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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Influence of videogames on English language acquisition

I declare that I have written my entire bachelor's thesis by myself and that I have cited every source used.

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Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Petr Florián
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Název práce:	Vliv videoher na osvojování anglického jazyka
Název v angličtině:	Influence of videogames on English language acquisition
Anotace práce:	První kapitola této práce vyzdvihuje faktory ovlivňující proces osvojování druhého jazyka. V druhé kapitole se pak pozornost obrací na videohry samotné a jejich kategorizaci, rozebíraje obsáhlé možnosti nabízené různými aspekty zmíněných videoher. Třetí kapitola je definována výzkumem ve formě průzkumu, který spojuje první dvě části práce a vyvozuje závěry zakládající se na výpovědích od 11 českých hráčů videoher, kteří jsou zároveň studenty angličtiny jakožto druhého jazyka. Výsledky tohoto výzkumu jsou doporučení pro hráče videoher na téma, jak nejlépe využít videohry jakožto vzdělávací nástroj. Dialog, titulky a okamžité překládání doposud neznámých slovíček jsou doporučeny jako efektivní nástroje k maximalizaci efektivity osvojování druhého jazyka. Co se týče výběru videoher nejvhodnějších pro osvojování druhého jazyka, hry pro jednoho hráče nabízejí nejlepší vzdělávací zážitek v podobě dobrodružných a RPG her (česky také hry na hrdiny), mezitím co v online videohrách je nejlepší praktikou využít možností hlasové komunikace.
Klíčová slova:	Videohry, hry, anglický jazyk, angličtina, osvojování, slovní zásoba, vliv
Anotace v angličtině:	The first chapter of this thesis introduces the important factors in second language acquisition. In the second chapter, the focus shifts to videogames and their categorization, exploring the various learning possibilities offered by different aspects of said videogames. In the third part, research in the form of a survey is conducted, connecting the previous two topics and drawing conclusions based on the responses from 11 Czech regular videogame players and English as a second language learners. The results of the survey are recommendations for

	videogame players on how to best utilize videogames as a learning tool, suggesting dialogue, subtitles, and instant word translating as effective ways to maximize the second language learning efficiency. Regarding the choice of videogames best suited for second language acquisition, single-player games offer the best learning experience in adventure and role-playing games, while in online games, it is best to utilize the voice chat features.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Videogames, games, English language, English, acquisition, vocabulary, influence
Přílohy vázané k práci:	Appendix 1: *The questionnaire*
Rozsah práce:	36 s.
Jazyk práce:	Anglický jazyk

Contents

Introduction

Among the growing number of educational tools, videogames are becoming popular not only as a source of entertainment but also as a means of learning, especially for second language acquisition. This thesis investigates how videogames can enhance English language proficiency among students who are not native English speakers. Due to the prevalence of English language in worldwide media and growing popularity of digital games, this popular activity can be utilized as a learning tool. Therefore, this study examines the theoretical framework supporting the educational utility of videogames and the empirical data demonstrating their effects on language skills.

The theoretical part of this paper focuses on the concept of second language acquisition. It is based on a number of key concepts: These include the Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of receiving cognitive language input, and interactive environments, which benefit language learning. Videogames, with their rich narratives and interactive dialogues, naturally incorporate these elements, offering both input and interactive opportunities in abundance. This section also discusses the motivational aspects provided by videogames, which can lead to increased engagement and sustained interaction with the English language, crucial for language retention and proficiency.

Complementing the theoretical exploration, the practical component of this thesis is centered around a survey conducted with 11 Czech speakers who regularly play videogames in English. The survey seeks to determine how these interactions with gaming can translate into improved language skills. This empirical study aims to provide insights into how specific features of videogames, such as narrative complexity, dialogue, and subtitle usage, contribute to vocabulary acquisition and grammatical competence. Furthermore, the learners present tips on how to maximalize the process of second language acquisition through videogames.

1. The pillars of second language acquisition

This chapter focuses on second language acquisition and the requirements for it to successfully and effectively happen.

1.1. Second language acquisition

"Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers both to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language. The additional language is called a second language (L2), even though it may actually be the third, fourth, or tenth to be acquired." (Saville-Troike, 2006, pg2). Language acquisition is a procedure in which people gain the ability to perceive, produce, and use language for the purpose of communication. It is a long process that, ideally, leads to the mastery of the target language. According to Saville-Troike, there are four components contributing to the final state of multilingual competence: feedback with error correction, great memory capacity, and analytic ability, motivation, and instruction or teaching (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Videogames are an excellent tool for language acquisition if used correctly. They are a great source of vocabulary and pronunciation adjustment, not to mention the benefits of online multiplayer games where the player gets to chat with other players, whether it's through text chat or voice chat – and interaction takes place.

Interaction is a contributor to language acquisition; it generates comprehensible input, which is defined as *"language input that can be understood by listeners despite them not understanding all the words and structures in it"* (British Council, 2024), which is critical for said acquisition (Saville-Troike, 2006, pg176), provides negative feedback, and encourages output and negotiation of meaning (Reinders & Wattana, 2011). This is backed up by Swain's Output Hypothesis, which states that for successful second language acquisition to happen, comprehensible input by itself is not enough; the learner must also be provided with opportunities to interact in the new language, which leads to the learner producing comprehensible output, which is what then leads to them developing competence in the language (Swain, 1985).

However, Krashen (1998) diminishes Swain's Output Hypothesis, highlighting issues with her opinions and promoting his Input Hypothesis instead. According to his hypothesis (Krashen. 1982), in order to progress in second language acquisition, learners need to comprehend language input slightly more advanced than their proficiency level. An example is presented in

the form of i + 1, where i is the level of language competence and the +1 is the *"little piece"* missing for improvement in language proficiency.

1.2. Negotiation of meaning

Negotiation of meaning is a process that takes place when two or more people fail to understand each other during a conversation. The outcome of the process is ideally a mutual understanding of the situation.

It was already suggested that interaction contributes to the learning process. But what happens during negotiation of meaning, when the participants are able to make use of the content of negotiation and advance their knowledge? Although he is not the only contributor, Michael Long is most often credited as the author of the Interaction Hypothesis. This idea sprouted up in the 1980s with the belief that the development of language proficiency is promoted by interaction and communication. *"According to Long, negotiation of meaning during interaction contributes significantly to second language comprehension and the negative feedback received through negotiation facilitates second language development, particularly for vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. Negotiation also provides opportunities for learners to focus their attention on linguistic form and to notice aspects of the target language. Noticing has been considered important because when input is noticed, it can become intake, i.e. input that the learner has comprehended semantically and syntactically, which facilitates acquisition."* (Reinders & Wattana, 2011).

According to Long (1996), the Interaction Hypothesis posits that:

A) Comprehensible input is necessary for second language acquisition

B) Modifications to the interactional structure of conversations that take place in the process of negotiating a communication problem help to make input comprehensible to a second language learner

Long (1997) also suggests that attention, accomplished partly through negotiation of meaning, is crucial in the process of second language acquisition. *"In addition, noticing pushes learners into a more syntactic processing mode that will help them to internalise new forms and improve the accuracy of their existing grammatical knowledge."* (Reinders & Wattana, 2011).

As previously mentioned, Long is not the sole contributor to the hypothesis. Another major researcher on the topic is Teresa Pica, who has published several relevant research papers. In one of them, Pica et al. (1987) found out that social relations play a significant role in the

process. She highlights the need for mutual understanding and a relationship, in which the participants are aware of their unequal proficiencies, but still see each other equally. Based on her findings, an important addition to the Interaction Hypothesis can be made, essentially adding a third pillar to it:

C) Tasks in which there is a need for the participants to exchange information with each other promote more interactional restructuring and a situation in which the conversational partners share a symmetrical role relationship affords more opportunities for interactional restructuring

Finally, these findings have been examined by Rod Ellis (1991), and based on his critical evaluation, he has put together his own revised version of the hypothesis, which states that:

A) Comprehensible input facilitates second language acquisition but is neither necessary nor sufficient.

B) Modifications to input, especially those that take place in the process of negotiating a communication problem make acquisition possible providing that the learners:
    a. comprehend the input
    b. notice new features in it and compare what is noticed with their own output.

C) Interaction that requires learners to modify their initial output facilitates the process of integration

However, the contents of this chapter assume that learners are willing to make use of the opportunity to produce language. This crucial aspect is called *"willingness to communicate"*.

1.3. Willingness to communicate

Willingness to communicate can be defined as *"readiness to enter into the discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2 [second language]"* (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). It is a very important aspect of second language acquisition, as it is crucial to mastering the target language. Willingness to communicate influences the frequency with which students use the second language for communication, leading to the development of communication skills. It has been proposed as a fundamental goal of the second language learning process (Reinders & Wattana, 2011).

