convenience sampling. As pointed out by Cohen, Manion, and

Morrison (2018), convenience sampling, as a form of non-probability sampling, inherently does not allow every individual in the broader population an equal chance of selection and can potentially leave out certain demographics.

For the scope of this thesis, such method is highly advantageous as it allows for access to a specific demographic that aligns with the objectives of this research. The questionnaire was distributed online through two primary channels: direct sharing with my peers and classmates through personal networks, and public distribution on the social media platform Reddit. Communities centred around gaming or language acquisition were targeted so younger generations and active digital users were reached.

By the conclusion of the 83-day period, a total of 71 respondents interacted with the questionnaire. As detailed in the previous section, a screening mechanism was implemented in Q6 regarding weekly gaming frequency. Out of the 71 participants, 4 indicated that they spend 0 hours per week on video games, and the system automatically concluded the survey for them.

As a result, while the full demographic profile consists of 71 respondents (N = 71), the subsequent evaluative sections focus on a refined sample of 67 active players (N = 67). Although this sample cannot be generalised to the entire Czech population, it represents a relevant empirical foundation for the data analysis presented in Chapter 3.

3 Research Results and Analysis

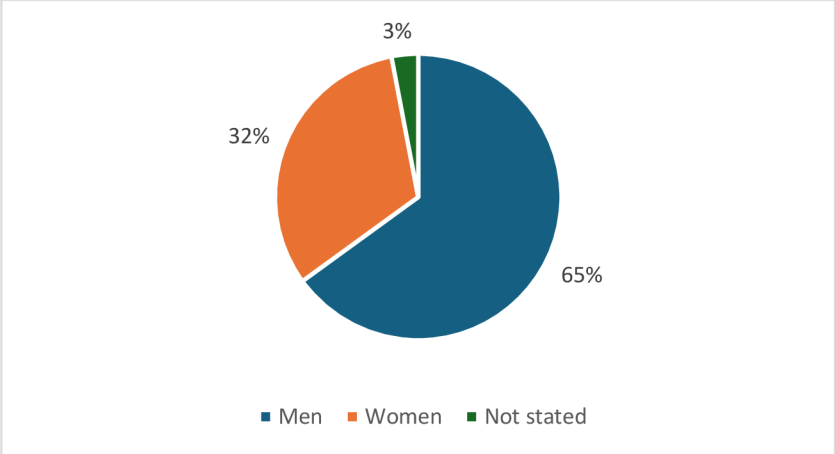
This segment of the thesis presents the empirical findings that were gathered from the online questionnaire and provides a detailed analysis of the collected data. The main objective is to evaluate the relationship between video gaming and the development and acquisition of the English language. The presentation of the acquired results follows the layout established in the previous chapters, dividing the analysis into three areas: the demographic and linguistic background of the respondents (N = 71), their gaming habits (N = 67), and lastly, their subjective perception of language acquisition through digital gameplay (N = 67).

3.1 Demographic and Linguistic Background

Before examining the specific gaming habits and language development of the respondents, it is essential to first establish a baseline demographic and linguistic profile. The first section of this chapter analyses the data gathered from the first five questions (Q1–Q5). At this stage of the analysis, the responses of all 71 participants (N = 71) are evaluated, including the four respondents who were subsequently filtered out as non-gamers. This section documents variables such as age, gender, and language proficiency; this allows for a complete overview of the research sample.

3.1.1 Gender Distribution of the Respondents

The very first question (Q1) mapped out the gender identity of the participants. Out of the total initial sample (N = 71), 46 respondents identified as men, thus representing the majority at 65%. Women accounted for 23 respondents, making up 32% of the sample. Only 2 respondents, the remaining 3%, chose the option to not state their gender. No participants opted for the "Other" category.



Graph 1: Gender distribution of the respondents. Source: Author.

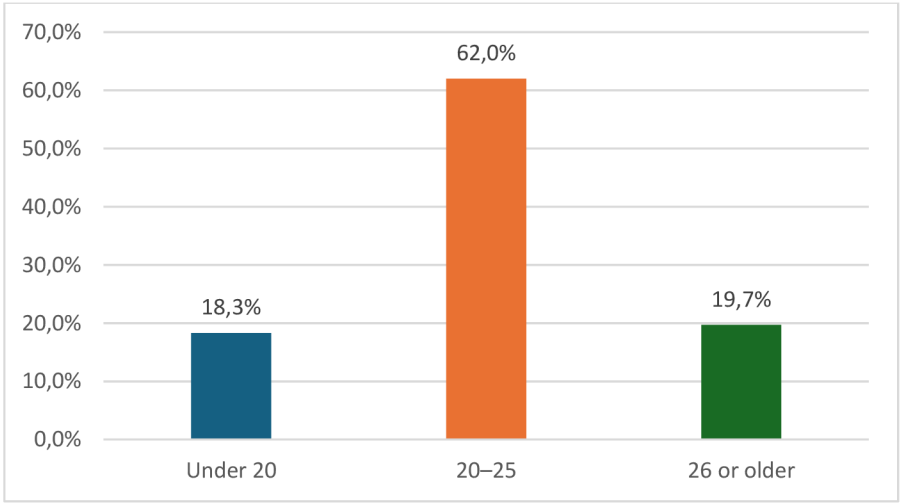
This distribution indicates a significant male preponderance but according to the Entertainment Software Association (ESA, 2024), the overall gaming population is increasingly becoming more gender balanced and both men and women constitute for around 50% each. While it is true that historically male players exhibit a higher tendency to actively play video games, this trend has been changing over the years.

Despite the imbalance that the data shows, the presence of a 32% female cohort is enough to provide a diverse range of perspectives. The disparity can be primarily attributed to the small sample size of this study and should not challenge the idea of the user base being a gender-balanced global demographic.

3.1.2 Age Distribution of the Respondents

The second item of the questionnaire (Q2) examined the age of the respondents. This question was designed as an open-ended one allowing respondents to state their exact age rather than just selecting from a predefined age bracket. The age of all initial respondents (N = 71) ranged from 16 to 32 years old, with the calculated average age being approximately 22.2 years, and the mode being 22 years (appearing 14 times).

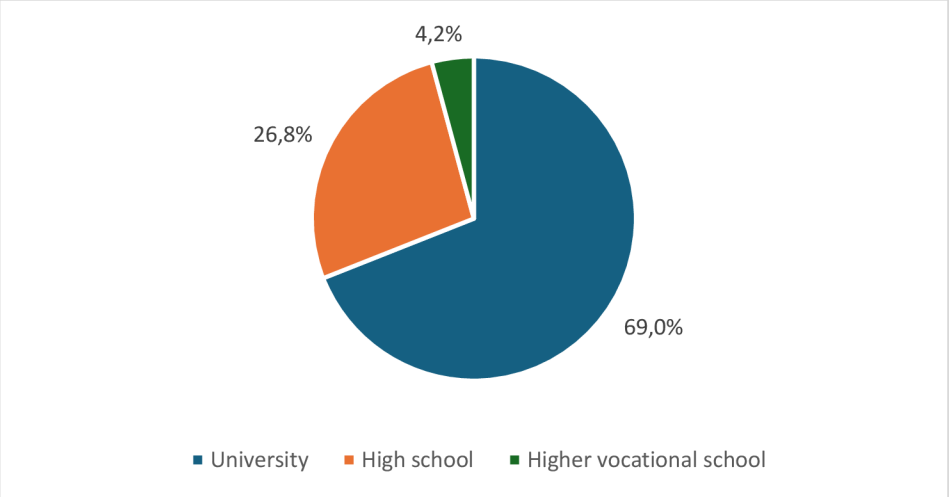
While for the pure statistics it was best to keep this question open-ended, to visually represent the distribution, the collected data were categorized into three "life-stage" groups. The vast majority of the sample fell into the 20–25 age bracket, accounting for 44 respondents (62%). The younger cohort aged under 20 represented 13 participants (18.3%), and the remaining 14 respondents (19.7%) were aged 26 or older. These findings heavily supported the convenience sampling discussed in Chapter 2; the young adult demographic was successfully isolated and consists predominantly of university-aged individuals.



Graph 2: Age distribution of the respondents. Source: Author.

3.1.3 Educational Background of the Respondents

The third question (Q3) was meant to investigate the current educational status of all the participants. Once again, all the initial respondents (N = 71) were able to provide an answer. The data revealed that a clear majority of the research sample consisted of higher education students, with 49 participants (69%) currently studying at a university. The second-largest group was formed by high school students and accounted for 19 respondents (26.8%). Only 3 participants (4.2%) indicated that they were enrolled at a higher vocational school.