Willingness to communicate and its importance is brilliantly conceptualized in the layered pyramid model by MacIntyre et al. (1998, p. 547). The pyramid (see Figure 1) has six layers, which can be further divided into two parts. Situational influences (layers I, II, III) take

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immediate effect and may vary depending on the context of the given situation and the target audience. This essentially suggests that there is a difference between talking to a friend and talking to a stranger, much like there is a difference depending on the topic and the speaker's relation to it. On the other hand, enduring influences (layers IV, V, VI) take effect over time and depend more on the history of the speaker and the rest of the group. They include motivation and confidence in using the second language (consisting of self-evaluation and anxiety), inter-group attitude, social situation of the speaker and competence in communicating, as well as inter-group climate and, finally, personality.
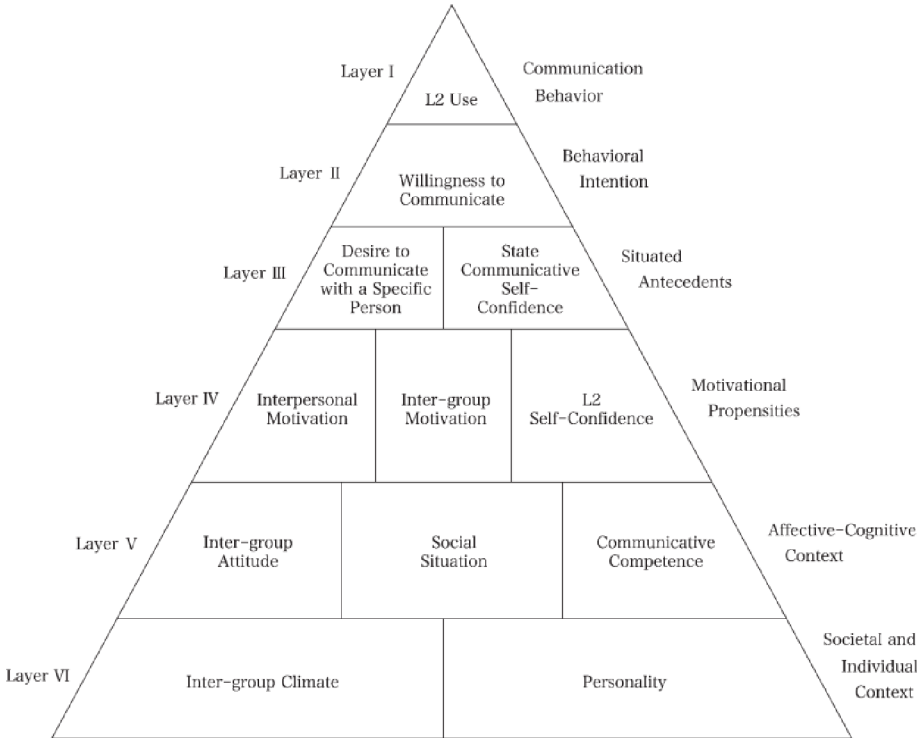
Figure 1: Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing Willingness to Communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547)

According to Reinders & Wattana (2011), willingness to communicate is related to the likelihood of the speaker improving their productive second language skills. Reinders & Wattana also state that findings from past studies indicate that learners who demonstrate a willingness to communicate have effective interactions in the second language, which was found to contribute to increased frequency of second language use.

This is where willingness to communicate ties to videogames – people play them voluntarily, as they are fun to play, provide entertainment, and create a safe space. So, when multiplayer games with usually inclusive communities and their text or voice chat systems are considered, the player often has a genuine interest in communicating with other players. In a

study on this topic by Reinders & Wattana (2011), two groups of students were closely examined during 3 sessions of playing an online game on the same server. The results showed significant changes in both groups' willingness to communicate and most of the students reported an increase in their confidence and effort to make contact in the English language. *"Not only did the game provide an attractive environment to participants, but communicating in that environment led them to become more willing to communicate in that environment with the proportion of first language use diminishing over time."* (Reinders & Wattana, 2011, p. 24).

1.4. Visual cues

Visual cues are subtle prompts or signals, often non-verbal, that supplement communication and draw attention. They play a substantial role in second language teaching – reading or hearing a new word and being able to instantly associate it with a visual representation (image, video...) can pose as a massive helping hand for both beginners and more advanced learners, even more so when there is no translation available. Introducing and revising vocabulary can be made much easier with the use of visual aids (=deliberate visual elements designed to enhance understanding and engagement) and they are especially helpful for providing context and teaching abstract or challenging language structures. According to Chung's report, visual aids improve comprehension and facilitate the transfer of knowledge. They also hold the potential to make school lessons much more dynamic and engaging by capturing the learner's attention more efficiently and by motivating them to participate in the lesson. Visual aids, such as videos, provide learners the option to connect visual cues to an actual spoken language. This connection provides a clear model for pronunciation and thus poses as a learning tool for enhancing the pronunciation and listening skills of the learner (Chung, 2023).

To further explore the importance of visual aids in second language learning, Chung has recently done experimental research using a pre-test and post-test method. Two groups of learners on different levels have been made, one was instructed to use visual aids in their learning and the other one was instructed not to. The results of the study suggested that using visual aids caused positive changes to the subjects' learning experience. The amount of difference using visual aids also differed by proficiency level – while low-proficiency learners benefitted from using visual aids the most, high-proficiency learners did not show any significant difference (Chung, 2023).

1.5. Incidental learning

"Incidental vocabulary learning/acquisition is the learning of new words as a by-product of a meaning-focused communicative activity, such as reading, listening, and interaction. It occurs through "multiple exposures to a word in different contexts." (Huckin & Coady, 1999, p. 185)." (Bogdanov, 2012, p. 2). As an example, Theodorsen (2015) presents reading a book, encountering an unknown word, and guessing the meaning of it from the context. However, estimating the effect of incidental learning on learning itself seems to be quite problematic. *"In one of the early experiments, Nagy, Herman and Anderson (1985) found the probability of learning a word from context from just one exposure to be between 10–15%. While in a later study, Herman et al. (1987) estimated the probability of learning a word based on just one encounter to be as low as 5 %."* (Theodorsen, 2015, p. 7).

According to Bogdanov (2012), rather than measuring one exposure to the word, it is needed to understand incidental learning as a cumulative process, where knowledge of the word is built through repeated encounters with it over a reasonable time period. He further goes to discredit the previous studies, emphasizing that a single exposure to the word cannot be a reliable measure.

Theodorsen (2015) presents a set of important conclusions on the topic of incidental learning: both attention and noticing play a crucial role in language learning, and need creates tension, which may, to a mild degree, indirectly positively affect learning. He then goes on to highlight need as the most interesting aspect of incidental learning – videogames further strengthen the need component of motivation; because they are interactive and entertaining, the player feels the need to be involved.

1.6. Cognitive overload

The human memory can be divided into three types: sensory memory, short-term memory (further referred to as working memory), and long-term memory (Shi, 2019). The ability of the mind to process information can be simplified into a single diagram expressing the journey of said information from sensory memory all the way to long-term memory. At the beginning (see Figure 2), we have the input itself – information taken from the environment, noticed by the person, and taken into sensory memory. If attention is paid to the information, it is transferred to the working memory. In the other case, it is forgotten. Only after the information is in the working memory, the person becomes a learner and it is up to them whether they decide to try

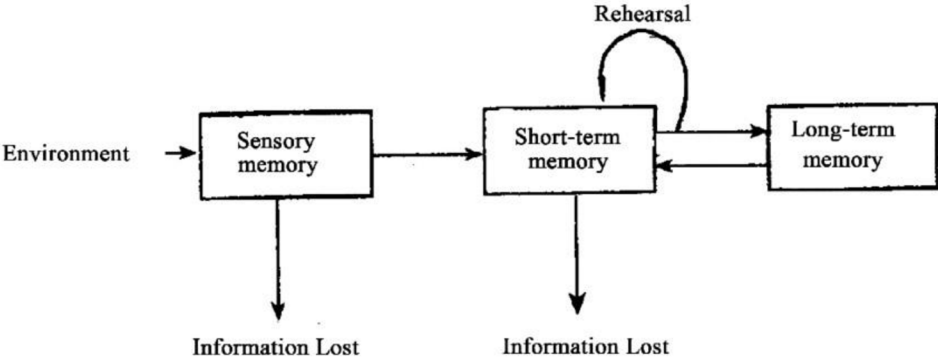and exert cognitive load in order to commit the information to long-term memory, or let it get forgotten.

Figure 2: Human memory system (Shi, 2019, pg. 118)

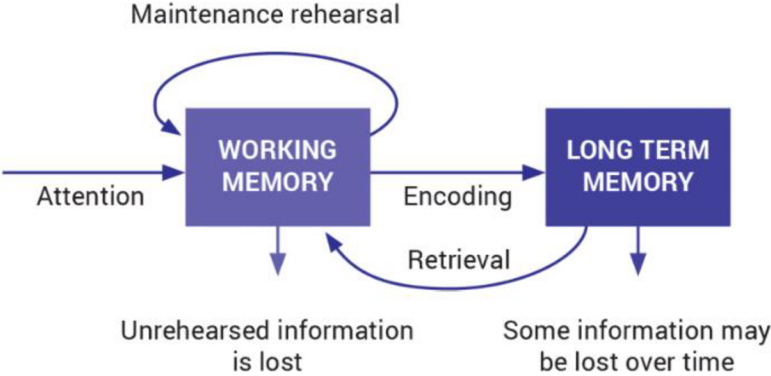The diagram in relation to education can be further explored in more detail in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Human memory system in relation to education (An introduction to cognitive load theory. In: LIKOUREZOS, Vicki. The Education Hub [online]. c2024 [cit. 2024-03-30]. Retrieved from https://theeducationhub.org.nz/an-introduction-to-cognitive-load-theory/)

Cognitive overload happens when a learner is overwhelmed with information beyond the capacity of their working memory. Cognitive load is then the amount of information the learner's working memory can process at a time. It can further be divided into three categories: intrinsic cognitive load refers to the complexity of the content that is being learned, extraneous cognitive load is connected to the mental activities of the learner that take place outside of the learning process, and finally, germane cognitive load is associated with the efforts made to commit the knowledge into long-term memory (Warrick, 2021). Based on this division, some general pointers can be established in an attempt to reduce cognitive overload possibilities and maximize the learning process efficiency. Simplifying the new information can help reduce intrinsic cognitive load. Extraneous cognitive load should be reduced as much as possible, enabling the learner to focus on the information rather than distractions. Finally, germane

cognitive load is the area we want to expand on, enabling deep processing of new information, contextualizing it, and possibly storing said information into long-term memory.