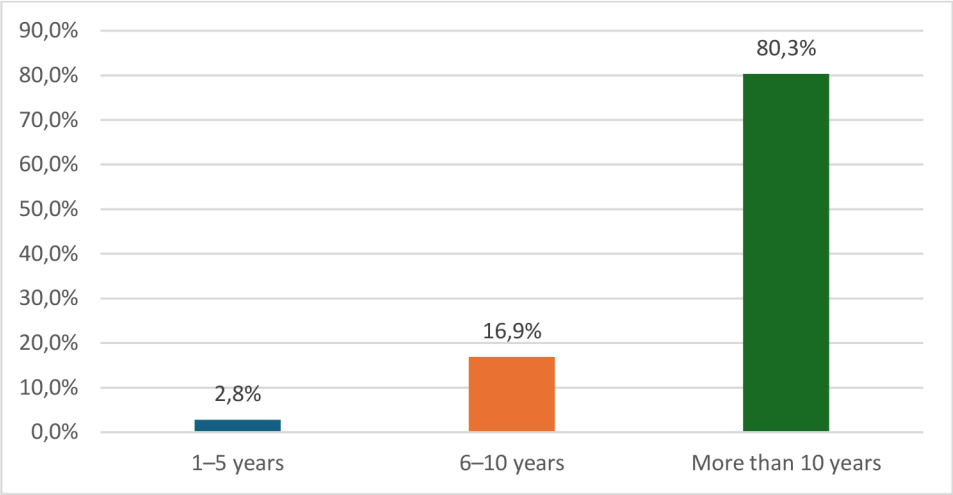


Graph 3: Educational background of the respondents. Source: Author.

These findings strongly correlate with the age distribution described in the previous section (Section 3.1.2) and confirm that the questionnaire primarily reached young adults engaged in tertiary education.

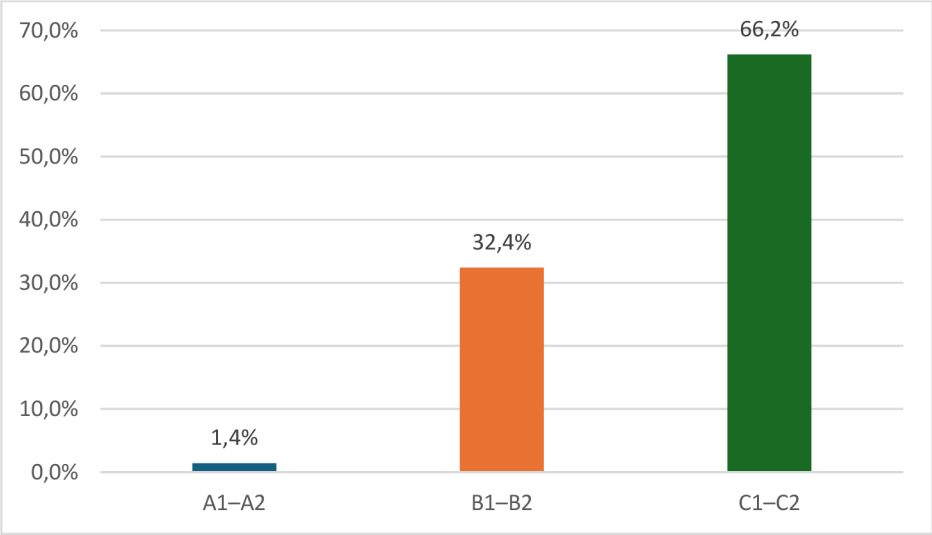
3.1.4 Length of English Language Learning

To further explore the educational background, primarily the linguistic baseline the respondents have, the next two questions monitored the total number of years the participants had been learning English, and what English proficiency they believe they had achieved. Regarding the duration of formal learning (Q4), the generality of the respondents, specifically 57 of them (80.3%), indicated that they had been learning English for more than 10 years. The second group, consisting of 12 respondents (16.9%), reported a learning duration between 6 and 10 years, while only 2 respondents (2.8%) stated they had been learning the language for merely 1 to 5 years.



Graph 4: Length of the respondents' English language learning. Source: Author.

When asked to evaluate their overall English proficiency using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale (Q5), the respondents' self-assessments strongly mirrored the long-term learning metrics from the previous question. A dominant majority of 47 participants (66.2%) rated their skills at the advanced/proficient level (C1–C2). The intermediate tier (B1–B2) was selected by 23 respondents (32.4%), and only a single person (1.4%) chose the beginner option (A1–A2).



Graph 5: Respondents' self-assessed English proficiency based on the CEFR scale. Source: Author.

With the range of the respondents' age, it seems unusual that a small cohort stated they had been learning English for only 1 to 5 years. This anomaly can be logically attributed to respondent misinterpretation of the question. Given their age, all the participants had certainly been exposed to mandatory English lessons at school, but perhaps they interpreted the question as asking about their self-directed learning. Overall, judging by these introductory metrics, the

sample consists of highly experienced and confident English speakers. Such an advanced linguistic baseline is relevant for the following analysis, as it provides an important foundation for the participants to fluidly navigate through more complex video games without significant language barriers that would otherwise hinder their experience.

3.2 Gaming Habits and English Language Exposure

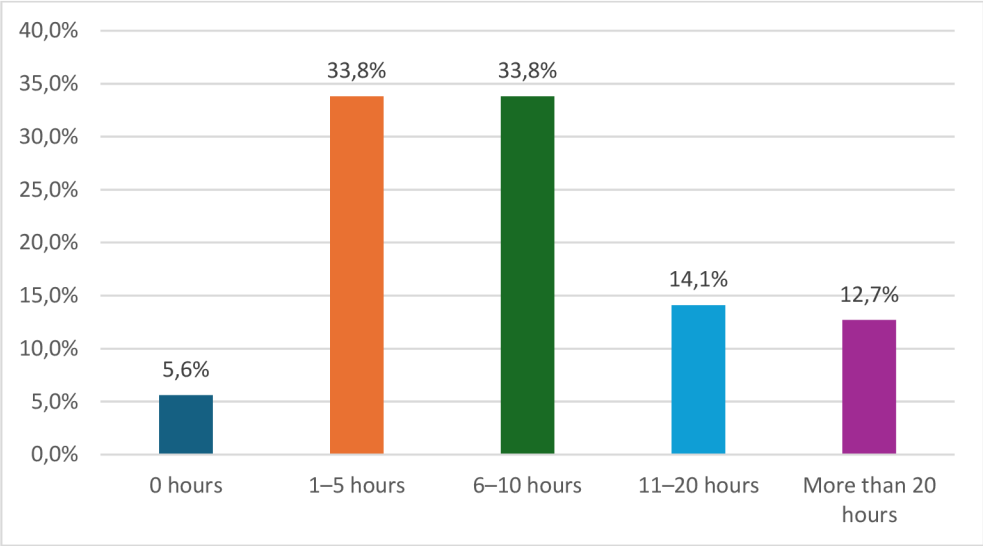
Following the initial demographic profiling of the research sample, this section shifts the focus to the core behavioural metrics of the respondents related to their experience playing video games. Understanding the respondents' gaming habits is essential for establishing the intensity and nature of their contact with the English language.

The questions in this category were designed to assess not only the volume of time dedicated to video games, but also the exact environments, and genres that allow language acquisition. Additionally, this phase of the questionnaire served a crucial role, and methodological junction, as it narrowed the research sample exclusively to active video game players. This was done to secure the validity and reliability of the subsequent findings; removing respondents who are not active video game players ensures that the upcoming statistics are not distorted.

3.2.1 Weekly Time Spent Playing Video Games and Sample Filtering

Instead of collecting more data for general demographic profiling, this question (Q6) marked a transition to the analysis of the participants' gaming habits. It investigated the average number of hours per week the respondents spent playing video games. All 71 participants answered this question. The collected data disclosed a fairly balanced distribution among casual and more devoted gamers: 24 respondents (33.8%) revealed that they played for 1 to 5 hours per week; a group of an identical amount engaged in gaming for 6 to 10 hours weekly. Less numerous groups were formed by more intensive players, with 10 respondents (14.1%) playing for 11 to 20 hours, and 9 individuals (12.7%) spending more than 20 hours per week playing video games.

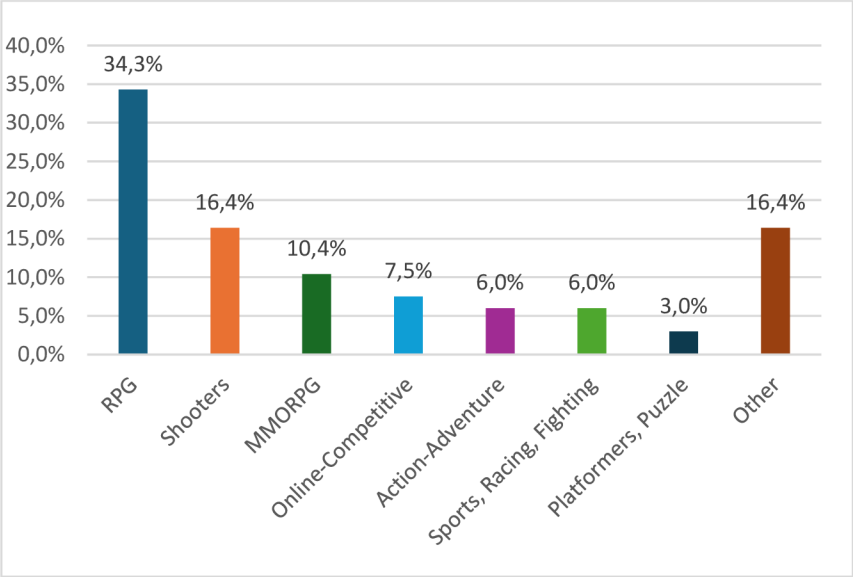
Crucially, Q6 served as a filtering tool within the research. A moderately small group of the data sample, specifically 4 respondents (5.6%), indicated that they spent 0 hours per week playing video games. Everyone with such answer was automatically redirected to the end of the questionnaire, as the core objective of this thesis is to examine English language acquisition through active digital gameplay, and their further participation would distort the subsequent data. For the remaining sections of this study, the active research sample is adjusted (N = 67).



Graph 6: Weekly time spent playing video games by the respondents. Source: Author.

3.2.2 Preferred Video Game Genres

The following question (Q7) focused on the specific video game genres that the respondents played the most. Instead of listing every category separately, the text highlights the most significant trends, while the complete distribution is fully visualized in the bar chart below.



Graph 7: Preferred video game genres among the respondents. Source: Author.

The data revealed a major preference for RPG (role-playing games), the category emerged as the single most dominant genre, chosen by 23 respondents (34.3%). Shooters and the "Other" category tied for the second position, with each being selected by 11 respondents (16.4%). The remaining participants were distributed in smaller numbers among MMORPGs, action-adventures, online-competitive titles, sports games, and platformers.

Since the "Other" option chosen by 11 respondents included an open-ended text field, a qualitative inspection of these responses provides deeper insights into their gaming preferences. The answers indicated a tendency towards real-time strategies, sandbox and survival games (such as Minecraft), and niche action sub-genres. Crucially, a few respondents expressed their tendencies to regularly play in groups of two to five people, mentioning cooperative multiplayer games.

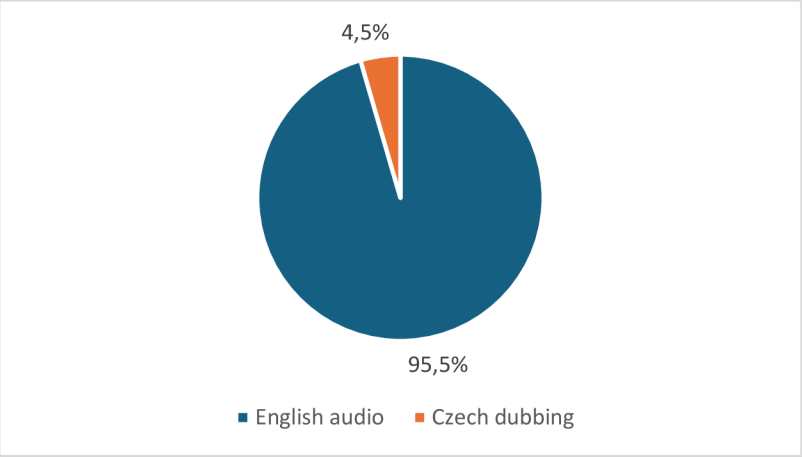
From a language acquisition perspective, the dominant RPG genre (34.3%) as well as the findings from the "Other" category, are momentous. RPGs, survival sandboxes, and strategies are inherently text-heavy or communication-heavy; they rely on complex narratives, quest logs, and item descriptions. Similarly, the popular shooter genre (16.4%), while less narrative-heavy, routinely exposes players to intense English communication and terminology through multiplayer team coordination that is often necessary. Such a great exposure to the English language has the theoretical potential to facilitate language acquisition, as players are expected to deduce the meaning of various linguistic elements from the provided context. Consequently, this immersive interaction within the gaming environment can help bridge the gap between passive comprehension and active language utilisation, allowing the players to internalize complex linguistic structures in a stress-free environment.

Rather than claiming immediate acquisition, the respondents' genre preferences suggest that an optimal baseline for incidental language acquisition and extramural English development has been established. These are both concepts previously outlined in the theoretical part of this thesis. This baseline exists since virtually every genre represented in the sample offers distinct affordances for language contact, whether through passive exposure to narrative text, auditory input, or active communication in multiplayer environments.

3.2.3 Language Settings

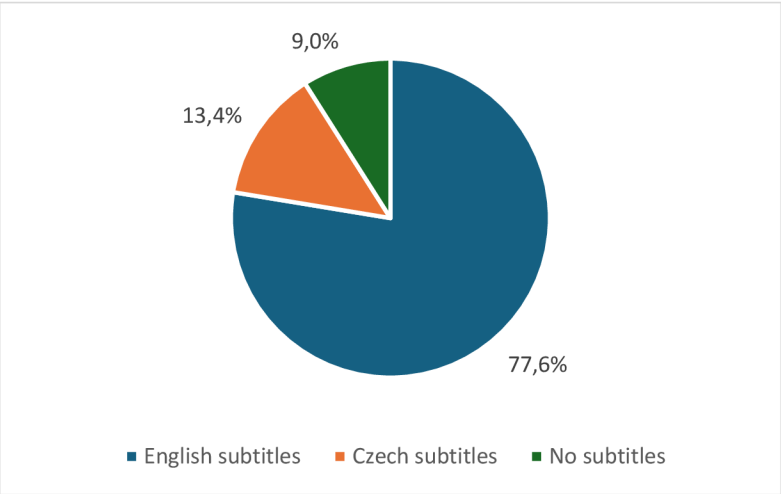
While identifying the preferred video game genres establishes the structural type of content the respondents encounter, a proper analysis of language acquisition necessitates shifting focus to the specific linguistic settings the players actively configure. Therefore, the following two questions (Q8, Q9) were designed to investigate the primary language settings chosen for in-game audio outputs and on-screen subtitles. Collecting such data offers a clear picture of the multimodal input, whether it is auditory or visual, that the respondents process during their gameplay.

Regarding the primary audio configuration (Q8), there is a near-unanimous preference for English voiceovers. A vast majority of 64 respondents (95.5%) stated that they played video games with English audio and only the 3 remaining individuals (4.5%) selected that they use Czech dubbing. No usage of other languages was reported. This demonstrates that the researched sample is almost entirely exposed to authentic spoken English, which offers auditory input with various accents, intonations, and pronunciation patterns.



Graph 8: Primary in-game audio configuration chosen by the respondents. Source: Author.

While the audio preferences were heavily uniform, according to the collected data, the prioritized settings of in-game subtitles (Q9) displayed a marginally higher degree of variance. A powerful inclination toward the English language still remained, with 52 participants (77.6%) selecting it as their most utilised language for subtitles. Conversely, 9 respondents (13.4%) preferred Czech captions, and a small group of 6 individuals (9.0%) chose to play without any subtitles whatsoever.



Graph 9: On-screen subtitles configuration chosen by the respondents. Source: Author.

A closer cross-examination of the data gathered from Q8 and Q9 revealed that 2 respondents configured their gaming environments entirely in their native language, selecting Czech for both audio outputs and subtitles, which thereby minimized their English language exposure during gameplay.

From a language acquisition standpoint, the fact that more than three-quarters of the active sample (77.6%) actively combine the English language for both audio and subtitles is highly significant. In theory, this specific configuration is referred to as multimodal input. As previously outlined in the theoretical framework of this thesis in reference to James Paul Gee's (2003) concept of semiotic domains, the fact that video games operate with numerous modalities that support language acquisition is precisely what makes them valuable. By simultaneously processing of auditory streams and textual subtitles combined with rich visual context, the players are able to operate within a complex semiotic environment. Such stimulation enhances retention, comprehension, and acquisition as a whole.