Cognitive overload in second language education is a concern, much like in any other learning environment. Since second language learners are constantly being encouraged to use the second language as opposed to their native language, they must allocate greater cognitive resources to focusing on the language than if they were to use their native language, since the content of the lesson as well as the language itself need to be processed. Learners who are more prone to anxiety also reportedly show heavier cognitive loads. However, language learning through digital media may expose students to cognitive overload more than other types of language learning. According to Warrick, *"cognitive overload can occur more easily with web-based language learning than in physical classrooms because of the unique characteristics of online lessons (Zhang et al., 2013). Long hours of watching a courseware screen which is filled with text, sound, graphics, pictures, photographs, animation and moving video may constitute cognitive load and make the students become tired (Liu, 2011)."* (Warrick, 2021, p. 27).

Within the digital environment of videogames, the players need to expend increased amounts of mental effort interacting with the game and social stimuli that usually come with it. This essentially means that while learning through videogames, players might be facing greater amounts of extraneous cognitive load than in other educational environments. Nonetheless, in their study, Chang et al. (2018) concluded that cognitive load in digital game-based learning (see Chapter 2.1.) was, in fact, lower than in traditional computer-based learning. DeHaan et al. (2010) studied differences in cognitional load while playing a reaction videogame versus watching it being played. Similarly, they concluded with "No statistically significant main or interaction effects for language proficiency or videogame proficiency on any aspect of cognitive load were found." At the same time, the research also focused on vocabulary acquisition, and the results of this part of the study differed. The players recalled significantly less vocabulary than the watchers, and this, according to DeHaan et al., can be attributed to the induced extraneous cognitive load due to the interactivity of the game – the players reported that they found the game and its language, as well as attending to the gameplay and vocabulary at the same time far more difficult than the watchers (DeHaan et al., 2010).

1.7. Motivation

Motivation is an incredibly important factor in achieving any goal, and with learning, it is no different. It plays a significant role in the success and intensity of second language learning

in general and in classroom language learning as well. *"Motivation is not static, it changes depending on the context and it changes over time (Gass and Selinker, 2008)."* (Nurhidayah, 2020). Nurhidayah also cites an example of an underperforming but motivated student possibly achieving greater results than their high-performing counterparts who are not as motivated.

There are two models of motivation relevant to second language learning:

1.7.1. Instrumental and Integrative Model

The original idea of this model belongs to Gardner & Lambert (as cited in Allen, 1974). Nurhidayah says that instrumental motivation is an objective-driven approach, meaning the driving force behind the motivation is getting a job, being able to watch a local TV series, or passing a course in school. Integrative motivation, on the other hand, is the desire to be identified with the communities exclusive to the second language, as well as getting to know their values and cultural context. Integrative motivation is the main focus of many of the second language acquisition motivation researchers (Nurhidayah, 2020).

1.7.2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Model

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a psychological concept that essentially suggests that people are likely to be motivated by people, situations, and undertakings that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Within the SDT concept lie the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation models. Intrinsic motivation is defined by striving for feelings of satisfaction and/or pleasure following the learning process. As an example, Bernard (2010) portrays a person who enjoys learning a new language because of the satisfaction felt whenever they make an advancement or master a new concept. Bernard also presents a further distinction of intrinsic motivation into three separate parts:

A) Intrinsic motivation for knowledge (the pleasure of gaining knowledge)

B) Intrinsic motivation for accomplishment (the pleasure of achieving a goal)

C) Intrinsic motivation for stimulation (feelings like excitement and fun)

Extrinsic motivation refers to learning with the purpose of accomplishing a goal that is separated from the learning activity itself. As an example, Bernard portrays a person learning a second language for the convenience of it on their travels, Nurhidayah (2020) presents an example in the form of better career opportunities. He then highlights the nature of external motivation – once the external motivator is removed, learners might stop the process of second language learning.

Motivation is a necessary part in learning, and videogames have the potential to make a positive impact as they are meant to be entertaining. A study by Chen & Yang (2012) on adventure games and their impact on second language acquisition has revealed that students reported increased motivation for second language learning. Another study by Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh (2017) concluded with statistically significant results that videogames and their use for education do indeed increase motivation. Informal language learning instruments overall (videogames, movies, music) have been found to yield better learning outcomes compared to the traditional classroom lessons, as reported by Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh.

2. Videogames and their influence on second language acquisition

The videogame industry is peaking nowadays (Morikawa, 2023), and people all over the world find themselves passing their free time playing them, whether it's on a computer, gaming console or even a mobile phone. Videogames can be especially appealing to individuals around their teenage years, as they often have a lot of free time during their day after school ends. This chapter introduces the concept of using videogames in line with second language acquisition, as well as the different attributes of videogames that may influence the learning process to some degree.

2.1. The use of videogames in education

According to Reinders & Wattana (2011), a key element in the topic of using videogames in the context of education is that learners more actively focus on the activity at hand. More attention could lead to an increase in the flow of information to a person's working memory, thereby positively influencing the process of committing that information to long-term memory.

Gee (2003) has come up with 36 learning principles as a basis for evaluating videogames. Some of his principles include:

Semiotic Principle – Learning about and coming to appreciate interrelations within and across multiple sign systems (images, words, actions, symbols, artifacts, etc.) as a complex system is core to the learning experience.

or:

Amplification of Input Principle – For a little input, learners get a lot of output.

Videogames that employ most of these principles enable the players to unintentionally use their learning muscles and are *"good games"* by his definition, meaning that they are suitable for second language learning.

Before we discuss the categorization of videogames, educational, serious, and commercial videogames should be mentioned. Educational videogames refer to videogames made with the intent of teaching academic subjects. According to Reinhardt & Sykes (2012), game-based learning is defined as a combination of videogames and education; in simpler terms, game-based learning means playing educational videogames, which were made solely for the purpose of education. These games, however, are not very popular among learners, as they are often assumed to be boring (Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh, 2017). Susi et al. (2015) contradict Reinhardt

& Sykes' definition with their own, referring to game-based learning and serious videogames as interchangeable terms. This only goes to show the fragile differences in the definitions of such terms.

Serious videogames are defined as *"games used for purposes other than mere entertainment."* (Susi et al., 2015, p. 1). This includes areas like education, corporate, military or healthcare. Although the border between serious videogames and educational videogames might be blurry, serious videogames embrace the same goals as educational videogames but take the extra step beyond facts and memorization, including all aspects of education – teaching, training and informing. One might think that, at the end of the day, every serious videogame is an educational videogame as well, but that is not the case – for example, a videogame made for the purpose of military training would most probably prioritize teaching tactical skills to academic subjects. So, while there is overlap between serious games and educational games, they differ in their primary focus and intended applications (Susi et al., 2015).

While game-based learning puts entertainment after learning, game enhanced learning takes learning for a second goal rather than being the purpose, with primary intent of playing the videogame being entertainment. That is the case with commercial videogames, which have very little difference to vernacular videogames (=commercially available videogames not made for any specific educational purposes) and are often used interchangeably. Commercial videogames are by far superior in popularity to serious videogames, and for that very reason, they are the main focus of this paper.

2.2. The videogame categorization problematic

In his research paper, Apperley (2006) explains King's and Krzywinska's videogame categorization model: according to their study, videogames can be categorized based on platform, genre, mode (the mode in which the videogame is experienced – the environment and social setting), and milieu (the visual genre of the videogame – f.e. horror, fantasy, science fiction). Platform categorization is very straightforward – this solely depends on the hardware used to play the videogame. Whereas mode and milieu categorization are not as straightforward and can be somewhat subjective, they are generally not highlighted by the publisher nor are they considered important in choosing a videogame. In contrast, genre categorization can be key to successfully presenting a videogame, as genre is what often decides whether the videogame even sparks interest in the target audience.

When a new videogame is developed and marketed, efforts to make it stand out are to be expected. Categorizing the videogame is an important aspect of its marketing, ensuring it reaches the right audience. However, as the market grows, so does the category count. The problem is, there is no universal list of genres – every platform uses its own, and that can get chaotic. While there is a foundation in the form of a few general genres that can essentially describe any existing videogame, publishers often create their own subgenres to further specify their products for their audience. This might be hard to grasp for someone unfamiliar with the genre evolution, as it is easy to imagine that a typical person browsing a videogame catalog might not know what to imagine under the *"shmup"* genre (see Figure 4).

SPECIAL SECTIONS	GENRES			THEMES
Free to Play	Action	Role-Playing	Strategy	Adult Only
Demos	Arcade & Rhythm	Action RPG	Card & Board	Anime
Early Access	Fighting & Martial Arts	Adventure RPG	City & Settlement	Horror
	First-Person Shooter	JRPG	Grand & 4X	Mystery & Detective
Steam Deck	Hack & Slash	Party-Based	Military	Open World
Great on Deck	Platformer & Runner	Rogue-Like	Real-Time Strategy	Sci-Fi & Cyberpunk
	Third-Person Shooter	Strategy RPG	Tower Defense	Space
Controller-Friendly	shmup	Turn-Based	Turn-Based Strategy	Survival
Remote Play				
VR Titles	Adventure	Simulation	Sports & Racing	PLAYER SUPPORT
VR Hardware	Adventure RPG	Building & Automation	All Sports	Co-Operative
	Casual	Dating	Fishing & Hunting	LAN
Software	Hidden Object	Farming & Crafting	Individual Sports	Local & Party
Soundtracks	Metroidvania	Hobby & Job	Racing	MMO
	Puzzle	Life & Immersive	Racing Sim	Multiplayer
macOS	Story-Rich	Sandbox & Physics	Sports Sim	Online Competitive
SteamOS + Linux	Visual Novel	Space & Flight	Team Sports	Singleplayer
For PC Cafés				

Figure 4: Videogame categorization on the digital distribution platform Steam (Valve Corporation, 2003)

One of the first researchers to explore videogame genres is Mark Wolf. In his book "*The Medium of The Video Game*" (2001), Wolf discusses the notion that film-genre classification is a consensual agreement between the audience and the producers, comparing it to the problematic nature of videogame genres. Wolf then proceeds to list his adapted taxonomy of genres, wherein he outlines 42 videogame genres along with their descriptions. However, the genres are constantly evolving, and his now 23-year-old list does not cover nearly all of the current genres – examples such as mobile games or gacha games (videogames implementing vending machine-like mechanics) are not part of Wolf's taxonomy as they have emerged after his book was published.