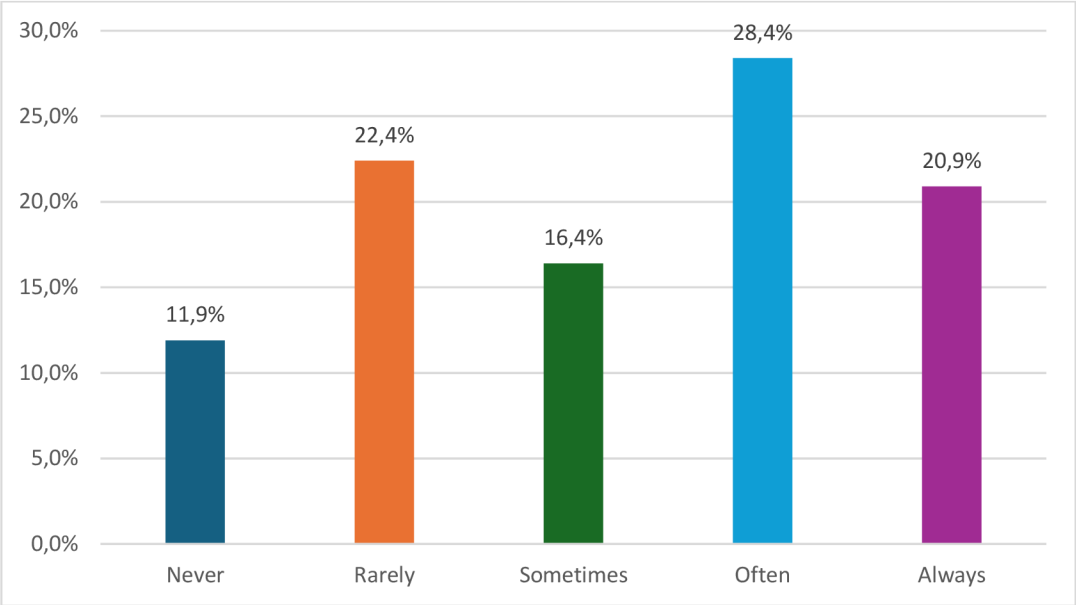
3.2.4 In-Game Activities and Language Engagement

In order to properly uncover the nature of active user interaction, the next question (Q11) moves beyond passive localization settings. A five-point Likert scale (ranging from *Never* to *Always*) has been utilised to track distinct communicative, receptive, and cognitive behavioural patterns that players engage in during gaming. By evaluating these variables, it is possible to map out the respondents' active language output, assess the value of the environment, and finally evaluate how video games naturally facilitate linguistic development.

3.2.4.1 Active Written and Spoken Communication

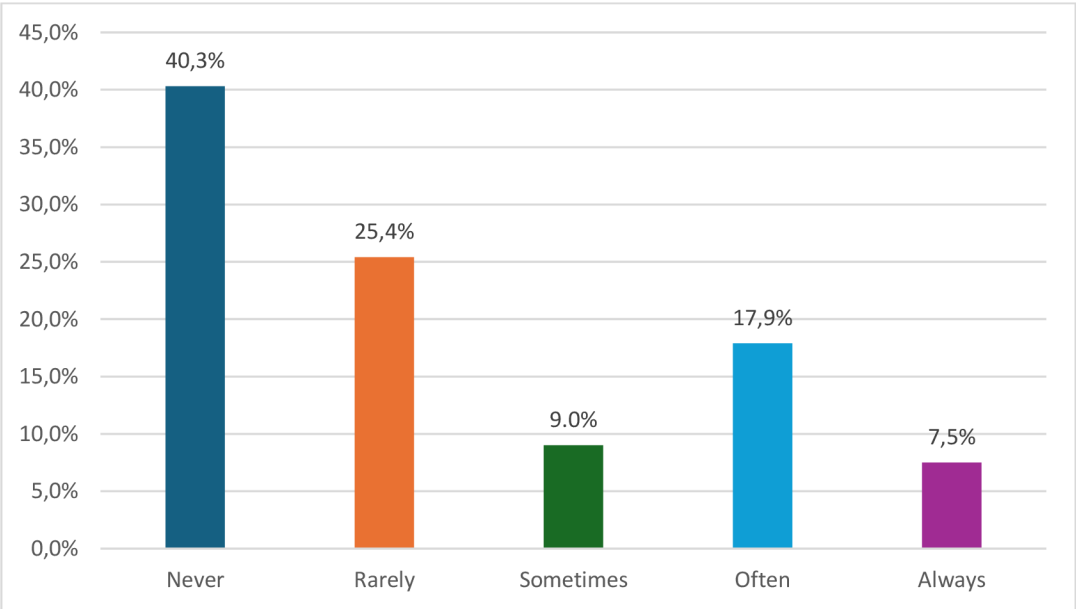
The first two components of this question contrasted the production of English in written and spoken forms through in-game text chatting and voice chatting. The respondents were asked to evaluate the frequency of their active output based on two specific prompts.

When presented with the statement *"Communicating with other players in English (text chatting)"*, the data revealed that half of the active research sample engaged in written English production frequently, with 33 (49.3%) respondents selecting either *Often* or *Always*. Conversely, a combined total of 23 (34.3%) respondents *Never* or *Rarely* utilise text chat, leaving 11 (16.4%) who do so only *Sometimes*.



Graph 10: Frequency of the respondents' active English production via in-game text chatting. Source: Author.

This active engagement stands in contrast to the results gathered about communication through voice chats. When reacting to the prompt *"Communicating with other players in English (voice chatting)"*, an overwhelming majority of 44 (65.7%) respondents stated they *Never* or *Rarely* engaged in voice chatting. Only a quarter of the sample, which is 17 (25.4%) participants utilised this feature frequently (*Often* or *Always*), while the remaining 6 (9.0%) engaged in it *Sometimes*.



Graph 11: Frequency of the respondents' active English production via in-game voice chatting. Source: Author.

Overall, the results revealed a significant preference for textual communication over a verbal one. When interpreted through the lens of SLA theories, specifically Stephen Krashen's

(1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, this discrepancy reveals a key structural strength of the gaming medium: video games naturally establish a low-stress and highly autonomous learning space. To better comprehend the results, this approach to communication must be evaluated on two levels: mechanical and psychological.

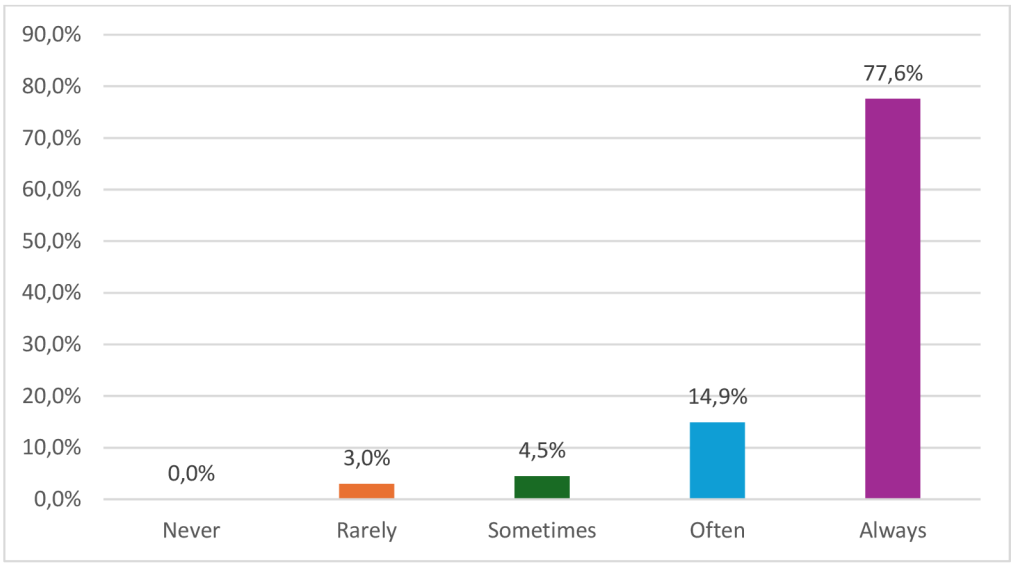
On the mechanical level, the lower engagement in voice chat was predetermined by the established genre preferences. Since a substantial portion of the sample frequently played single-player, narrative-driven games where live spoken communication is non-existent, the data was fairly affected. However, the survey tracked the frequency of use rather than the underlying causes. The data does not differentiate between users who avoided voice chat and those who simply lacked the mechanical opportunity to communicate. Disentangling these variables remains a compelling objective for future research.

Psychologically, this is where the concepts of Krashen (1982) and Vygotsky (1978) fully manifest. While the avoidance of voice chat suggests that live speaking may trigger a high internal affective filter (simply anxiety), the gaming environment itself counteracts by giving the player a full autonomy. Such autonomy lets the player decide whether they want to engage in spoken communication or use other forms of interaction. Unlike traditional classrooms where students are simply put on the spot, video games usually do not penalize or punish silence. Within this environment, text-based communication acts as a linguistic scaffolding within the player's ZPD. It provides an extended cognitive processing time to formulate ideas at their own chosen pace, keeping their affective filter firmly lowered and allowing them to transition to spoken English only when they feel confident enough.

3.2.4.2 Receptive Language Skills: Reading and Listening

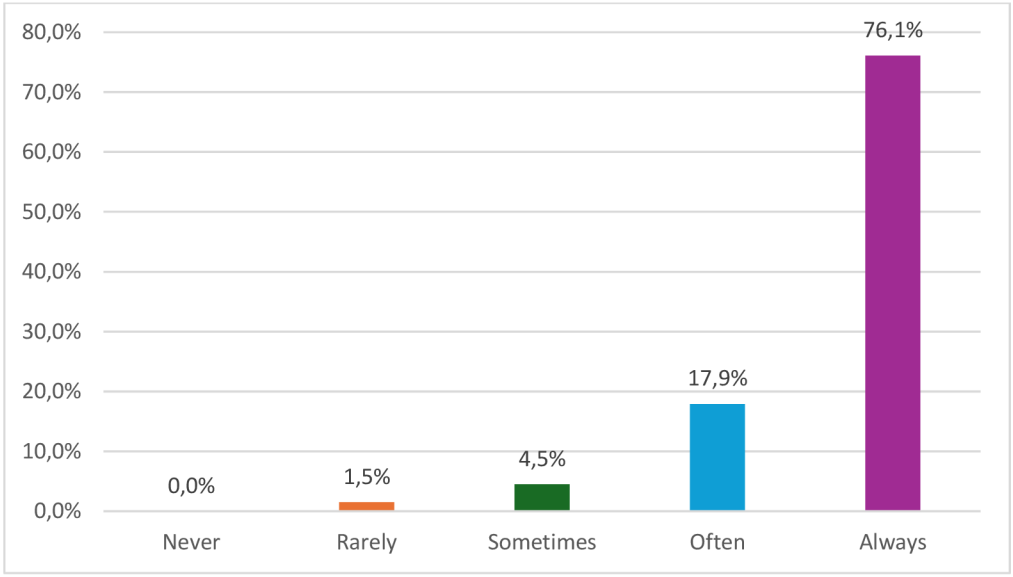
The next two statements shifted focus from active language production to receptive language skills, particularly evaluating how often the respondents exposed themselves to written and auditory English stimuli. While hesitant engagement was observed in verbal production, the data regarding receptive engagement demonstrated a complete opposite.

When presented with the prompt *"Listening to English dialogues or narrations within the game"*, not a single respondent selected *Never* and only a negligible minority of 5 people (7.5%) chose *Rarely* or *Sometimes*. The vast majority of the research sample engaged with auditory English on a regular basis, with a combined total of 62 (92.5%) participants selecting either *Often* or *Always*.



Graph 12: Frequency of the respondents' receptive English engagement via in-game listening. Source: Author.

An identical behaviour pattern emerged from the second statement regarding this category, *"Reading in-game English text (descriptions, tutorials, menus)"*. Again, *Never* was not selected and only a small portion of 4 respondents (6%) chose *Rarely* or *Sometimes*. The remaining 63 (94.0%) respondents revealed that reading in English is a constant baseline activity during their gameplay by selecting either *Often* or *Always*.



Graph 13: Frequency of the respondents' receptive English engagement via in-game reading. Source: Author.

When analysing these findings from a pedagogical perspective, the striking disparity between the previous active communication data and this receptive data provides crucial insights into the core of digital game-based English language learning. While live communication, specifically the one through voice chatting, was avoided by a large part of the

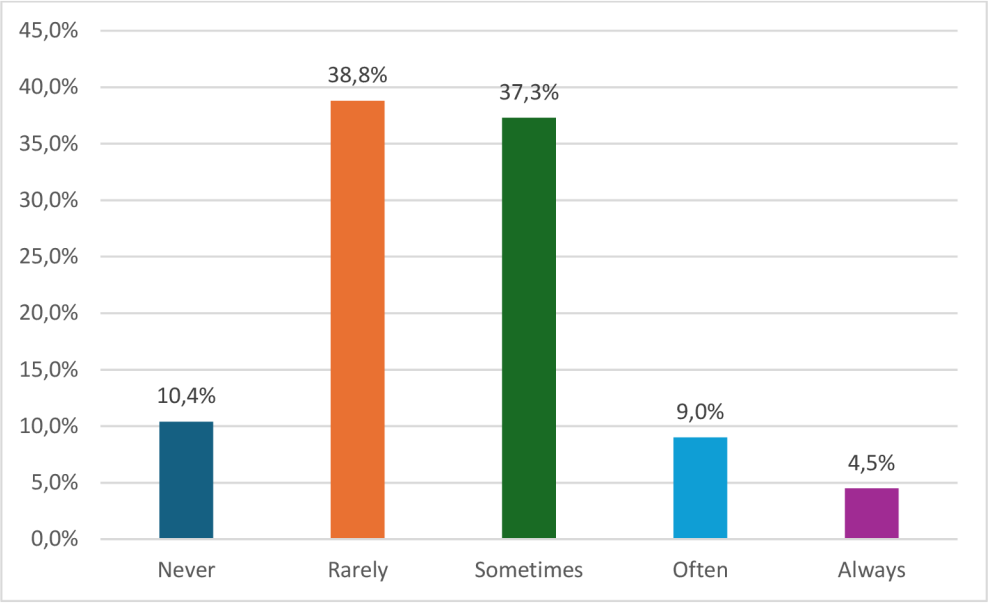
sample, reading and listening in English were revealed to be nearly universal components of the gaming experience.

From a linguistic standpoint, while these results do not directly measure language acquisition itself, they demonstrate that video games subject players to a continuous and immense amount of the English language. Such an environment is an ideal prerequisite required by Stephen Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis. According to his theory, language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input. Video games are an exemplary medium for such input as they offer a multimodal environment where dialogues are paired together with text, visual effects, animations, and other types of situational context. Such a high degree of contextualization allows the player to understand unfamiliar language by utilising these surrounding contextual clues. This way, raw linguistic data is being transformed into comprehensible input.

3.2.4.3 Vocabulary Acquisition: Contextual Clues vs. Dictionary Use

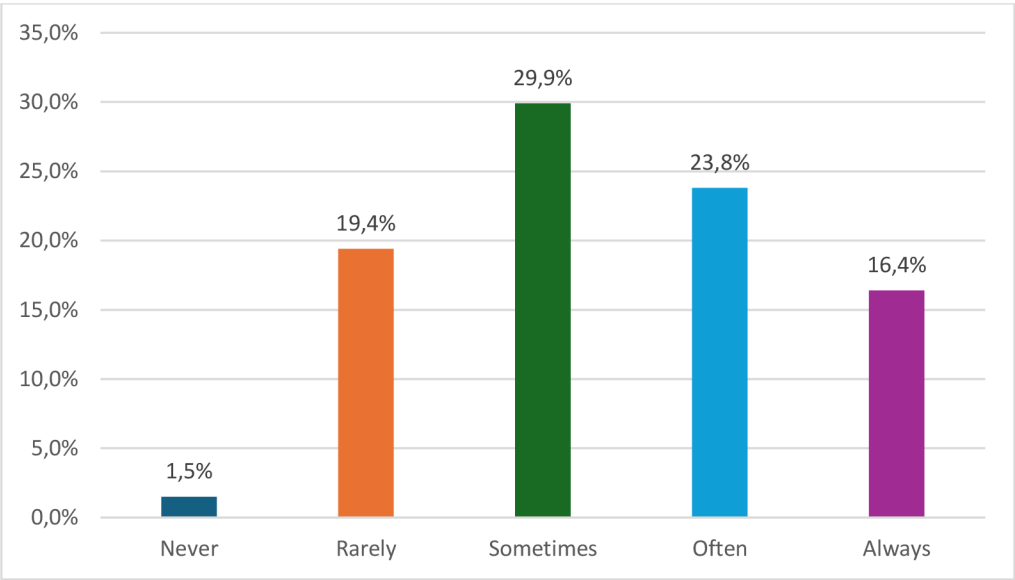
The next two measured activities were focused on vocabulary acquisition strategies, specifically tracking how the respondents managed unfamiliar vocabulary that appeared during their gameplay.