Apperley (2006) mentions four videogame genres: simulation, strategy, action, and role-playing. It can be argued that these genres are foundational, as at least one of them is present in any given videogame.

A) SIMULATION VIDEOGAMES:

This genre includes videogames that simulate various sports, driving, flying, managing a farm, or building and managing a civilization. The content in these videogames is generally inspired by common activities. As stated by Apperley, some even argue that videogames themselves should be a genre of simulation. An interesting struggle in simulation videogame development is finding the balance between adhering to the so-called laws of physics and the laws of play. Developers must fine-tune this balance to ensure the videogame remains true to its intent while also being entertaining and appropriately challenging. A good example of this practice would be a driving videogame. If the physics are too realistic, casual players might find it difficult to control the vehicle and, as a result, lose interest. Conversely, if the physics is too lackluster, the videogame may not feel immersive enough, leading to a similar loss of interest.

B) STRATEGY VIDEOGAMES:

The strategy genre contains videogames that place importance on the ongoing play of contextualization. Although almost every videogame is strategic to some extent, videogames belonging to the strategy genre are generally played from an aerial point of view and often include a lot of different information and variables in the graphic user interface. This genre can be further divided into two major subgenres: real-time strategy games (RTS) and turn-based strategy games (TBS). Apperley concluded that the strategy genre of videogames emphasizes a particular mental process that is found in all videogames, which indicates the inseparability of the player and the text.

C) ACTION VIDEOGAMES:

Two major subgenres are what encapsulate the entire action videogame genre: first-person shooters (FPS) and third-person videogames. While the former uses the point of vision of the digital player model for the placement of the camera so the gameplay can be as immersive as can be, third-person videogames put the player model on full display. Third-person videogames often reason their camera behind trying to deliver a better cinematic experience, as first-person view is unheard of in

cinema. Action videogames are unique in a way that they require players to physically perform difficult actions to progress through the game. This sets them apart from other types of videogames where actions may be simply selected and executed by the computer. In action videogames, players have to directly input commands to carry out specific actions needed to move forward in the game.

D) ROLE-PLAYING VIDEOGAMES (RPG):

In a role-playing game, the player changes their behavior to assume a role, usually in a fantasy setting. Role-play was introduced with Tolkien's cultural impact and in the context of gamification, it was brought to life by the tabletop game Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). The game consists of a team of players and one Dungeon Master (DM). It relies heavily on the DM's imagination, as they are the storyteller who is also in control of the narrative. The players the take turns to roll the dice and follow the DM's story, making decisions with a success rate based on the dice rolls. This role-playing mania developed into what's regarded as live-action role-play (LARP), but nowadays more known as cosplay. The practice of LARP brought about conventions of fantasy lovers and created communities where people dress up as their favorite fantasy characters and role-play as them. It was people from these communities who transferred the passion into their work, which gave birth to the first ever computer RPG and later on to the first massively multiplayer online RPG (MMORPG) (Horsfall & Oikonomou, 2011).

Social interaction is a big aspect of RPGs. The singleplayer RPGs try to simulate that interaction using non-playable characters (NPCs). These are located all over the game world and are designed to help the player immerse into the game world, which they can achieve with various interactions, such as dialogues, combat, or quests. Memorable characters play a pivotal role in shaping the essence of role-playing, offering participants in any role-playing platform the opportunity to embody different personas. Yet, what motivates individuals to assume the role of fictional characters? *"A psychiatric view of role-playing may suggest it is down to our childhood. DeSouza (2007) explains in the book "Be Yourself" how the onset of adolescence brings about a shift in our primary motivation, from survival to significance. We eventually come to realise our existence is not as fragile and dramatic as we once thought as children."* (Horsfall & Oikonomou, 2011, p. 64). This statement suggests that role-playing is a way for players to feel important and impactful, as they get to shape their own fantasy world and character of their liking.

Horsfall & Oikonomou suggest that the players might find comfort in the excitement and/or danger the fantasy world might provide, similar to one they may have experienced as children exploring the real world.

Instead of losing their real-life social element, RPGs actually sparked the idea of game communities. Although online RPGs didn't replicate the exact social setup of traditional RPGs, they tapped into existing communities centered around character transformations. The rise of the Internet led to the growth of both official and unofficial videogame-focused communities, communicating mainly through bulletin boards or blogs, with some using chatrooms. Nowadays, the technology has evolved and there are places and applications designated especially for videogame communities. Notably, MMORPGs blur the lines between the game and its community. The only real difference from traditional RPGs is the absence of a DM, replaced by programmed processes managing the game environment.

The RPG genre is closely intertwined with the literary realm of fantasy. It is argued that a significant distinction between pencil-and-paper RPGs and computer RPGs lies in the transition from a collectively crafted fantasy to one set within an established fantasy world with set parameters. This shift in focus within the videogames moves away from character development and role-playing towards a series of challenges, where success is evaluated based on the accumulation of rewards (Horsfall & Oikonomou, 2011).

Following Apperley's taxonomy of videogames, mobile gaming has become increasingly popular, especially considering the widespread availability of mobile phones, which have outnumbered the global population ever since 2016 (see Figure 5). There are millions of different mobile games available online nowadays (Mäyrä & Alha, 2020) and mobile games can therefore be considered a valid category of videogames. While videogames made for computers and consoles have evolved as experiences rich in audiovisual effects, mobile phones often take different routes. Due to the limitations of the size of phones, they face various complexities when it comes to gaming – small screens, lower performance, and limited input options are some of the struggles of mobile game development. These issues lead to mobile phones being suitable primarily for casual games, which is the type of games that has made mobile gaming as successful as it is nowadays. However, due to this, mobile games then to be regarded to as a lesser form of gaming, facing criticism from computer and console players (Mäyrä & Alha, 2020).

Smartphones are ever-present, providing constant distractions whenever needed. Mobile gaming sessions demand less preparation compared to many other forms of gaming and can be enjoyed at any place or time. Consequently, this accessibility renders mobile games prone to problematic and excessive usage (Mäyrä & Alha, 2020).
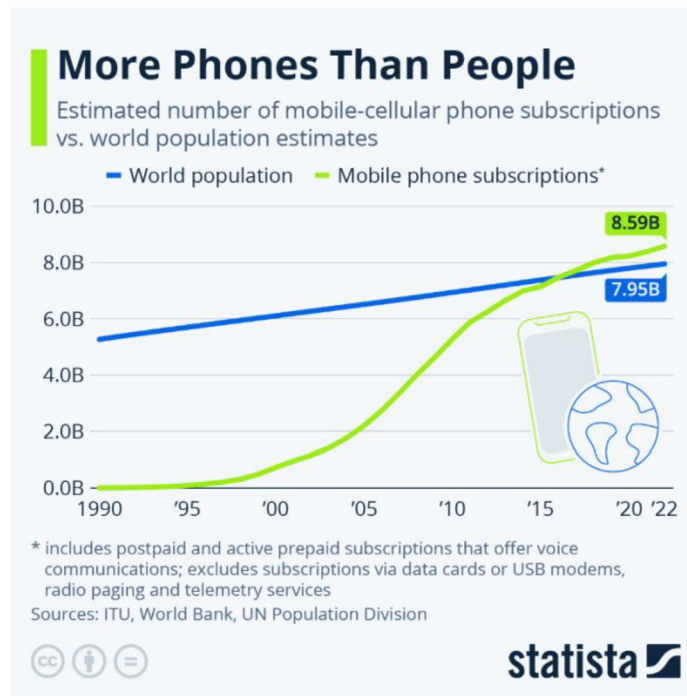

Figure 5: The graph comparing the estimated number of mobile phone subscriptions with the world population (retrieved from https://www.statista.com/chart/4022/mobile-subscriptions-and-world-population/)

2.3. Subtitles and their contribution to language acquisition

By providing written translations of dialogue alongside audiovisual content, subtitles not only enhance listening skills but also reinforce the acquisition of vocabulary and grammatical structures. This integration of written text with spoken language facilitates a deeper understanding of context and pronunciation, thereby fostering a more immersive language learning experience. Moreover, subtitles cater to individual learning preferences and pace, enabling learners to engage with authentic materials in a way that suits their proficiency level.

According to Almeida & Costa (2014), there are three main reasons as to why watching movies and TV with subtitles provides a benefit to the second language learning process:

A) The story in subtitled videos is presented via visual images, spoken in the foreign language, and through the subtitles – these means support each other. Additionally, the videos constitute a rich context for second language acquisition and may offer the viewer hints to derive the meaning of the used vocabulary from

B) The viewer is generally well-motivated to understand the content of the video

C) The viewer generally has a positive attitude towards the English language since it is considered the lingua franca of the modern world.

Atop of these, Almeida and Costa also note another possible benefit to subtitles, which is the distinction between different ways of pronunciation (British and American) and the connotations attached to them (slang – informal language, and aristocratic – formal language high social rank people use) (Almeida & Costa, 2014).

In her study, Vulchanova et al. (2015) investigated the effect of subtitles on second language comprehension and second language acquisition of Norwegian high schoolers. She has conducted research where four episodes of the popular TV series *"Family Guy"* were played to 3 groups of students. Subtitles were found to have a short-term effect on comprehension of the contents of the episode, however, according to the data gathered from the groups, whether the subtitles were in English or Norwegian language did not matter. The conclusion is therefore drawn that whether the subtitles are intralingual or interlingual does not hold significant importance as either way they facilitate the comprehension of the episode. The most important factor in the results was the amount of time the participants used to spend playing videogames in English, highlighting the effect playing videogames in English might have on second language comprehension. Another interesting finding in the research is that the habit of making use of native language subtitles has a negative impact on comprehension in the long term. This is not the case with English subtitles, as they allegedly show a slight increase in comprehension instead.

Lastly, in a study by Lei (2023) on the role of video subtitles on second language acquisition, it was concluded that subtitles in videos are indeed helpful for language learning. The learners are provided with dual channel learning (receiving both audio and video inputs at the same time), which helps to better identify the contents of the video. Although one might consider listening comprehension unrelated to the topic of subtitles, this area of second language learning also benefits from said subtitles – the author of the research cites an experiment where it was concluded that being able to read the text of the character's dialogue on screen while they were in the middle of it helps with the previously mentioned listening comprehension. However, paying the right amount of attention to subtitles is highlighted as crucial. If too much attention is paid to the subtitles, it could cause harm to listening comprehension. Similarly, if too much attention is paid only to the audio, a negative impact on the understanding of the content is the threat. These risks go along with the cognitive load theory. The author concludes the research

with recommendations for subtitle creators, such as experimenting with subtitle styles (f.e. changing the font and/or color of the subtitles) in the pursuit of reducing cognitive load and increasing the fun aspect (Lei, 2023).

While subtitles in the second language seem to provide great value for the learner, what about subtitles in the native language? According to the same study (Lei, 2023), subtitles in the native language do not help with second language acquisition in any noticeable way; they can only be helpful in vocabulary learning regarding understanding the meaning of words. On the other hand, subtitles in the second language play a more important role in grammar acquisition. Lastly, in the experiment, the bilingual subtitle method was also used, which resulted in a great effect on vocabulary, however, it also seems to cause a cognitive burden.

2.3.1. Playing videogames with and without subtitles

Subtitles in videogames come in two types: intralingual and interlingual. The former means rewording the content using other words from the same language, much like in a dictionary. Intralingual translation is the practice of properly translating the content and its intended meaning using other languages. The trend in videogaming is to include intralingual subtitles in most original games and interlingual subtitles in most localized games (Mangiron, 2013).

Mangiron further states three levels of subtitling in videogames:

A) Cutscenes
B) Cutscenes and in-game audio dialogue
C) Full subtitling (cutscenes, in-game audio dialogue, audio tutorials, and sound effects when available)

The importance of subtitling just cutscenes not being enough in terms of accessibility for the hearing impaired is also emphasized, as well as the fact that the missing standard of full subtitling would be beneficial for many groups, including second language learners. Finally, the author provides a chart comparing the differences and recommendations on subtitles in TV, DVD, and videogame environments (see Figure 6).

Parameter	TV subtitling	DVD subtitling	Game subtitling
Time on screen	6 seconds rule	7-8 seconds	Variable User controlled in some games
Character/line	35-37	40	30 - 143
No. of lines	2 lines	2 lines	Variable: 2 +
Position on screen	Bottom of screen	Bottom of screen	Variable: bottom, top, centre Speech bubbles Text boxes
Alignment	Left & centred	Centred	Left & centred
Font type	Font without seriffs (i.e. Arial, Tiresias)	Font without seriffs (i.e. Arial)	With & without seriffs (i.e., Verdana, Broadway, custom fonts)
Font size	32 pixels	32 pixels	Variable (16 to 26 pixels)
Font color	White (yellow)	White	White, different colours used for highlighting information
Sense and grammatical blocks	Preserve	Preserve	Often not preserved
Reduction	Yes	Little	None for intralingual subtitles Little for interlingual subtitles

Figure 6: Subtitle comparison chart (Mangiron, 2013)

Despite of movie and TV subtitles being a well-researched area, the impact of videogame subtitles remains relatively underexplored. However, some research is available – in his research on the impact of adventure videogames on vocabulary acquisition, Chen & Yang's subjects mention subtitles multiple times.

The research used the adventure videogame *"BONE"*, which was chosen partially since it allows the players to simultaneously hear the dialogues spoken by native speakers and see the English subtitles at the same time. Some of the subjects reported that they found the speed of dialogues and subtitles too fast, which resulted in not being able to keep up with the content. There is no way to control the speed of the dialogue and subtitles in videogames, therefore despite the fact that videogames offer rich language inputs, the use of subtitles in videogames cannot be considered as a proper language learning method (Chen & Yang, 2013).

Additionally, another blow for the usage of subtitles in language learning was delivered by Theodorsen. In the conclusion to his research, he presents a result indicating that not using subtitles in videogames results in better vocabulary acquisition than the contrary. Theodorsen presents two opinions on as to how interpret the results. The first he credits to his limited range

of subjects. The limited number of study participants compromises the accuracy of the statistical data, and Theodorsen suggests that a larger dataset could yield results more consistent with previous studies on subtitles in second language learning. In the second opinion, he argues that the role of the player as a more present mediator, rather than a passive one in the case of the studies on subtitles in movies and TV shows, interferes with the learning effect of subtitles. Additional suggestions are made to study the topic of subtitles in videogames further, as there is a clear lack of research on the topic to this day (Theodorsen, 2015).

2.4. Online and offline videogames

There are many videogame genres nowadays, plenty for anyone to find at least one they enjoy. However, all of the videogames, regardless of the genre or platform, can be divided into two categories: offline and online videogames.

The difference between offline and online videogames lies in the social aspect of communication. Some offline videogames (RPGs) try to simulate said communication through scripted non-playable characters (NPCs), and some (adventure) have in-game dialogues in cutscenes. Still, online videogames offer the advantage of real, player-to-player communication either through text chat or voice chat. Rudis & Postic (2018) express the benefit of engagement in *"on the spot"* communication in multiplayer videogames. As an example, Rudis & Postic provide FPS videogames, highlighting their requirements for communication skills and verbal coordination with the other players.

According to the previously mentioned output hypothesis by Swain (1985) (see Chapter 1.1.), language is acquired when a person attempts to transmit a message, fails, and must try again. Eventually, negotiation of meaning happens, the correct form of utterance is achieved, the conversational party understands the message, and the new form is acquired. This hypothesis is criticized by Krashen in his review of Swain's theory, where he highlights some issues with her opinions. One of the issues addresses the scarcity of comprehensible output. Krashen is backed up by several researchers in his statement that comprehensible output does not happen often as the speakers do not tend to participate in negotiation of meaning. However, this changes in the environment of online videogame communities, especially when talking about MMORPGs, where the players often cultivate a friendly and supportive atmosphere and active negotiation of meaning is required (Zhang et al., 2017). Krashen also mentions students not enjoying being "pushed" to speak – which is another problem not present in videogames, as the communication happens willingly (Krashen, 1998).

According to Reinhardt & Sykes (2011), vernacular videogames offer educational possibilities not available in videogames and other virtual environments purposed for second language learning. One example of such possibility is presented in the form of a significant population of native speakers in MMORPG games such as World of Warcraft (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004), providing possibilities for language acquisition through interaction either for the purpose of accomplishing shared, in-game goals, or for the purpose of socialization. Both scenarios result in incidental learning.

The idea of teamwork in language learning is brought up by Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh (2017). According to their reports, teamwork results in better second language vocabulary acquisition and higher motivation. Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh state that if a team member thinks of their individual contribution as essential, they may feel more inclined to succeed in the future and may feel less hampered by failure. *"Put together, student collaboration results in superior learning gains since it can "generate a powerful motivational system to energise learning"."* (Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh, 2017, p. 92). In the context of videogames, teamwork is an important factor as well. Popular online videogames like League of Legends (Riot Games, 2009) completely rely on teamwork and communication – the players assume roles and responsibilities based on experience and expectations and thus, in this way, teamwork is promoted (Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh, 2017).

2.4.1. The differences in learning outcomes between text and voice chat

Communication is a vital aspect of multiplayer videogames, and a massive case for their applicability in the educational field. However, games exist that either only offer text chat communication, or their design makes it preferable to use voice chat. There are also videogames that need quick reaction times (most often FPS videogames), and thus it is more convenient to make use of the voice chat feature.

If we look at the differences between the two forms of communication from the language acquisition point of view, their effects can be compared. Reinders' and Wattana's research (2011) monitors and compares two groups of subjects, totaling 17, playing a popular videogame called Ragnarok Online (Gravity Interactive, 2002). The videogame was chosen because it requires player cooperation in order to progress at a comfortable pace, and also because the researchers were able to obtain permission from the game developer to modify some aspects of it for it to be better suitable for the learning environment (see Chapter 2.1.). One group, however, was instructed to only use text chat for communication and the other group was only allowed the use of voice chat.

The research showed that the students were positively impacted by the gameplay – both groups saw a statistically significant increase in length of turns and number of words expressed between the first and the third session (see Figure 6). This means that playing online videogames alone had a positive motivation on the students' willingness to communicate.
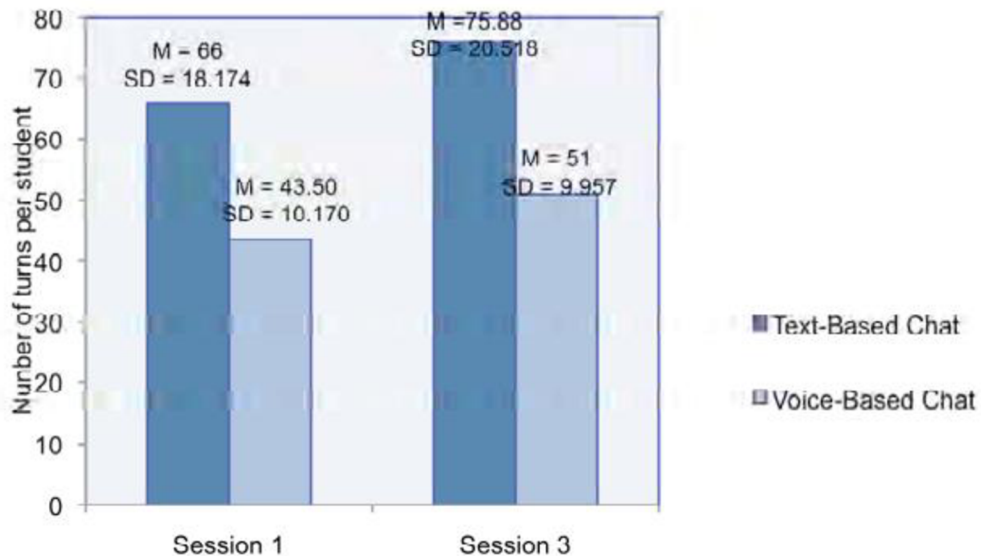

Figure 7: Number of words and number and length of turns in text-based chat and voice-based chat during gameplay of Ragnarok Online (Reinders & Wattana, 2011)

Moreover, text chat is perceived as less demanding than voice chat due to the absent instant response requirement, giving the students time to read and prepare their answers. For this reason, participants in the study using voice chat communicated less often than participants using text chat. Furthermore, text chat group has produced fewer mistakes than voice chat group, which is attributed to the increased cognitive load of the live conversation in the latter case.