When presented with a statement regarding intentional vocabulary learning, *"Looking up the meaning of English words/phrases you encounter in the game",* the vast majority of the sample indicated a low reliance on external tools. Only a small portion of the respondents revealed that they look the meaning of English vocabulary regularly, with 6 (9.0%) participants selecting *Often* and 3 (4.5%) choosing *Always*. More than third of the respondents, 25 (37.3%) chose *Sometimes*, while the largest group, consisting of 26 (38.8%) participants, selected *Rarely*. Additionally, 7 (10.4%) respondents claimed they *Never* looked up the meaning of unfamiliar words.



Graph 14: Frequency of the respondents' intentional vocabulary learning by looking up unfamiliar words. Source: Author.

A fundamentally opposite distribution emerged from the following statement, *"Guessing the meaning of unknown words from context (without using a dictionary"*. Only 1 (1.5%) participant selected *Never* and 13 (19.4%) chose *Rarely*. The remaining majority utilised contextual clues either conditionally or on a more regular basis, with 20 (29.9%) responding with *Sometimes* and the remaining 33 (49.2%) selecting either *Often* or *Always*.



Graph 15: Frequency of the respondents' vocabulary learning by guessing the meaning of unknown words from context. Source: Author.

The collected data uncovered a pronounced behavioural contrast; there is a clear preference for contextual guesswork over manual looking up of the meaning. These results offer crucial clues regarding the cognitive state of gamers. In the context of Second Language

Acquisition (SLA), this behaviour mirrors Stephen Krashen's (1982) fundamental distinction between language learning and language acquisition. While the usage of an external dictionary represents an intentional learning strategy aimed at explicit and conscious linguistic precision, the derivation of meaning from context aligns with subconscious language acquisition.

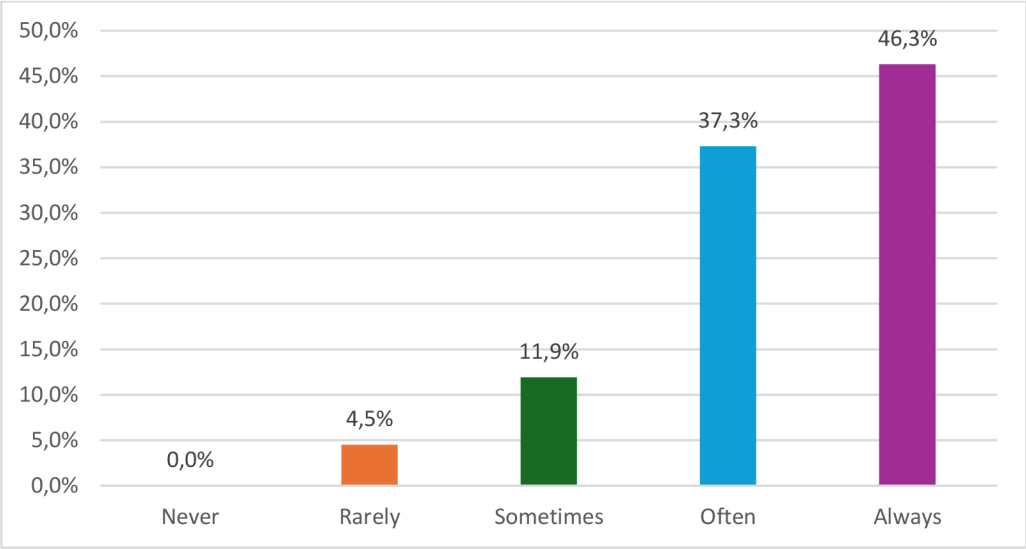
The preference toward lexical inference is only efficient because of the structural nature of video games, which effectively validates the principle of situated meaning by James Paul Gee. Language, instead of being presented in an abstract, detached manner, is always tied to visual actions, environments, and even specific goals. When there is an encounter with an unfamiliar vocabulary, the multimodal interface allows the player to derive its meaning through non-verbal input such as visual icons, animations, and immediate consequences. Since the verbal elements are processed alongside these context clues, the players are effectively able to overcome their linguistic gaps without any formal instruction.

However, as per Linderoth (2012), a heavy reliance on semiotic or contextual cues may lead to a non-effective language processing. Bypassing the language and relying merely on the game mechanics, language acquisition might actually be limited. Nevertheless, with half (49.2%) of this thesis' data sample stating that they guess meaning from context frequently, it is expected that the multimodal environment serves as an active catalyst for language acquisition, not a system for language evasion.

3.2.4.4 Out-of-Game Exposure and Community Engagement

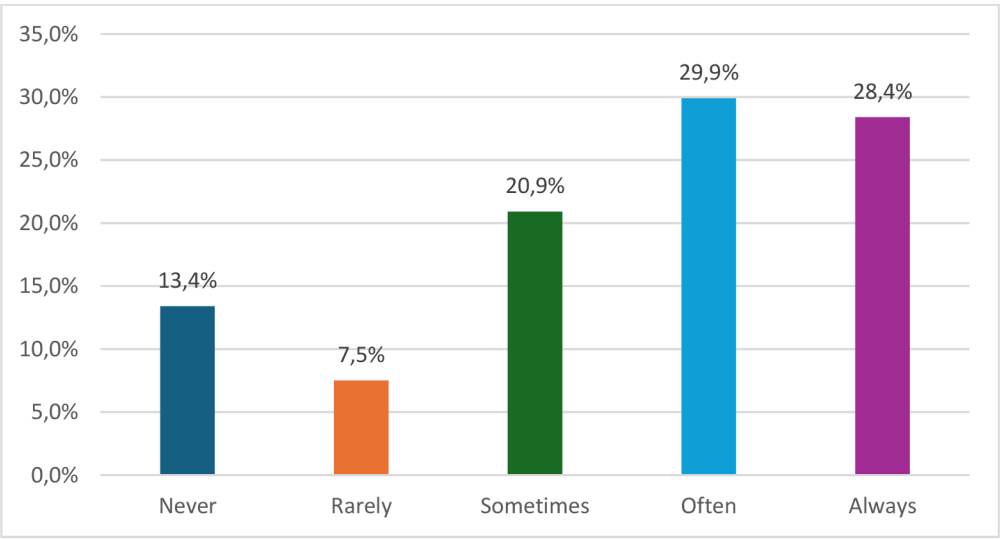
The next two investigated statements expanded beyond the actual game environment and examined English language exposure outside of video games. The prime objective of this subsection was to determine whether language engagement extends into the respondents' broader digital lives. As the collected data showcase, English language exposure does not end when the game does.

When reacting to a statement *"Watching game-related content in English"*, a striking majority reported a high frequency of consuming game-related content. Not a single respondent stated they *Never* watched game-related content, and a mere 3 (4.5%) participants selected that they watch it only *Rarely*. While 8 (11.9%) individuals responded with Sometimes, the remaining bulk of the cohort reported a regular consumption of English language gaming content, with 25 (37.3%) selecting *Often* and 31 (46.3%) choosing *Always*.



Graph 16: Frequency of the respondents' consumption of English game-related content. Source: Author.

A marginally more distributed pattern emerged regarding active social participation, but the results still remained heavily positive. When presented with the statement *"Interacting with gaming communities in English outside of the game (discord, reddit)"*, more than half of the sample chose the options indicating they regularly communicate in English within external gaming communities. While 9 (13.4%) respondents chose *Never* and 5 (7.5%) selected *Rarely*, 14 (20.9%) participants engaged *Sometimes*. Most participants, specifically 20 (29.9%) engaged *Often* within the gaming communities and the remaining 19 (28.4%) answered *Always*. While these results are not as dominant as the previous ones, they still indicate a significant trend.



Graph 17: Frequency of the respondents' interaction with English-speaking gaming communities outside of games. Source: Author.

From a theoretical standpoint, these notably high numbers validate Gee's (2004) concept of affinity spaces. Per Gee (2004), the learning and linguistic potential of video games does not end when the software is turned off. Affinity spaces accommodate both receptive language exposure (such as the massive consumption of content related to video games observed in the first statement) and active participation within these spaces. According to his ideas, all the players are part of a broad community, and they can further communicate without actually playing the game. These digital environments act as what Thorne, Black, and Sykes (2009), call a social landscape. People who take part share an affinity toward the same thing, which naturally reduces psychological barriers of communication.

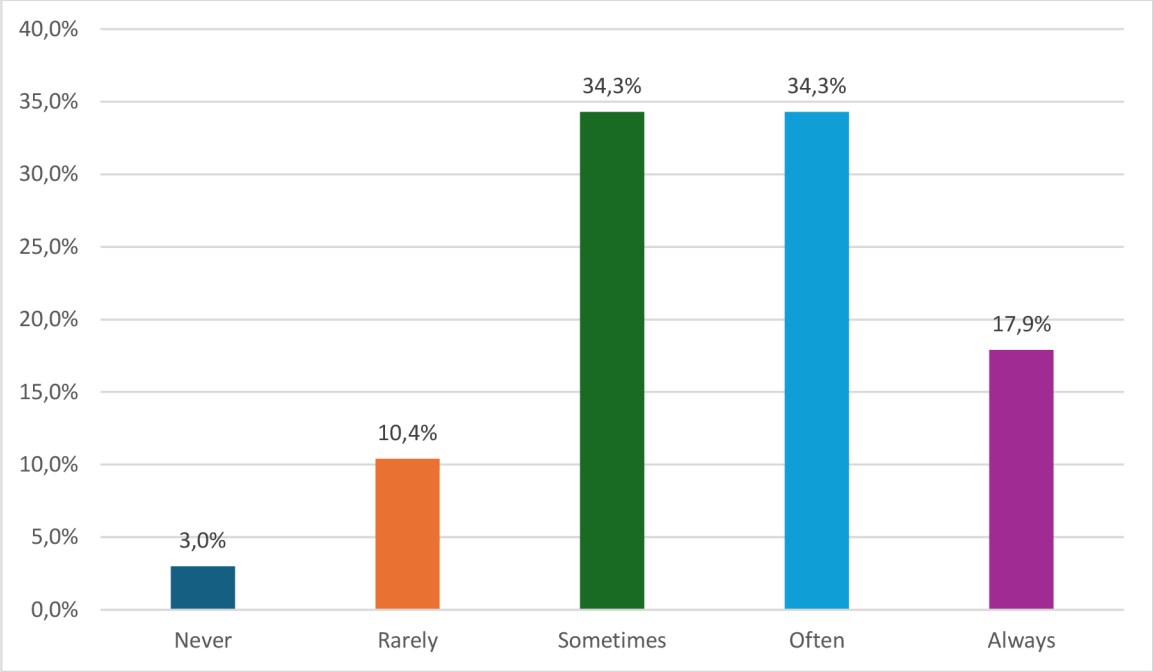
Furthermore, these findings perfectly align with the concept of third places introduced by Oldenburg and further explored by Steinkuehler and Williams in terms of gaming. Gaming communities function as third places where natural peer-to-peer communication takes place, providing an informal environment for players to actively utilise English language. Since 58.3% of the respondents frequently interact within these spaces, they are expected to be continuously subjected to both English language input and output.

Nevertheless, there is a certain limitation of the collected data that must be acknowledged. While the questionnaire successfully documented the high frequency of the respondents' engagement outside of the games, there is no established methodology to measure the qualitative depth of their interactions. Because of this, it remains indefinite whether the communication within gaming communities provides a complex and relevant linguistic output or not as impactful interactions (e.g., sharing memes, short phrases). Further qualitative research would be highly beneficial to explore the language production in these third places.

3.2.4.5 Application of Learnt Vocabulary

Another crucial aspect of this section addressed whether the vocabulary acquired through the video games environment is successfully applied in real-world communication. The prompt stated: *"Trying to use new words or phrases learned in a game in other contexts"*. The collected data showed a high linguistic transferability. Only a small fraction of the sample reported a complete lack of transfer, with 2 (3.0%) respondents selecting *Never* and 7 (10.4%) *Rarely*. In contrast, 23 (34.3%) respondents reported they attempt to transfer acquired vocabulary *Sometimes*. The remaining majority demonstrated a high tendency toward lexical transfer from video games, with 23 (34.3%) choosing *Often* and 12 (17.9%) selecting *Always*. Combined, 52.2% of the data sample regularly attempted to implement their gaming vocabulary

in non-gaming contexts; furthermore, this figure expanded to 86.5% when including occasional attempts as well (*Sometimes*).



Graph 18: Frequency of the respondents' attempts to apply newly acquired vocabulary in other contexts. Source: Author.

These findings are essential to counterargue against traditional criticism regarding game-based language acquisition. Alice Chik (2014) argues that vocabulary acquired via gaming experience has low real-world transferability and is fundamentally often overly niche, archaic, or simply only related to the specific video game. She underlines the impractical nature of the vocabulary acquired through gaming.

However, the fact that over 86% of the respondents in this study are able to actively try reuse the acquired language elements on at least occasional level, is prove that contemporary gaming lexicon is versatile and usable in standard communication. According to the collected data, video games are a relevant source of the English language and can serve as rich repositories of functional vocabulary directly applicable to daily English communication.

Furthermore, it is worth noting the specific formulation of the statement the respondents were reacting to, as it measures particularly conscious effort ("*Trying to use*") to implement the acquired vocabulary. In the context of Stephen Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, language acquisition is subconscious and so would be the utilisation of acquired vocabulary. Therefore, it can be argued, that the everyday transfer of vocabulary within this sample might be even higher than the data suggests.

3.2.5 Primary Motivation behind Video Games

To better understand the nature of language acquisition in video games, it is necessary to examine another important metric that the following question shifted focus toward. The main objective of the following question (Q10) was to determine whether the respondents actively utilise video games as educational tools to improve their linguistic skills, or if English development is a byproduct of their gaming experience.

The acquired data revealed that the primary goal for a staggering majority of 60 (89.6%) respondents was simply playing and enjoying the game itself. By contrast, only a single respondent (1.5%) indicated that their main motivation was improving their English language skills. The remaining 6 (9.0%) individuals selected the option "*Both*", situating themselves in the category balancing for language practice and entertainment.

In theory, such astounding preference for entertainment and enjoyment of the game itself provides a solid foundation for incidental language acquisition. As Pia Sundqvist highlights in her framework of Extramural English, while her concept includes any exposure to English language outside of school, the vast majority of such activities are driven by intrinsic motivation. Since nearly 90% of the data sample revealed that they played primarily to enjoy the game, the collected data empirically supports her theoretical framework by demonstrating that Extramural English in the context of video games is almost exclusively authentic. Moreover, this high level of authenticity plays a vital role in minimizing the psychological pressure; within Stephen Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, this relates to a lowered Affective Filter. Because the respondents are fully immersed in the gameplay rather than focusing on their linguistic performance, their anxiety regarding English language development is significantly lowered.

3.2.6 Respondents' Self-Assessment of Language Improvement

One of the final segments of the questionnaire once again utilised a five-point Likert scale, this time ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The following ten statements were designed to capture the respondents' subjective self-assessment regarding the influence of video games on various aspects of English language proficiency. To best display the collected data, the complete distribution of the percentage responses of all ten statements (labelled S1 to S10) is systematically summarised in the table below. For clarity, the individual statements are presented in the table under abbreviated titles, corresponding to the following full questionnaire items:

- **S1:** Playing video games has significantly improved my listening comprehension skills.
- **S2:** Video games have helped me to significantly expand my general English vocabulary.
- **S3:** I find it easier to communicate in English because of my gaming experience.
- **S4:** I understand written English instructions better thanks to my gaming experience.
- **S5:** Because of my gaming experience, my pronunciation has improved.
- **S6:** I have learnt specific idioms or phrases through gaming that I would not learn in school.
- **S7:** I feel that learning English through video games comes more naturally than through textbooks.
- **S8:** I feel that learning English through video games is more efficient than through textbooks.
- **S9:** I feel more confident using English while playing games than in a classroom setting.
- **S10:** I often learn new words or grammar in games without actively trying to study them.

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Somewhat Disagree (%)	Neither (%)	Somewhat Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
S1	0.0	1.5	7.5	32.8	58.2
S2	0.0	3.0	4.5	29.9	62.7
S3	3.0	7.5	10.4	37.3	41.8
S4	1.5	3.0	10.4	31.3	53.7
S5	3.0	13.4	23.9	44.8	14.9
S6	0.0	7.5	9.0	37.3	46.3
S7	0.0	1.5	10.4	31.3	56.7
S8	3.0	14.9	23.9	26.9	31.3

S9	3.0	9.0	20.8	37.3	29.9
S10	0.0	4.5	11.9	40.3	43.3

Table 1

Table 1: Respondents' self-assessment of their language development. Source: Author.

Before rigorously evaluating these results, a brief methodological clarification regarding terminology is necessary. Within these statements, the term "learn" (or "learning") has been consistently utilised. The theoretical framework strictly distinguishes between conscious learning and subconscious acquisition based on Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis. However, to ensure maximum comprehension and prevent any semantic confusion, the term "acquire" (or "acquisition") was not used, since it is expected that the broader demographic might not be familiar with the psycholinguistic difference.

To prevent descriptive fragmentation, the subsequent analysis synthesises these ten statements into three thematic groups, which focus on linguistic skills, the communicative and social dimensions of gaming in comparison to formal learning, and the perceived efficiency of language acquisition through video games compared to traditional pedagogy.

An analysis of the linguistic skills cluster within Table 1 (items S1, S2, S4, and S5) uncovered an overwhelming unanimity regarding the positive impact of gaming on receptive skills and language acquisition. The highest levels of agreement were recorded for improved listening comprehension (S1) and vocabulary expansion (S2), where a combined total of 91.0% and 92.6% of respondents, respectively, expressed positive agreement. A similar trend was followed when the participants evaluated their improvement in understanding written instructions (S4), with 85.0% of the sample noting an improvement. While the improvement in pronunciation (S5) was not as unanimous, a majority of the sample still indicated that gaming aided their pronunciation. A quarter of the sample (23.9%) preferred to remain neutral regarding this statement, and 16.4% disagreed completely. This amount of divergence suggested that while the multimodal nature of the video game environments provides exceptional support for auditory and visual comprehension, it does not offer as many opportunities for active output.

When evaluating the communicative and social dimension in comparison to formal education (items S3, S6, and S9), the data highlighted a major impact on situational confidence and functional proficiency. Specifically, a substantial majority of 79.1% of the respondents

found communication in English easier because of their gaming experience (S3). This is strongly complemented by the 83.6% who agreed that they have learnt specific idioms or phrases within the gaming environment that are typically absent from standard formal education. Furthermore, the data suggested that the usage of the English language was far easier and less stressful during a gaming session compared to a formal academic setting. More than two thirds (67.2%) of the respondents expressed higher situational confidence while communicating within the gaming environment, highlighting lower anxiety levels associated with the affective filter.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the remaining data compared the perceived value of language acquisition through video games and language learning in a more formal setting (S7, S8, and S10). A major part (88.0%) of the respondents agreed that "learning" English through video games felt more natural than using standard textbooks (S7). A similarly sized cohort (83.6%) confirmed that they frequently internalised vocabulary or grammar; importantly, this happened without any active study intention (S10). However, regarding the overall educational system (S8), the collective data revealed a lower degree of consensus. When presented with a statement claiming that *"learning through video games is more efficient than through textbooks"*, the agreement dropped to 58.2%, while a high neutrality rate of 23.9% took place. The overall disagreement rose to 17.9%. While these results are still positively skewed towards video games, the value that structured textbooks offer seems to be recognized. Collectively, within the examined sample, the data served as a direct confirmation of incidental language acquisition through video games.

3.2.7 Qualitative Insights from Open-Ended Questions

The last part of the questionnaire contained two open-ended questions to give the respondents the opportunity to provide qualitative insights. Answering these two questions was not mandatory and not providing an answer meant nothing for the overall results the questionnaire provided. These two questions were drafted to bring in more qualitative data by firstly identifying specific video games that helped the respondents with language acquisition. Secondly, the respondents were allowed to reflect freely on their personal experience with gaming.

3.2.7.1 Specific Gaming Titles Helping With Language Acquisition

The respondents were asked to name a specific video game (or video game series) that they perceived as the most valuable one for their English proficiency. Based on the feedback from 48 respondents, these are the most prominent titles categorized into three genres:

- **Sandbox and Survival Games**: Minecraft was the title that happened to be mentioned most frequently appearing 15 times. Multiple respondents highlighted how explicitly this game helped them with their initial vocabulary expansion in childhood. One respondent stated that Minecraft was the first game they played before reaching a higher level of English language proficiency, thus making the game the most valuable out of all they have played. Another respondent stated that Minecraft provided them with the largest foundations of vocabulary. This tier was additionally complemented by other open-world and life-simulation video games, such as The Sims and Star Stable Online. These three titles share similarities, with a low-stakes environment and object labelling being the most important ones. According to the collected data, sandbox games are highly effective especially for early-stage linguistic acquisition.
- **Competitive and Multiplayer Games:** Video games that belong to this category are titles such as World of Warcraft, Counter-Strike, League of Legends, Overwatch, Fortnite, and Roblox. While individually these titles appeared only a few times within the sample, they share a common linguistic benefit. The environments of these games, unlike single-player ones, necessitate some form of real-time communication (whether it is written or spoken) and in a way force the player to engage with other players. Consequently, such a dynamic shifts the language process from passive reception to active production; heavily competitive and multiplayer games serve as an environment for the development of different, yet equally important, linguistic skills from the previously mentioned category.
- **Role-Playing and Narrative-Driven Games:** The last significantly represented category were games with a complex narrative, titles such as The Witcher series, Life is Strange, Baldur's Gate, Detroit: Become Human, Disco Elysium, and the Grand Theft Auto (GTA) series belong there. One of the respondents specifically connected the value of these titles to their exposure to dialogues and storytelling. While the rest did not specifically mention what makes these games the most helpful for them, it can be assumed that the reasons are of the same nature.

3.2.7.2 Respondents' Reflections on Their Experience

The final open-ended question offered the participants a space to share any additional personal reflections regarding their experiences with English in video games. The data collected from 13 respondents who decided to further elaborate revealed to primary trends.

Firstly, it was mentioned by several respondents that video games were especially useful during their formative childhood years. One respondent went as far as saying that without childhood gaming, they would not have achieved such prominent level of English proficiency they currently have. This indicates that video games provide a vital foundation for English development that traditional schooling often cannot replicate.

The second major theme emerged from a detailed message of one respondent who compared video games with staying abroad. This person stated that they have acquired English naturally without knowing the specific grammatical rules, only in school did they finally learn the reason behind the correct grammar. This follows Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, as video games serve as a source of comprehensible input, while formal education later helps students understand the underlying explicit rules.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this bachelor thesis was to analyse the perceived value of video games on the English language proficiency, narrowing the gap between theoretical psycholinguistic frameworks and the subjective reality of contemporary learners. In an era where the gaming market experiences unprecedented growth (Newzoo, 2026) and the digital sphere as a whole develops at remarkable speed, video games have established themselves as a vital source of extramural English exposure. Through a thorough evaluation of the empirical data collected from Czech English learners, this study successfully addressed all three previously established research aims, providing concrete insights into the nature of game-based language acquisition.

Regarding the first research aim, this study effectively established that the subjective impact of video games on linguistic skills is heavily genre-dependent. While receptive skills (listening and reading comprehension) showed an overwhelmingly high rate of improvement across the entire sample, the data on productive skills was not as unanimous. *Minecraft,* along with similar sandbox titles, was isolated as the most valuable video game for childhood lexical expansion. Conversely, narrative-driven video games were credited with introducing players to complex dialogues and storytelling, while competitive multiplayer titles were most useful in improving active textual and spoken production.

In relation to the second research aim, the empirical findings strongly validated the role of multimodality in supporting language acquisition. A sizable majority of the respondents actively utilised English audio in combination with English subtitles. According to James Paul Gee's (2003) concept of semiotic domains, this dual processing of visual, textual, and auditory clues creates a contextual framework for smooth English language acquisition. The usefulness of such multimodal input was directly confirmed by the respondents' behavioural patterns: the majority of the respondents preferred to derive the meaning from context, rather than interrupt their gameplay when they encountered unfamiliar vocabulary, which proves that situated meaning within the gaming environments actively fosters subconscious comprehension.

Finally, concerning the third research aim, a complex and balanced perspective, regarding the comparison between traditional schooling and acquisition through video games, was revealed. While most of the respondents perceived acquisition through video games as more natural and less stressful than using standard textbooks, traditional pedagogy was not dismissed. While video games were highly valued especially for fluency and vocabulary

expansion, the respondents recognised the importance of formal education and its necessity to explicitly explain underlying grammatical structures and provide systematic linguistic order. These findings perfectly align with Krashen's (1982) Monitor Hypothesis.

With regard to language pedagogy, these results imply that modern English language teaching should not ignore the massive volume of extramural exposure students can receive through digital gameplay. Video games should be viewed as rich repositories of functional vocabulary, conversational input, and overall as a useful tool for language acquisition.

Nevertheless, there are certain limitations of this thesis that need to be acknowledged. The research relied on a modest sample size obtained through convenience sampling. The respondents consisted of university-aged students with a highly developed linguistic baseline. Furthermore, the data captured the respondents' subjective self-assessments rather than objectively measuring their qualitative depth or precise proficiency gains. Future research in this field would benefit from a much larger and more diverse demographic, where the subjective feedback of the respondents would be combined with objective language testing.

Taking everything into consideration, this thesis provides an empirical confirmation of incidental language acquisition through video games. It proves that video games are no longer simply a source of entertainment, but a complex and highly effective semiotic environment that naturally supports English language development.

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