The usage of voice chat and its learning benefits can be compared to the traditional method of in-classroom speaking activities. While the speaking activities might offer more grammatical knowledge and on-topic conversations, in-game voice chat can offer a stress-free atmosphere that can be rarely achieved in a classroom environment. On top of that, there are many studies recommending taking advantage of online voice chat in language learning. While studies in the videogame voice chat field are still very lackluster, the benefits of a relaxed social environment within voice chat can be highlighted beyond the videogame setting. Bin Tahir (2015) has studied the influence of voice chat on speaking skills and motivation in 15 Indonesian university students. His results showed statistically significant positive improvements in both areas. These

findings are further supported by Maulina et al. (2023) and their study on using an online messaging app called WhatsApp (Facebook Inc., 2024). 28 university students were exposed to audio and video recordings of communicative activities through WhatsApp. The results showed increased speaking interest, learning collaboration, better learning engagement, and academic progress.

Similarly, when comparing the learning benefits of text chat and classroom activities, one of the main advantages of text chat is reduced anxiety. In a traditional classroom, high pressure is often placed on the student as there are certain expectations of their performance. The benefit of decreased anxiety can have many explanations – lack of pressure and a friendly setting are both mentioned by researchers. As reported by one of the students in research by Satar & Özdener, *"I felt less anxious because I was talking to a friend of mine. I felt more confident about using English"* (Satar & Özdener, 2008, p. 605). Interestingly, participation in text chat seems to improve speaking skills, as supported by Satar & Özdener's research.

While comparing the usage of text chat to the usage of voice chat, text chat is better suited for less proficient learners as they can afford long pauses. Conversely, intermediate, or more advanced learners might benefit from the usage of voice chat more, as it offers the opportunity to improve active vocabulary and fluency of speech. In the manner of cognitive load, voice chat is more demanding than text chat, thus again, advanced learners are better suited as they are less prone to cognitive overload than less proficient learners (Satar & Özdener, 2008).

2.5. Participation in videogames

This paper has brought multiple studies to attention and thus established that videogames do have a place in second language learning and are an effective tool for second language acquisition. However, what about streaming? Videogame streaming is essentially playing a videogame and broadcasting it live on the internet for an audience. One might compare such activity to watching a movie with added commentary. With the rise of social media, videogame streamers have become a popular media, same as YouTube (YouTube, 2005) as a platform for watching (not only) gameplay videos.

A study by DeHaan et al. was previously briefly mentioned (see Chapter 1.6.). To recapitulate, the study focused on studying the learning outcomes of two groups of students. One group played a musical videogame and the other watched someone play the game instead. The player group recalled significantly less vocabulary than the watcher group, which, as was already mentioned, is attributed to the extraneous cognitive load due to the videogame's

interactivity. This is also supported by the participants' reports, as the players have reported to have found the game more difficult than the watchers. They have expressed the difficulty of paying attention to both the videogame and its language at the same time. A few comments were also recorded wishing to be a part of the watcher group in order to learn English.

Meanwhile, the watcher group seemed more likely to use the videogame for studying English. They had more time to process the videogame, they even recalled details about the environment of the game. Some have also reported that the objects in the game levels and the sentences describing them made it easy to learn the vocabulary. DeHaan et al. draw a recommendation from the study, stating that *"the power of games for educational purposes may not reside in the games themselves, but in the context and activities related to and extending from play."* (DeHaan et al., 2010, p. 86).

DeHaan et al.'s recommendation is further supported by Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh and their research. In their study of the effect of videogames on high school students' language learning motivation, they have found out that the watcher group has shown higher motivation than the player group. While the players were interested in the videogame's story and discussed their ideas and alternative storylines, the watchers were less interested, possibly because of the missing need for participation in the videogame. While the player's participation was necessary, the watchers were not judged for the lack of it and thus were able to be more relaxed and perhaps have had more fun while participating in the study (Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh, 2017).

3. Research part – videogames in English and their influence on vocabulary

When it comes to the amount of practical vocabulary (usable in everyday life) videogames bring to the table, there can be major differences in what each individual game can offer. Aspects like gameplay mechanics, storytelling, or online communication differ from game to game – while one game might include a rich storyline and no possibilities to communicate with other players, another one might not include a storyline at all, but offer rich online interactions. This variability likely leads to different long-term opportunities for second language learning.

This issue can be demonstrated on the example of second language acquisition through the videogames Minecraft (Mojang Studios, 2011) and Counter-Strike 2 (Valve Corporation, 2023). Although both fundamentally being action videogames, the experience of playing a single-player Minecraft action videogame would most likely result in vastly different vocabulary acquisition than playing a multiplayer Counter-Strike 2 action videogame. If we expand on this example from the perspective of language acquisition, we can divide these games into categories further than just offline and online games.

Minecraft, for example, is a very vocabulary-heavy game. It is a sandbox game, meaning it works with the creativity of the player in such a way that the limit to the extent of what the world of Minecraft can offer is the imagination of the player, as they can build and depict virtually anything using the wide range of blocks and decorations the game offers. At the same time, it is a survival game, so it provides a challenge to keep the player alert. There is a considerable number of items and materials used in everyday life mixed with some fantasy elements. The reason Minecraft is a good source of vocabulary is because of the brilliant incorporation of visual cues. With every new vocabulary item the player learns, they get to instantly see the visual representation of it, whether it is a block of gravel or a pair of armor boots, and interact with it in some way. This helps immensely with storing the word and it's meaning into long-term memory, especially for low proficiency level students, as per the outcome of the previously mentioned visual aids research done by Chung (2023).

On the other hand, Counter-Strike 2 is a perfect example of a voice-chat based game. Counter-Strike 2 is an FPS game, where, in the main game mode, the player is a part of a 5-person team trying to eliminate the enemy team of 5. Counter-terrorists are trying to fight off terrorists, whose goal is to plant a bomb and protect it until its ultimate explosion. This game has very little practical vocabulary to learn for the average person, but what it offers is

communication skills instead. In this game, it is necessary to have ongoing voice chat communication with the teammates in order to play the game at a certain level. So, hence the player is *"forced"* to talk, it is more than likely that they express important second language acquisition items such as willingness to talk or negotiation of meaning and expand their pronunciation and communication skills in the long term.

According to Reinders & Wattana (2011), students of English as a second language prefer to communicate in English while playing videogames by the likes of World of Warcraft (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004). The credit is given to the inclusive social situation of such videogames, which facilitates willingness to communicate in the second language, as it tends to be the default language of online videogames.

Indeed, there is still a need for research on the topic of videogames and the different learning possibilities experiencing them in a second language might offer, hence, in order to gather relevant personal experiences, it was decided to conduct a survey gathering information about videogame players and their views and experiences with second language acquisition through different videogame genres. The survey seeks to identify aspects of videogames beneficial for second language acquisition, thereby hopefully making it easier for the players to differentiate between second language acquisition opportunities in different genres of videogames.

3.1. Methodology

A qualitative survey (see Appendix 1) in the form of a pen and paper interview was conducted, involving 11 Czech respondents experienced in playing videogames in English as second language learners. Most of the questions were open-ended due to the nature of the survey. The majority of respondents were male (9), with only two female participants. Ten participants were university students, while one was a high school student. The average age of the respondents was 22 years, and they had been learning English as a second language for an average of 13.7 years. Due to the length of the survey, only the most relevant and interesting questions will be reported and commented on.

Besides gathering personal opinions and experiences, a few research questions were established:

1) Which aspects of videogames do the respondents perceive as most useful for second language acquisition?
2) What are the main methods through which respondents acquire new vocabulary?

3) Do the respondents notice any negative impacts on their English skills that they attribute to videogames?

4) Do the respondents have any recommendations on what to focus on in videogame playing in order to make the activity better suited for vocabulary acquisition?

3.2. Results

As already mentioned, this subchapter is only a selection of the findings. The highlighted questions were chosen based on their contribution to the studied topic. The full survey can be found in the Appendices section of the thesis.

Hraješ raději v češtině nebo v angličtině? Proč?

(Do you prefer to play in Czech (native language) or English? Why?)

7 of the respondents prefer to play videogames in English, while the remaining 4 prefer their native language. The most recurring arguments for their choices were the availability and quality of the translations. Both of these were mentioned 4 times and based on these findings, it can be assumed that Czech videogame translations tend to be rare and might lack quality. Two respondents in favor of Czech translations have stated a better experience from the videogame as a reason for their choice, both commenting that they welcome being able to understand everything. It is important to note that these two respondents rated their English proficiency skills quite low. The respondents in favor of playing in English have also mentioned the problem with whether the translation feels natural or not and the learning aspect, both 2 times. The former can be considered as related to the quality of the translation; poor and unimaginative translations may result in an "unnatural" gaming experience. Lastly, mentioning the learning aspect might be a sign that the respondents value the contribution of videogames to their second language proficiency over the availability of native language translations.

Jaký aspekt videoher ti přijde nejpřínosnější pro osvojování angličtiny?

(Příklady: titulky, dialog, vizualizace, voice chat, uživatelské rozhraní)

(What aspect of videogames do you find the most impactful for English language acquisition?)

(Examples: subtitles, dialogue, visualization, voice chat, user interface)

The most impactful aspect of videogames for second language learning according to the respondents was subtitles with 6 mentions. Dialogue followed right after with 5 mentions, suggesting that adventure and role-playing videogames may be perceived as most impactful for second language learning. This comes as no surprise, as those videogames typically include storylines abundant in cutscenes full of dialogues, thereby providing vast vocabulary. Combined with the subtitles, one can argue that adventure videogames are a meeting point

between videogames and cinema. However, another aspect mentioned 5 times was voice chat, while text chat was only mentioned once. This would indicate that the respondents value real, spoken communication over text chat and many other aspects of videogames. This finding is unsurprising, as communication with native speakers is widely recommended as one of the best methods for significant advancements in second language learning.

Jakým způsobem většinou získáváš novou slovní zásobu z videoher?

(Příklady: ze situačního kontextu hry, z titulků, z dialogu, vyhledávám si je, ptám se ostatních hráčů, z vizuální asociace)

(How do you usually acquire new vocabulary from videogames?)

(Examples: from the situational context of the videogame, from subtitles, from dialogue, from looking up the words, from asking other players, from visual association)

While the expected most mentioned method would be subtitles, it is not the case. Dialogue was mentioned 6 times as the most prevalent source of vocabulary, followed by looking up the unknown words and acquiring vocabulary from the situational context of the videogame (=understanding the context in which words are used rather than explicit explanations or definitions provided by subtitles or dialogue) (both 4 mentions). Only then, subtitles were mentioned by 3 respondents. This suggests that while respondents find subtitles beneficial for second language acquisition, they may not rely on them as heavily for vocabulary acquisition compared to other aspects of language learning. Communication with other players within online games was mentioned 3 times as a source of vocabulary acquisition.

Naučil/a ses během hraní nějaké slangové výrazy nebo idiomy? Pokud ano, uveď prosím příklad.

(Have you learned any new slang words or idioms during gameplay? If yes, please provide an example.)

9 of the respondents reacted positively, stating that they have indeed acquired new slang (=informal expressions commonly used in spoken and informal written communication)/idioms during videogame gameplay. One respondent did not acquire any new slang/idioms, and another one answered with *"I am not sure"*. While not every positively reacting respondent provided an example, the mentioned samples can be categorized into three groups: abbreviations, idioms, and uncommonly used words. Abbreviations mentioned included ones typical for the videogaming community such as *GG* (good game), *WP* (well-played), *NPC* (non-playable character), but also ones typical for online communication in general, such as *BTW* (by the

way), *TBH* (to be honest), *FR* (for real), *NGL* (not going to lie), with the last two also being cases of slang. Idioms were only mentioned by one respondent, and they have presented *"barking up the wrong tree"* and *"beat around the bush"* as examples. Finally, some of the respondents have answered this question with regular words that they perhaps thought of as slang. These are words like *jetlag, push, class, combo,* or *checkpoint.* Lastly, one respondent mentioned the slang contraction *"ain't".*

> Myslíš si, že interakce s ostatními hráči v online videohrách (text chat nebo voice chat) přispěly k rozvoji tvojí slovní zásoby? Proč ano/ne?

> (Do you think that interactions with other players in online videogames (text chat or voice chat) contributed to your vocabulary acquisition? Why yes/not?)

8 respondents confirmed that interacting with other players within online videogames influenced their vocabulary acquisition. However, all the remaining 3 respondents noted that they do not engage in online videogames, which would mean that 100% of the respondents who interact with other players within online videogames find the practice helpful for their vocabulary acquisition. As for the reasons for said contribution, the need for the usage of active English skills was mentioned, as well as the variety of people with different active English levels, which reportedly helps with vocabulary acquisition. One of the respondents mentioned voice chat being the main source of their vocabulary acquisition, praising its contribution to their understanding of the structure and word order of English language sentences.

> Všímáš si nějakých negativních dopadů na svoje dovednosti v angličtině, které přiřazuješ videohrám? Pokud ano, jaké?

> (Do you notice any negative influence on your English language skills that you attribute to videogames? If yes, please specify.)

The majority of respondents (7) did not notice any negative influence on their English language skills caused by videogames. The remaining four respondents have mentioned exposure to vulgarisms and racism being a bad influence on their active vocabulary, mixing US and UK English, and the possibility to acquire bad grammar while communicating with non-native speakers.

> Na škále od 1 do 10, jak moc si myslíš, že jsou videohry v angličtině užitečné pro studenty anglického jazyka? (1 = vůbec, 10 = nezbytně)

> (On a scale from 1 to 10, how useful do you think videogames are for students of the English language? (1 = not at all, 10 = absolutely necessary))

Most of the respondents (9) gave a score of 7 or higher, while the remaining 2 gave a score of 3 and 4. The average score given by the respondents is therefore 6.9, indicating that the respondents value videogames as a useful tool for English language acquisition.
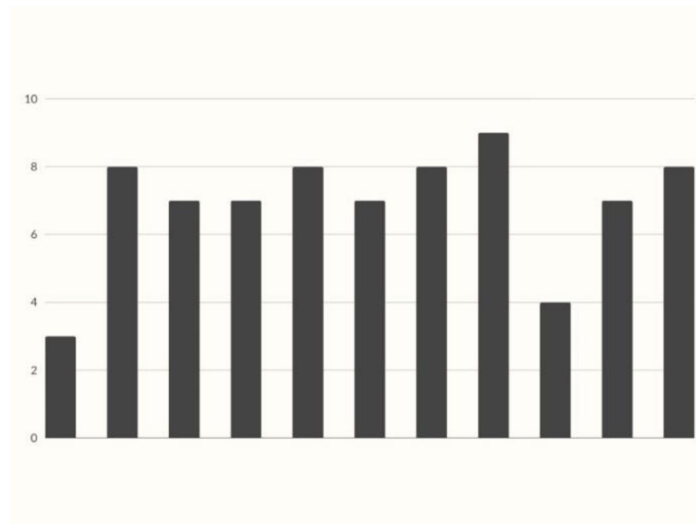
Figure 8: The graph of respondents' answers to the question on the usefulness of videogames for students of the English language

Jak bys zhodnotil/a efektivitu sbírání slovní zásoby skrze videohry v porovnání s tradičními výukovými metodami? V čem jsou videohry lepší a v čem horší?

(How do you rate the effectiveness of vocabulary acquisition through videogames in comparison with the traditional teaching methods? In what areas are videogames better or worse?)

This question produced many different opinions, from which only one was shared by the majority of respondents (7): videogames are better than traditional teaching methods in entertaining the learner and thereby motivating them. Two respondents also mentioned vocabulary acquisition being easier within videogames. On the other hand, 3 of the respondents mentioned the disadvantage of videogames being too tied to the theme/story of the videogame, hence the vocabulary being less extensive and relevant than it might be, for example, in a classroom.

Co bys doporučil/a někomu, kdo se učí anglicky, ohledně využití videoher jako vzdělávacího nástroje?

(What recommendations would you give to someone learning English regarding the use of videogames as a learning tool?)

The most prevalent piece of advice was for the learner to translate new and unknown words (4 mentions). One respondent advised for the learner to first try and understand the meaning of the word from the context, and only then translate it. The runner-up, with 3 mentions, was the advice to play for fun rather than with the primary intent of learning. Following these were recommendations to focus on online videogames, utilizing the voice chat feature, playing videogames with a storyline, or playing with subtitles turned on.

Based on the gathered and discussed information, the previously established research questions may now be answered:

1) **Q:** Which aspects of videogames do the respondents perceive as most useful for second language acquisition?

    A: The respondents find subtitles the most useful for second language acquisition, with dialogue and voice chat following right after.

2) **Q:** What are the main methods through which respondents acquire new vocabulary?

    A: The respondents acquire vocabulary through in-game dialogue the most often, followed by looking up the words and situational context of the videogame. Only then, subtitles and online communication with other players are mentioned.

3) **Q:** Do the respondents notice any negative impacts on their English skills that they attribute to videogames?

    A: The respondents feel negative impacts the most in exposure to vulgarisms and racism, being more prone to make use of the relevant vocabulary. In addition, mixing of UK and US English is another of the problems, followed by the risk of bad grammar acquisition due to the lack of verification possibilities.

4) **Q:** Do the respondents have any recommendations on what to focus on in videogame playing in order to make the activity better suited for vocabulary acquisition?

    A: The respondents advise the learner to translate unknown words, prioritize fun over learning, make use of online games and their voice chat features, and in single-player games, focus on story-driven games and subtitles.

4. Conclusions

The first chapter of the theoretical part has introduced the reader to the concept of second language acquisition. Aspects such as cognitive overload or motivation should not be ignored in second language learning, as they are important for the success of the second language acquisition process. Furthermore, negotiation of meaning, willingness to communicate, incidental learning, and visual cues were introduced, all of which are important for second language acquisition. In the subsequent chapters, it was revealed that all of these aspects can be facilitated through videogames, making a case for their use in education.

The second chapter of the theoretical part has been dedicated to expanding on the topic of videogames and their categorization, differences, and use of different elements of them in second language learning. Adventure and RPG videogames have been found out to possibly provide the most benefits to vocabulary and grammar acquisition, due to their use of dialogues and subtitles. However, according to studies on subtitles, the player should not pay overly much attention in order to prevent cognitive overload. Moreover, native language subtitles were found to potentially mitigate the learning process, hence subtitles in a second language are encouraged. The social aspect of online videogames was also discussed, focusing on text chat and voice chat. Making use of text chat was found to be beneficial for beginners, while voice chat provides more second language acquisition opportunities for intermediate learners.

The research part has utilized a survey to gather the opinions of individuals who are both regular videogame players and English second language learners. Based on their experience with gaming and language learning, we have gathered insight into the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing videogames in second language learning. Due to the relatively small number of participants and the subjective nature of the survey, no statistical conclusions were drawn. The results serve merely as recommendations for the focus of videogame players studying English and further researchers interested in the topic.

The responders found subtitles, dialogue, and voice chat the most useful for second language acquisition. Subtitles in the second language were found to facilitate comprehension and grammar acquisition, as discussed in Chapter 2.3. When it comes to dialogue, practical vocabulary is the most beneficial area. Lastly, voice chat is usually a stress-free environment, where the player can practice their active vocabulary and develop their fluency of speech; all that while areas like negotiation of meaning (see Chapter 1.2.) and willingness to communicate (see Chapter 1.3.) may be practiced too, without the player even being aware.

It was discovered that the responders acquire their vocabulary mostly through dialogue. This would confirm Chen & Yang's (2013) research results, where they concluded that videogames are beneficial to second language learners' vocabulary knowledge. On top of that, videogames often use dialogues to tell a story, and due to the interactive aspect of videogames, the player might feel drawn to the story more than if they were to, for example, watch a movie. Other mentioned vocabulary sources included looking up unknown words, subtitles, deriving the words from the wider context of the game, or subtitles. By looking up the unknown word, the learner commits the word and its meaning to their working memory and rehearses it, thereby greatly improving their chances of storing the particular word to long-term memory (see Chapter 1.6.). While deriving words from context, learners assume the meaning of the word based on the environment in which it is used. This can aid in better understanding the usage of the word.

When asked about the negative influences of videogames, the responders only had comments on the social aspect of online videogames. Exposure to vulgarisms and racism in online chat was mentioned, which could possibly be attributed to the *"safe space"* feeling and missing face-to-face confrontation in online communication (see Chapter 2.4.1.). Additionally, frustration from not performing well in the videogame itself may contribute to such behavior. Apart from toxic behavior, mixing UK and US English and adapting bad grammar structures were reported. Those can be attributed to the unpredictability of online communication – the player might get to talk to a native UK speaker with perfect grammar, but the next day they might talk to a second language learner adapting US English and using faulty grammar. This can create bad second language habits and therefore communication in online videogames should probably not be the only source of language acquisition.

As a part of the survey, the respondents were asked to rescommend a practice for learners trying to maximize their second language acquisition through videogames. Translating unknown words was the most suggested practice; this should be an efficient way to commit those words that might otherwise be forgotten to long-term memory, as looking them up stores them in working memory. Playing for fun in the first place and education in the second was another suggestion, which is important for motivation (see Chapter 1.7.). Not prioritizing language acquisition creates space for incidental learning (see Chapter 1.5.). Another set of recommendations includes previously mentioned tips the respondents use, including utilizing voice chat, subtitles, and playing story-driven videogames. Voice chat, as previously mentioned, facilitates willingness to communicate and creates space for negotiation of meaning. Subtitles

facilitate grammar reinforcement and lastly, story-driven games offer the opportunity for practical vocabulary acquisition, as well as a rich context for easier facilitation of unknown words.

The survey has answered the research questions and provided an insight into the videogaming community and their thoughts on acquiring English as a second language through videogames. The recommendations provided by the survey should prove helpful for second language learners interested in videogames and possibly could offer ideas for what to focus on in future research on the topic.

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List of appendices

Appendix 1: The questionnaire

Videohry v angličtině a jejich vliv na slovní zásobu

Věk:

Pohlaví: o   muž   o   žena   o   nebinární

Mateřský jazyk:

Jak dobře si myslíš, že ovládáš tyto oblasti angličtiny?

- Poslech:
  *(**A1:** rozumím základním frázím, pokud se mluví pomalu a zřetelně, **A2:** rozumím nejběžnější slovní zásobě k oblastem, které se mě týkají, **B1:** rozumím hlavním myšlenkám o běžných tématech a relevantním tématům v TV, **B2:** rozumím přednáškám a výměnám názorů, většině filmů ve spisovném jazyce, **C1:** rozumím delším promluvám i bez jasné stavby, rozumím filmům, **C2:** bez potíží rozumím jakémukoliv projevu)*

- Mluvení:
  *(**A1:** Umím klást a odpovídat na jednoduché otázky týkající se základních potřeb, **A2:** Zvládnu krátkou konverzaci, i když nerozumím natolik, abych ji udržel/a, **B1:** Umím si poradit s většinou situací při cestování v anglicky mluvících zemích, **B2:** Mohu vést běžný rozhovor s rodilým mluvčím, **C1:** Umím jazyk používat pružně a efektivně pro společenské a pracovní účely, **C2:** Jsem dokonale plynulý/á a flexibilní v jakékoliv konverzaci, znám dobře idiomy a hovorové výrazy)*

- Psaní:
  *(**A1:** umím vyplnit formulář s osobními údaji, **A2:** umím napsat jednoduché poznámky a zprávy o mých základních potřebách, **B1:** umím psát dopisy popisující zážitky a dojmy, **B2:** umím obhájit nebo vyvrátit názor, napíšu podrobný text, **C1:** umím se jasně vyjádřit, uspořádat text a podrobně vysvětlit svá stanoviska, **C2:** umím napsat jasný, plynulý text vhodným stylem, nebo třeba recenzi odborné práce)*

- Čtení:
  *(**A1:** rozumím známým slovům a jednoduchým větám, třeba na plakátě, **A2:** umím přečíst krátký a jednoduchý dopis, **B1:** rozumím textům s každodenní slovní zásobou, **B2:** rozumím článkům zabývajícím se současnými problémy, **C1:** rozumím dlouhým, složitým textům, a ocením stylistické rozdíly, **C2:** snadno přečtu všechny formy písemného projevu)*

Kolik let se již učíš anglicky?

Jak často se ti stává, že narazíš na slovní spojení nebo větu, u které nepochopíš její význam?

Jak často hraješ videohry?

Jaké typy videoher hraješ nejčastěji?

*(Příklady: **Action/Adventure** (Assassin's Creed, God of War, Tomb Raider), **Role-Playing Games - RPG** (The Witcher, Elden Ring, The Elder Scrolls), **Simulation** (The Sims, Euro Truck Simulator, Football manager), **Strategy** (Civilization, Starcraft, Warhammer), **Sports** (FIFA, NHL, NBA2K), **First-Person Shooter - FPS** (Counter-Strike, Valorant, Overwatch), **Story-Driven** (The Last Of Us, The Walking Dead, Life is Strange), **Mobile Games** (Brawl Stars, Clash Royale, Subway Surfers), **Sandbox** (Minecraft, Terraria, No Man's Sky), **Survival** (Rust, The Forest, Valheim), **Fighting** (Tekken, Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat), **Racing** (Forza, Need For Speed, Mario Kart), **Massively Multiplayer Online - MMO** (World of Warcraft, The Elder Scrolls Online, World of Tanks))*

Hraješ raději v češtině nebo v angličtině? Proč?

Jaký aspekt videoher ti přijde nejpřínosnější pro osvojování angličtiny?

(Příklady: titulky, dialog, vizualizace, voice chat, uživatelské rozhraní)

Ovlivnily videohry nějakým způsobem tvou anglickou slovní zásobu?

Jakým způsobem většinou získáváš novou slovní zásobu z videoher?

(Příklady: ze situačního kontextu hry, z titulků, z dialogu, vyhledávám si je, ptám se ostatních hráčů, z vizuální asociace)

Vyhledáváš a překládáš si aktivně nová slova, na která narazíš při hraní?

Vybavíš si konkrétní situaci/situace, kdy ti hraní videoher pomohlo naučit se nové anglické slovíčko nebo frázi?

Naučil/a ses během hraní nějaké slangové výrazy nebo idiomy? Pokud ano, uveď prosím příklad.

Myslíš si, že videohry ovlivnily tvoji sebedůvěru, co se komunikace v angličtině týče?

Všiml/a sis nějakého zlepšení v tvých dovednostech (poslech, mluvení, čtení, psaní) co se angličtiny týče od doby, co hraješ videohry?

Myslíš si, že interakce s ostatními hráči v online videohrách (text chat nebo voice chat) přispěly k rozvoji tvojí slovní zásoby? Proč ano/ne?

Všímáš si nějakých negativních dopadů na svoje dovednosti v angličtině, které přiřazuješ videohrám? Pokud ano, jaké?

Na škále od 1 do 10, jak moc si myslíš, že jsou videohry v angličtině užitečné pro studenty anglického jazyka? (1 = vůbec, 10 = nezbytně)

Jak bys zhodnotil/a efektivitu sbírání slovní zásoby skrze videohry v porovnání s tradičními výukovými metodami? V čem jsou videohry lepší a v čem horší?

Měl/a bys nějaké nápady, v čem by se mohly videohry zlepšit, aby lépe pomáhaly hráčům osvojovat si angličtinu a její slovní zásobu?

Kromě hraní videoher, kde jinde se pravidelně setkáváš s pasivní (čtení, poslech) angličtinou?

(Příklady: sociální sítě, předmět ve škole, sledování filmů v angl., poslouchání písniček v angl., čtení knih v angl.)

Kromě hraní videoher, kde jinde se pravidelně setkáváš s aktivní (psaní, mluvení) angličtinou?

(Příklady: natáčení videí v angl., předmět ve škole, zpěv v angl., videohovory s v angl., chatování v angl.)

Myslíš si, že některé z těchto tebou uvedených činností či metod jsou v osvojování angličtiny efektivnější než hraní videoher? Proč ano/ne?

Co bys doporučil/a někomu, kdo se učí anglicky, ohledně využití videoher jako vzdělávacího nástroje?

Pokud máš nějaké další komentáře, připomínky či poznatky ke vztahu mezi videohrami a osvojováním anglického jazyka a jeho slovní zásoby, napiš je sem: