



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

**Benefits of Videogames as a Digital Tool to Learn English:**

**A Case Study at a Public University**

MARZO 2021

Tesis presentada para obtener el grado de:  
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**A Case Study at a Public University**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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# **Benefits of Videogames as a Digital Tool to Learn English: A Case Study at a Public University**

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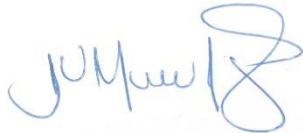
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## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study was to know what English language skills students from a university can develop by using certain video game genres and what actions they did took in order to learn with them.

This study was carried out at a language department of a public university in Mexico. The participants were EFL students from different departments of the university. The instruments were administered to people who believed that English language skills can be improved by playing video games. It was a mixed-method research and the instruments I used to collect data were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The results revealed that some participants were comfortable playing online and speaking with unknown people at first. Others just communicated by writing. In both cases they stated they believed they had mainly improved their speaking and writing skills respectively. More results are and implications are described within this thesis

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

It is known that the methods of teaching are made for specific purposes. Generally, the visions of teaching have been changing through the years, as new technologies have been created. There are many tools that help people to learn a new language. In the case of digital tools, there are games that are created specifically to learn a new language as well as regular videogames. It is commonly perceived by people that playing videogames is not very useful in second language acquisition, they are even considered mindless which do not have any educational value. In my opinion, videogames are an underestimated tool to learn a language. Taking advantage of it as learning tools may have many benefits.

Pillay (1999, cited in Rankin, Gold & Gooch, 2006, p. 1) states that recreational videogames engage player in a complex cognitive process that is employed when interacting. Videogames are designed to be attractive to the player which enhances the interest and motivation. With this, the cognitive abilities are enhanced as well.

Through this thesis I want to explore how skills can be developed through the use of videogames.

### **1.1 Rationale**

When I was younger, I played some videogames in English and it helped me to learn some vocabulary, but I never thought it could be a tool to learn English. I became interested in this topic because when I was in Japan, in an exchange program, I met two people from Spain. They were the best European speakers of Japanese in the dormitory

where I stayed; they even had fluent conversations with native people. They told me that they had learned by using grammar textbooks but they used videogames to practice the language. They learned a lot of vocabulary from there as well. In Japan, when everyone was studying so hard using books, they were there playing or reading comics. I noticed through watching them that it was not as easy as it sounds.

I was looking forward to observing them and gathering information of some of the perceptions that these students had when they played videogames. I wanted to know what skill they thought they had improved by using them.

When I returned to Mexico, I became interested in self studying cases, and I definitely wanted to know more about videogames for English learning.

## **1.2 Location of research**

This study was carried out at a language department of a public university located in the center of Mexico. Here, students can study an undergraduate and graduate program in English Language Teaching (ELT). There is also a language center where students from other undergraduate programs as well as high school students of the same university can study different languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Chinese. I carried out this investigation in this language center. The participants of this study were students between 15 and 23 years old. It did not matter what genre of video games they played as they had a solid perception of what they learned by using them.

## **1.3 Research aims**

The aims of this study are the following:

- To know student perceptions about the relationship between using video games and learning English.
- To know what skills students develop when they play video games
- To know how different the process of learning can be through specific games or certain genre

#### **1.4 Research questions**

- Main Research Question – Do English as a Foreign Language students think they have improved English through specific videogames to learn a language? If so, how?
- Contributory Research Questions- What skills do students develop when using certain genre of videogames?

#### **1.5 Significance of the research**

As I said before, despite videogames are treated as being senseless and without any educational value, they can have a great impact when learning a language. Therefore, investigating about this topic is relevant. It would be good for people that are enthusiastic about learning a language to know that videogames can be a great tool to develop language skills and subskills. It is important to search for new tools that help students to learn English in an effective way for each individual. In addition, it can be used to learn other languages if used affectively.

#### **1.6 Context of research**

The following areas of study are related to this topic: Cognitive learning, educational technologies, learning styles, videogames and language acquisition.

## **1.7 Chapter conclusion**

In chapter I, I provided the introduction, the rationale, the purpose of the study as well as the research questions. I also described the location of the research and explained the significance. In the following chapter, I will provide the literature review where I explain detail the areas of study related to this topic.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, we will see some theories about language learning and language acquisition. I will retake fragments of various theories that are related to the language acquisition and can contribute to my own research about learning English with video games as a good resource of knowledge for learning a second language.

### **2.1 Second language acquisition**

There are many theories that try explain the process of second language acquisition. For many of them, language is seen as a “set of a linguistic system external to the learner to the learner, thus, learning is seen as the process of assimilating the structural components of the system into preexisting mental structures” (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000, p. 1). One of the reasons why there are different theories that explain the second language acquisition process is because it is very complex; therefore, theories may complement each other. Some theories were taken and developed to create new ones (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). Additionally, even if researches on language acquisition constructions vary in order try to find “the most effective way of facilitating the assimilation of new systemic knowledge to discovering and constructing the ideal linguistic system, it is generally agreed the language learning and language use are two distinct phenomena” (Firth & Wagner, 1997, 1998; Gass, 1998; Hall, 1993, 1995, 1997 cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000, p. 1).

Behaviorisms theory was the most accepted one at the time. New researches demonstrated that behaviorism failed in explaining some aspects so more theories appeared. For instance, one of the more valuable is the Monitor theory of Stephen Krashen which has

influenced other researchers (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). From here, there were new findings in the sociocultural perspective in language and studies towards classrooms (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000).

In this section, the theories of second language acquisition will be explained according to Lightbown & Spada (1999), VanPatten & Williams (2007), Gass & Mackey, Hall & Verplaetse (2000), McLaughlin (1987), Skehan (1998), Dörnyei (2009), Krashen & Terrell (2000).

### **2.1.1 Behaviorism**

This theory states that language development is described as the acquisition of a set of habits. It is known that people acquire the first language through those habits but at the same time those can interfere when learning a second language; “these habits interfere with those needed for second language speech, and new habits must be formed” (Lado, 1964 cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 23). All learning, whether verbal or non-verbal, takes place through the same underlying process, habit formation. In any context, whenever people are talking, they receive linguistic input. There is a positive reinforcement when people who listen talk back repeating or imitating, this leads to people to form habits.

In addition, VanPatten and Williams (2007) point out that behaviorism tries to explain behavior with no necessity of internal processes but with external factors that happen in the environment. There were Pavlov’s experiments that are related with behaviorism as the origin of the theory. In the experiment, whenever the dog was fed, there was a sound as well. Sometime after, whenever the dog heard the sound (stimulus), it believed that was the meal time, and as a response, it started to salivate (the response).



Thus, Pavlov demonstrated that if there was not food when the dog heard the sound, it salivated. The reason for this was the repeated association between the sound and the food. After some trials, just hearing the sound made the dog to respond to it by salivating. This process was called classical conditioning. Frequency is very important because each time there is a response to the stimulus, the association between them is strengthened. On the other hand, if the stimulus is stopped, the response might stop too. Thus, continuous repetition is essential for creating new behaviors.

Behaviorists went further beyond this concept to the behavioral conditioning based on reinforcement and punishment. When there is enough feedback, animals might acquire a new behavior even when there is no more stimulus because it already learned the association. Reinforcement encourages the continuity of the behavior as punishment discourages it.

### **2.1.2 Cognitive theory**

Lightbown and Spada (1999) mention that the cognitive theory sees “second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge system that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding” (p. 25). This means that people will take more and more information until they will be able to speak and understand without efforts. Second language learning is treated like a complex cognitive skill. Thus, many aspects of the task must be practised and then integrated into fluent performances of the learners. During the learner’s performance, there are internal representations that guide and regulate them. Those representations are the reason why learning is a cognitive process. Also, they are related with the language system, which includes the selection of vocabulary, grammatical rules, and pragmatic conventions governing language use.

In any context, people, in order to be able to communicate, just have to focus on any aspect of the target language. As people is exposed to a language and as they keep practicing it, they will eventually be able to use what they know in a natural way that even they would not be aware of it. At the same time, as performance gets better, learner's restructuring becomes constant as they "simplify, unify, and gain control over their internal representations" (Karmiloff-Smith, 1986 cited in McLaughlin, 1987, p. 134). After this, learners have the opportunity to explore and develop other areas: "This frees them to focus on other aspects of the language which, in turn, gradually, become automatic" (McLaughling, 1987 cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 25).

As it was pointed out above, there is a phenomenon called restructuring. To explain better, even when we manage to use the language automatically, it does not mean that it took a build-up process to get to that point through practice. But instead, it is "based on the interaction of knowledge we already have, or on the acquisition of new knowledge which, without extensive practice, somehow fits into an existing system" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 25). In other words, using the language, without being aware of it, it is based on taking what we know and try to make it make sense inside a system.

### **2.1.3 Creative construction theory and the monitor model**

Lightbown and Spada (1999) and VanPatten and Williams (2007) explain that the creative construction theory is the result of taking what we know about Chomsky's innatist theory from first language acquisition to second language learning. This theory claims that the first language does not interfere with second language acquisition and that language learning is all a creative process. Learners can make unconscious hypothesis from the input, which at the same time, is part of the innate mechanisms process. Those mechanisms are

the same ones that operates in the first language acquisition (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). As a result, learners construct internal representations as mental pictures of the target language. All those representations will develop in predictable stages into a second language system.

More statements of this theory come from analyzing learner's error at acquiring a second language as well as the sequence in which those are acquired. "What is distinctive about this theory is that it proposes that internal processing strategies operate on language input without any direct dependence on the learner actually producing the language" (Lightbown & Spada, p. 26). To illustrate, it is not necessary for people to write or speak if they want to learn a second language but they have to hear and read the samples of what they can understand. Eventually, learners will be able to produce writing and speaking as the result of the learning process. That is the reason why writing and speaking is not seen as a cause of learning or even a necessary step for the learning process (Lightbown & Spada).

VanPatten and Williams (2007) stated that monitor model was the first model that tried to explain language learning since the effect of age and the uneven effects perspective. The monitor model does not make direct reference to Chomsky's theory of language but it seems connected to it since this theory states that humans are born with the innate ability for language acquisition. Therefore, Krashen believed that second language acquisition process is the very same that the process children have when acquiring the first language with the help of their biological endowings. Thus, for any acquisition the comprehension of meaningful messages and the interaction of the linguistic information of them with the innate language acquisition faculty are necessary.

Krashen has developed this model of second language acquisition which has five central hypotheses:

- 1) The acquisition-learning hypothesis
- 2) The monitor hypothesis
- 3) The natural order hypothesis.
- 4) The input hypothesis.
- 5) The affective hypothesis

I will take Lightbown and Spada (1999) and VanPatten and Williams (2007) as a reference to develop the following five hypotheses:

#### **2.1.3.1 The acquisition-learning hypothesis**

This could be the main hypothesis of the Monitor theory. Krashen believed that there are two ways to gain knowledge: acquiring and learning. “We acquire as we engage in meaningful interaction in the second language, in much the same way that children pick up their first language, with no attention to form” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 27). Learners are not able to articulate the knowledge but they operate by feel rather than rule.

That is, children do not know the grammar rules, but they can acquire the language through the messages received successfully between the listener and the speaker. Language acquisition means people being able to communicate in a natural and fluent way. In order to do this, “acquisition takes place naturally and outside of awareness; it emerges spontaneously when learners engage in normal interaction in the L2” focusing on meaning

with no guidance and intention to learn is not necessary (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 26).

Similarly, we learn through a conscious process, which includes actions that are often seen in language classroom; for example, studying, paying attention and getting corrected (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Learning is about getting knowledge about the languages such as its rules and patterns. “Gaining and using this knowledge are conscious and effortful processes that are undertaken intentionally” (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 26). Learners might know the rules and be able to articulate them but will not be able to produce them spontaneously.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) claim that, for those reasons Krashen believes that acquired and learned systems cannot interact with each other, so acquired knowledge cannot turn in learned knowledge and vice versa. As evidence, in the case of the acquisition process, he pointed out that there were people who could speak in such natural and fluid way without having learned the rules. Differently, people who learned the language, know the rules but is difficult for them to speak and they constantly break the rules. Krashen states that speakers focused on the learned system “may know rules but continue to break them when they are focusing their attention on meaningful interaction rather than on the application of grammatical rules for accurate performance” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 27).

### **2.1.3.2 The monitor hypothesis**

Krashen states that “the acquired system acts to initiate the speaker’s utterances and it is responsible for fluency and intuitive judgements of correctness” (Lightbown & Spada,

1999, p. 27). Thus, acquiring language is not a conscious process but a process where learners are in an environment surrounded by the language. On the other hand, the learned system functions as an editor that serves to polish what has been acquired during language production. Additionally, Krashen calls this actions construction. This is, when learners take advantage and have enough time to consult their knowledge of the rules. However, this would only happen when it is necessary for the learner to pay attention to accuracy. There are three specific conditions for monitoring: sufficient time, focus on form, and knowing the rules (VanPatten & Williams, 2007).

### **2.1.3.3 The natural order hypothesis**

This hypothesis claims that learners acquire the rules of a language through predictable sequences, so some rules can be acquired late and some earlier. Rules that are easy to learn may not be first to be acquired by the student (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). About the rules, for instance, there are the cases of grammatical morphemes like -ing, -ed and -s etcetera. Furthermore, learners “appear to pass through predictable stages in their acquisition of grammatical structures such as questions, negations, and relative clauses” (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 27).

### **2.1.3.4 The input hypothesis**

Krashen states we acquire language in only one way by receiving comprehensible input when we understand messages. If the language’s content and structure we are exposed to is just beyond the learner’s internalized language, they will be able to comprehend and acquire.

Krashen introduces two constructs:  $i$  which is the internalized knowledge the learner has, and  $i+1$  which is the level just beyond the internalized knowledge. Krashen states that input that is  $i+1$  is the most valuable knowledge for second language acquisition. Krashen claims that “roughly tuned input will automatically include several levels of input including  $i$ ,  $i+1$ , and probably  $i-1$  and  $i+2$  etcetera” (VanPatten & Williams, 2007, p. 28). This is, teachers should not use nor teach high level language skills to a learner who is not prepared to acquire that knowledge. As long as students are exposed to enough difficult and comprehensible input there is not inconvenient for acquisition to take place.

#### **2.1.3.5 The affective filter hypothesis**

This hypothesis asserts that the affective filter is an imaginary barrier that does not allow learners to process comprehensible input from the environment. “Affect refers to such things as motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 28). This means, students who are motivated toward learning a language have their filters set low because of the relaxation and motivation, so they can understand better the input. On the other hand, emotions or states like angry, anxious, tenseness or boredom will have a negative effect blocking the processing of input. This is, what people might acquire correspond to the state of mind acting as a filter limit. The filter will raise when the learner is in stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated conditions, such are the cases when students are forced to produce before they feel enough comfortable to do it. According to Krashen, this hypothesis can explain why learners of the second language have different outcomes depending on their ages and class conditions.

#### **2.1.4 The second language interactionist view**

Interactions are given when learners participate in conversations with native speakers. Those interactions are important for learners because they can notice the correctness or incorrectness of their utterances through them. Interactionists state that “a crucial element in the language acquisition process is the modified input that learners are exposed to and the way in which native speakers interact in conversations with learners” (Long, 1985 cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 29) believed that understandable input for language acquisition is important as Krashen believed but they focus as well on how input was made understandable. Talking between native speakers and non-native speakers is an essential aspect that can lead to interactional modifications.

Additionally, during the interaction between the non-native speaker and the native speaker, the first one can distinguish the difference in what he or she said and what the native speaker said. This is referred as noticing gap (Schmidt & Frota, 1986 cited in Gass & Mackey, 2012). Besides, when learners do not know how to express what they want, it can be said there is a hole in their interlanguage (Swain, 1998 cited in Gass & Mackey, 2012) Concluding, interactions can help learners to focus their “attention to something new, such as lexical items or grammatical construction” (Gass & Mackey, 2012, p. 181), helping to the development of a second language.

As Long (1985 cited in Lightbown & Spada, 1999) and others believed, modified interaction was important for language acquisition. It is summarized as follows:

1. Interactional modification makes input comprehensible;
2. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition.
- 3 Interactional modification promotes acquisition.

Long (1981 cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000) claimed that native speakers’ interactive modifications were given in order to acquire the second language. The following



interactive modifications were constructed in order to make easier comprehension and participation by the non-native speakers.

1. Topics are treated simply and briefly as compared to native speakers talk to native speakers
2. Topics are dropped unexpectedly and shifted to accommodate miscommunications by the non-native speakers.
3. Topics initiated in foreign talk are signaled by additional stress, left dislocation, intrasentential pauses, question forms as topic initiators, and frames.

In addition, Long (1981 cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000) gave the following techniques to keep conversations and lighten the burden in non-native speakers during interaction:

1. Native speakers engage in cooperative dialogue by supplying information to the non-native speaker's utterances to help the latter express an idea.
2. Native speakers answer their own questions and ask rhetorical questions.
3. Native speakers frequently use an interrogative style, thereby requiring answers and, hence, sustaining the conversation.
4. Native speakers use many and frequent clarification devices to avoid conversation problems and to repair miscommunications.

### **2.1.5 Skill acquisition theory**

This theory explains how learners can progress in various skills from easy to high levels. Carlson (2003 cited in Dörnyei, 2009, p. 151) believes that skills are defined as “an acquired ability that has improved as a consequence of practice” and are not only cognitive skills but also psychomotor skills. As learning is progressing, there are changes in the learner's behavior that leads to use the language fluently, spontaneously and effortless, and develop highly skilled behavior. Johnson, Wang, and Zhang (2003 cited in Dörnyei 2009, p. 151) claim that “Skills are thought to consist largely of collections of automatic processes. Automatic processing often occurs without attention. It is often, effortless, stereotypic, autonomous, and unavailable to conscious awareness.” There are three stages

of development denominated declarative, procedural, and automatic (Anderson, 1982 cited in DeKeyser, 2012).

For the first stage, learners may have knowledge about certain skill without even using it. Usually, learners need to be provided of relevant information through perceptible observation and analyzing others' skilled behaviors in a demonstration like cooking, or verbal or written instructions about the skill. This is, knowledge is transmitted from someone who knows how to do something to someone who does not.

The second stage consist in turn declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge, which means learners knowledge become behavior. Before learners proceed to proceduralization, they have to be provided of relevant declarative knowledge from a target behavior. The process of proceduralization can be complete once learners perform some attempts. Anderson (2004, cited in DeKeyser 2012, p. 98) pointed out that during the warm ups, learners can pass “from a declarative representation and slow interpretation of the task to a smooth, rapid, procedural execution of the task”. One advantage that has proceduralized knowledge over declarative knowledge is that learner do not longer need to gather information from the memory to reach a behavior because there is ready-made chunk which the learner can dispose whenever there are the conditions for a specific behavior. In addition, Anderson (2000, 2004, cited in Dörnyei 2009, p. 154) claims that proceduralization “involves the development of condition-action rules that the learner will increasingly draw on instead of the initially acquired declarative knowledge”. For Juffs and DeKeyser (2003, cited in in Dörnyei, 2009), development and correction of a highly specialized rules can be reached when learners repeat a relevant behavior and at the same time, relevant knowledge can be disposed in long term memory.

The final stage is about mastering the procedural knowledge for a behavior by making improvements through the practice of a skill that is already settled in order to make gradual automatization of knowledge. Learners have to practice many times in order to reduce the reaction time, the errors rate, and the attention required. This is displaying a behavior with complete fluency and with less errors. Furthermore, as the automaticity increases, the cognitive involvement decreases and learners cannot describe how they do certain task (Johnson, Wang, & Zhang, 2003, cited in Dörnyei, 2009). On the other hand, having highly automatized behaviors does not mean they are 100% automatic.

## **2.2 Language skills**

The usage of the language are grouped in four macroskills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is normal for real life tasks to demand more than one macroskill in order to accomplish them. The four macroskills interact with each other during normal life in a natural way. This does not mean that there are not tasks that involve just one macroskill; for instance, reading a book (Nunan, 1999a).

### **2.2.1 Speaking**

Brown and Yule (1983, cited in Nunan, 1999a) state that spoken language consists of short, often fragmentary utterances, in a range of pronunciations. In addition, for speaking in another language “one needs to know how to articulate sounds in a comprehensible manner, one needs an adequate vocabulary, and one needs to have mastery in syntax” (Nunan 1999b, p. 226). On the other hand, “speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information” (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997 cited in Cunningham, 1999, p. 1). The form and

meaning of speaking depend on the context in which it happens: the characteristics of the speakers, their own experiences, the place in which everything is happening and their purposes. It is regularly open ended, spontaneous and in constant development. (Burns & Joyce, 1997, cited in Cunningham Florez, 1999).

However, if we talk about speaking in a second language Hymes (1974, cited in Nunan, 1999b) proposed the communicative competence for such purposes. Apart of the linguistic competence, a range of sociolinguistic and conversational skills are necessary to the speaker to be able to know how to say what to whom (Nunan, 1999b).

Richards, Platt and Weber (1985, p. 49 cited in Nunan, 1999b) define communicative competence as follows:

Communicative competence includes: (a) knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language; (b) knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g., knowing how to begin and end conversation, knowing what topics can be talked about in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speak to and in different situations; (c) knowing how to use and respond to different types of speech acts such as request, apologies, thanks, and invitations; (d) knowing how to use language appropriately.

For successful oral communication, Nunan (1999a) proposes abilities to be developed. Some of them are provided below:

- transactional and interpersonal skills;
- skills in taking short and long speaking turns;
- skills in the management of interaction;
- skills in negotiating meanings;

Additionally, the purpose for speaking can be analyze by using Bygate's scheme. Bygate (1987, cited by Nunan 1999b, p. 228) states that "conversations can be analyzed in

term of routines”. Routines are predictable when one is presenting information. There are two types of routines: information routines and interactional routines. The first one can be divided in expository in nature which includes telling stories or making comparisons, etcetera, and evaluative which refer to actions such as explanation, predicting or making a decision. Interaction routines on the other hand can be divided in service encounter such as job interviews, and social which includes casual talking, talking in a party, etcetera. Furthermore, he states that negotiating meaning and managing of interaction are important to have a better conversational management dimension.

### **2.2.2 Listening**

“Listening is an active, purposeful processing of making sense of what we hear” (Helgesen, 2003, p. 24, cited in Chit Su Maung, 2014). Listening is also the mental process of constructing meaning from spoken input (Rost, 2002 cited in Chit Su Maung, 2014). Bueno, Madrid and McLaren (2006, cited in Segura Alonso, 2012) point out that “listening is a psychological phenomenon, which takes place on a cognitive level inside people’s heads, and a social phenomenon, which develops interactively between people and the environment surrounding them. It considers listening as a complex process, which needs to be understood in order to teach it, and subsequently, evaluate it before integrating it with phonological aspects and with the skill of speaking” (p. 282).

On the other hand, Rost (1994) states that “listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner” (cited in Nunan, 1999b, p. 200). There is not learning if there is not understanding of the input. Some of the reasons he pointed out to emphasize the importance of listening for the development of spoken language proficiency are the following:

Spoken language provides a means of interaction for the learner. Because learners must interact to achieve understanding, access to speakers of language is essential. Moreover, learners' failure to understand the language they hear is an impetus, not an obstacle, to interaction and learning.

Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to attempt to understand language as native speakers actually use it (Rost, 1994, p. 141).

Anderson and Lynch (1988, cited in Nunan, 1999a) state that there are two types of listening: reciprocal and non-reciprocal listening. Reciprocal listening occurs when there is the opportunity of interaction between the listener and speaker that enables the chance to “negotiate the content of the interaction” (Nunan, 1999a, p. 23). On the other hand, non-reciprocal interaction occurs when information goes only one way from the one who speak to the listener. Anderson and Lynch (1988, cited in Nunan, 1999a) state that for being able to comprehend taking into account reciprocal and non-reciprocal listening, listeners have to integrate the following skills that can be used for conversational or academic tasks:

- identify spoken signals from the midst of surroundings sounds;
- segment the stream of speech into words;
- grasp the syntax of the utterance(s);
- (in interactive listening) formulate an appropriate response.

Additionally, there are other non-linguistic skills which listeners have to pay attention as well. These are having “an appropriate purpose for listening; having appropriate social and cultural knowledge and skills; having the appropriate background knowledge” (1988, cited in Nunan, 1999a, p. 23).

Furthermore, Richards (1887, cited in Nunan, 1999a) states that interactional and transactional functions should be included as well for comprehension. Taking into account bottom-up/top/down processing dimension we can note that successful listening implies the following:

- skills in segmenting the stream of speech into meaningful words and phrases;
- recognizing word classes;
- relating the incoming message to one's own background knowledge;
- identifying the rhetorical and functional intent of an utterance or parts of an aural text;
- interpreting rhythm, stress and intonation to identify information focus and emotion/attitude tone;
- extracting gist/essential information from longer aural texts without necessarily understanding every word.

### **2.2.3 Reading**

“Reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in the text” (Aebersold & Field, 1997, p. 15 cited in Chit Su Maung, 2014). “Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among the readers’ existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of the reading situation” (Anthony, Pearson & Raphael, 1993, p. 238, cited in Chit Su Maung, 2014).

The purpose of reading is explained by White (1992) in three points. The first is that readers read referential material for getting factual information that is present in the situation. Readers read looking for intellectual content. The second one, is that readers read intellectual material instead of factual in order to get more knowledge and manipulate ideas giving the opportunity to influence people or situations. The last one is related with emotions like gratification for reading.

There are different types of reading skills that depend on the purpose for reading. We can find them in everyday life. Some of the everyday tasks where reading is involved proposed by Brosnan (1984, cited in Nunan, 1999a) are the following:

- looking in a newspaper to find a flat to rent

- interpreting labels on pharmaceutical products
- shopping for a particular product, for example dishwashing detergent
- selecting and reading a newspaper article
- reading a short story or novel

Brosnan (1984, cited in Nunan, 1999a) cited some examples of reading tasks in a school environment context:

- glance over it noting script, style and format;
- skim over it picking up key words and information (who it is from, the date etc.);
- skim again, disregarding unimportant parts;
- read again in more detail, checking you have all the information;
- respond by ringing or writing a note to the teacher;

In order to accomplish these tasks, the following reading skills are involved:

- recognizing and understanding script and format;
- recognizing and understanding keywords and phrases;
- skimming for gist;
- identifying the main point in text;
- reading in detail.

Additionally, Davies (1995, cited in Nunan, 1999b) pointed out four types of reading based on the studies of Lunzer and Gardner (1979) and Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1984).

Receptive Reading: rapid and automatic reading  
 Reflective Reading: paused reading for reflecting  
 Skim Reading: rapid reading to find the general idea  
 Scanning: searching for specific information

## **2.2.4 Writing**

Writing is not a natural activity. All physical and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet all people have to be taught how to write. This is a crucial difference between the spoken and written forms of a language. There are other important differences as well. Writing, unlike, speech, is displaced in time. Indeed, this must be one reason why writing originally evolved since it makes possible the transmission of a message from one place to another. A written message can be received, stored and referred back to at any time. It is permanent in comparison with the ephemeral “here one minute and gone next”



character of spoken language – even of spoken language that is recorded on tape or disk.

(White, 1981, p. 2)

Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and text” (Bell and Burnaby, 1984, cited in Nunan, 1999a, p. 36).

Richards and Renandya (2002, cited in Muñoz, Riquelme, and Saldivia, 2011) mention the reason why writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners is because of the necessity to generate and organize ideas and then translate them into readable text. Students tend to have many difficulties for this skill.

Successful writing involves:

- mastering the mechanics of letter formation;
- mastering and obeying conventions of spelling and punctuation;
- using the grammatical system to convey one’s intended meaning;
- organizing content at the level of the paragraph and the complete text to reflect given/new information and topic/comment structures;
- polishing and revising one’s initial efforts;
- selecting an appropriate style for one’s audience.

It is necessary to mention that although there might be some variations of the set of sub skills for each skill depending on the author, they tend to be similar. When learners are learning the four skills, indeed, they are learning some specific skills for each one from the four. For the integration of the four skills it is necessary to put them to work together so every skill can be expanded and reinforced and work among the others.

### **2.3 Video games and second language learning**

Video games for learning purposes have good and bad claims. Apart from the bad claims such as violence content, Gee (2003) believes that they can serve very well for learning purposes. One thing that video games make different from learning in the classroom is that, as teachers tend to shorten and simplify activities for students, in the case of video games, designers have to make them long and challenging. Gee states that one cannot play a game without learning it and if a game has good learning principles built into its design, it will be good for learning. Therefore, Gee (2007) argues that video games are good learning tools in terms of 3 points: first, players become active when they play. It means that they get deeply involved, interact with other players, act and take decisions, and therefore they get motivated because they get the feeling of being active agents. Second, problem solving skills become better by playing videogames. As video games constantly give ordered problem to the players, they can solve them based in the clues from previous ones. The last point is that video games give to player a better understanding if we compare with other media. This is, player have a better understanding of being a soldier when they control one in a game. Also, when players progress or lose in the game, they learn what actions works and what does not. This means that players make relationship of words and concepts to perceptions and actions. This action is called by Gee “system thinking”.

In the following sections I will explain the advantages and disadvantages of video games and the possibilities that it can bring for second language learning.

### **2.3.1 Why using video games is useful to learn a foreign language**

First, I would like to explain learning from video games in general which includes not only language but attitudes or other kind of knowledge. Nowadays it is very common for people to believe that video games are a waste of time. Gee (2003) took as an example

the case of a six year old child who was playing Pikmin. In this game, he had to perform several kinds of actions like leading, recollecting, raising and so on in order to progress. The grandfather considered that the game, although it might be useful to develop hand-eye coordination, it was a waste of time because there is no content to learn. “Important knowledge (now usually gained in school) is content in the sense of information rooted in, or, at least related to, intellectual domains or academic disciplines like physics, history, art or literature” (p. 21). Gee calls this the problem of content and pointed out that it is “based on common attitudes toward school, schooling, learning, and knowledge” (Gee, 2003, p. 20). Such attitudes were rooted in history where the idea of important knowledge was related to academic disciplines predominated. Work that did not involve history, literature, art, etcetera, was seen as meaningless and video games went in this category. Gee believes that disciplines or any other semiotic domain are not primarily content in the sense of facts and principles. Instead, it is “rather primarily a lived and historically changing set of distinctive social practices. It is in these social practices that content is generated, debated, and transformed via certain ways of thinking, talking, valuing, acting, and, often, writing and reading” (Gee, 2003, p 21).

Therefore, Gee believes that video games can be used for learning:

By a semiotic domain I mean any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g., oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings. Here are examples of semiotic domains: cellular biology, postmodern literary criticism, first-person-shooter videogames, high-fashion advertisements, Roman Catholic theology, modernist painting, midwifery, rap music, wine connoisseurship – through a nearly endless, motley and ever changing list (Gee, 2003, p. 18).

Furthermore, he states that learners can be passive and understand what is related in certain domain, or they can be active, which means being more participative and productive. To learn a semiotic domain in an active way there are three points to take into account (Gee,

2003, p. 23):

1. We learn to experience (see, feel, and operate on) the word in new ways.
2. Since semiotic domains usually are shared by groups of people who carry them on as distinctive social practices, we gain the potential to join this social group, to become affiliated with such kind of people (even though we may never see all of them, or any of them, face to face).
3. We gain resources that prepare us for future and problem solving in the domain and, perhaps, more important, in related domains.

This is, the three points for active learning are experience the world in new ways, forming new affiliations, and preparation for future learning. But to reach critical learning, one additional feature is needed: learners have to “think about the domain at a meta level as a complex system of interrelated parts” (Gee, 2003, p. 23). Therefore, Gee believes that genres of video games can be treated as domains because they have a particular type of content. Learners can be benefited from this content using the four points to learn and to manipulate it.

### **2.3.1.1 Using video games to learn a foreign language (L2)**

Theodorsen (2015, cited in Rudis & Poštić, 2018) argued about the importance of comprehensible input and output in second language learning and added language intake. Language intake is “input that has been processed in the working memory and made available for further processing” which is the case of video games. He added that players stay more focus in key words that convey meaning than in complementary words such as pronouns and prepositions.

Furthermore, he explains that through Task Based Language Approach, video games are a powerful tool that possesses a great potential as a learning tool because of the

player active interaction doing meaningful task and the huge amount of linguistic input in visual, auditory stimuli and the context. In many genres, players receive the information and tool games to solve problems which are important for the progress of the game. This all happens at the same time that language is presented. Language can be presented in context as well, triggered by player's actions and shown through narrative choices to make players more emotionally invested in the game's story, facilitating language acquisition even more (depending on the game)".

Additionally, Purushotma, Thorne and Wheatly (2009, cited in Theodorsen, 2015) quoted that "gaming environments should not simply reproduce conventional foreign language pedagogy in a digital format" (p. 6). And based in TBLT they quote that "the video game should provide a framework that emphasizes goal-directed activities within constructed gaming environments". They made a list of principles for designing videogames based in TBLT for L2 learning:

- 1) At least as much thought needs to go into the design of failure states as for success states.
- 2) Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning or words or phrases; secondarily, however, instruction should still focus on form.
- 3) All elements of the game, particularly communication and input mechanisms should have a playful spirit to them.
- 4) Metalinguistic descriptions and terminology should be presented through optional supporting material, not as part of the core gameplay.
- 5) Learning content should be organized around tasks, not presented taxonomically.
- 6) New concepts should be introduced gradually and interspersed with other content before requiring difficult responses from players.
- 7) Assessment should intelligently track free production tasks throughout the game, not simply measure controlled production during test events.
- 8) Consider the full range of gaming platforms available.
- 9) Games should allow students to spend extra time in activities they enjoy and to minimize time in ones they do not. Ultimately, instructional activities should be designed to teach students how they can autonomously continue playing similar games or performing similar activities taken directly from the target culture.

10) Where possible, multiplayer games should provide players with meaningful and distinct roles. (Purushotma, Thorne and Wheatly, 2009, p. 7).

According to Gee (2005, cited in Theodorsen, 2015), the ordered problems faced in a game make the players be creative and make them use the game mechanics to solve those problems. When information and tools are given to players to solve the problems when they required, the need to understand becomes the key for progressing in the game.

Another aspect applicable to L2 learning is noted by Reinders (2012, cited in Theodorsen, 2015):

[Video games] put performance before competence and they put experiences and actions before words and texts. This means players learn by doing, and that they have images and experiences to give deep meaning to the words and texts they read later, in order to resource their play and learning (Reinders, 2012:xii).

Another advantage of video games is the concept of interconnection of visual and word made by Plass and Jones (2005, cited in Theodorsen, 2015):

Video games connect the written word, a picture, sound, a virtual 3D representation of the object in the game world and actions associated with the object. This make the players activate word processes on several different levels continuously and simultaneously, which has been proven to enhance word learning (Plass & Jones, 2005, p. 472).

This is, video games offer the opportunity to players to associate linguistic phenomena with elements inside the game by using the players' senses. Plass and Jones (2005) made a model for multimedia-based second language learning. It makes a link between visual input and text inputs, showing how the two of them can together get into the learner's linguistic system at the same time. So, the whole process goes from taking the two inputs, make models through the working memory to the linguistic system, resulting in learners' output.

## **2.4 Video game genres and skills they help to develop in an L2**

All the genres of videogames have features that help to improve language skills. Although some genres share some characteristics, generally speaking, each one of them can develop certain skills more than other. The opportunity to improve certain skill also depends on the context such as players' game preferences or what skill the student is lacking. In this section, some features of some genres video games will be provided and how they may help learners to get better in their English skills.

#### **2.4.1 Role playing game, action game and adventure game**

DeHaan (2005) attributes to role playing games (RPG) and action/adventure games characteristics that help players to acquire a second language. For DeHaan, these genres contain more language than other genres. The games include “hundreds of conversations of varying lengths presented textually and/or aurally, hundreds of on-screen commands and items, and in-game notes, sign, computer screens, books and character diaries” (DeHaan, 2005, p. 233). These games allow the players to live through dynamic characters in worlds that are unlike their own. Although those worlds and realities can be engaging, the language that they offer is not the kind of language used in the real world. This is, after being frequently exposed to those games, players might be able to describe monster, magic spells or weapons. Therefore, there are few opportunities to use those language items outside the game circles.

In addition, role playing, action and adventure games include aural and textual language which allow learners to use semantic and linguistic knowledge to decode unknown words and grammar. Nevertheless, pausing, repeating conversations or cut scenes (sequence in a video game that is not interactive, breaking up the gameplay. Such scenes could be used to show conversations between characters, set the mood, reward the player, introduce new gameplay elements, show the effects of a player's actions, create emotional connections, improve pacing or

foreshadow future events) are not allowed, so games can be high engaging but not interactive because they do not give enough time to the player for lexical or syntactic points of interest. This is, although players might be motivated to play, they might be less enthusiastic because of the necessity to restart the game in order to listen again a word or sentence not understood in the first time.

The conversational style of these games is presented in a way that learner players just have to press a button for listening/reading the next line of dialogue. This is useful because learners can take their time for decoding the language easily, but if there is not substantial semantic context, the player might not be able to decode the language. Additionally, these games contain a vast quantity of language that learners can be overwhelmed and lose the interest.

DeHaan (2005) states that “although being some of the most impressive and language-rich games on the market, because of the lack of control over their unrepeated language, only advanced language learners able to divide cognition between simultaneous game playing and linguistic analyses would benefit from RPGs and action/adventure games” (p. 235).

#### **2.4.2 Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA)**

Erlebachová (2017) states that the sub-genre of real time strategy called Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) has elements that can help player to learn English. This game can be played alone or versus the computer or versus some else online. First, the players have to choose between the artificial intelligence of the game or versus other online players. The player will be transferred to the lobby area where they have the first contact with other team players to choose their characters to fight other 5 characters of the enemy team. The objective for both teams is to destroy the enemy's base which is protected by the



five players and supported with towers which are dispersed in the map. Each character has different abilities that can be explained in English through descriptions and video demonstrations. In order to use abilities is necessary to have 'mana' (energy). If characters run out of mana they will be unable to cast their abilities. With these abilities, players have to reduce the enemy character's health to 0 (characters will reappear after some time), and destroy the enemy's tower and base. By killing characters or destroying towers they will gain money and can be used to buy items in the base store. In there, there are many objects that help characters to be more powerful, gain more abilities or to buy potions to regain health or mana during battles. All the objects can be described in English.

Another aspect than can help players to learn is the story of the game and the characters. Each character has its own lore (traditional wisdom); however, not many people read them. On the other hand, there are story videos about characters and videos for the presentation of new characters which can be very popular among players.

During the game, there can be heard many sentences made by the narrator such as: Your turret/inhibitor has been destroyed. Such sentences are repeated during all the game and are well known. Finally, communication between the team is very important for ice breaking, sharing information and strategy, and boosting morale.

### **2.4.3 Massive multiplayer online role playing (MMORPG)**

Rankin et al. (2008) state the following about MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing) as a support of language acquisition:

Rather than relying solely on text as the means for providing critical information about the virtual environment, computer games leverage sophisticated graphics to generate images, sounds, gestures, and objects that take on different meanings relative to context of the game (p. 45)

In this genre, players interpret visual representation and respond according to it, and more than focusing on the four skills, it requires the players to follow the rules and process the information to accomplish a game task.

Rankin et al. (2008) identified three keys of the MMOPG genre for second language acquisition: virtual identity, social interactions and game context.

In the case of virtual identity, learners have problems for developing their skills in traditional classroom settings because they feel inhibited in the use of new language and they are afraid of committing mistakes in front of their classmates (Hadley 2001; Horwitz et al. 1986 cited in Rankin et al., 2008). Research has shown that the use of chat rooms can be helpful for learners because it provides a non-threatening environment, which eliminates the anxiety to practice their emerging language skills (Beauvois & Eledge, 1996 cited in Rankin et al., 2008). As a result, learners can have more interactive conversations. Learners that used this kind of interactions demonstrated that their cognitive skills had increased (Beauvois & Eledge 1996; Hudson & Bruckman, 2002 cited in Rankin et al., 2008). In the MMORPG genre, there are extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to complete quests in order to develop their virtual characters. Foreign language students can mask themselves with those characters to reduce their anxiety toward native speakers so they are more willing to communicate with others even if they commit mistakes (Rankin et al. 2006, cited in Rankin et al., 2008).

In MMORPG games, social interactions are part of the game experience. These games can become social spaces where people from different cultures and ethnicities and language can communicate with each other giving the opportunity to language learners to

practice in the target language (Steinkuehler & Williams; Jakobson & Taylor, 2003, cited in Rankin et al., 2008).

Social interactions in online chat rooms help students to develop faster their reading, thinking and writing skills (Payne & Whitney, 2002, cited in Rankin et al., 2008). This supports the theory that online interactions in this genre help to improve second language learning. As players need strategic affiliations with other players, there is the opportunity for foreign language students to interact in their target language with native speakers in order to seek help to overcome difficult quests. Those interactions encourage them to “continuously practice producing the target language and negotiating meaning with native speakers as foreign language students further develop communicative competence in the target language” (Rankin et al., 2008, p. 45)

The immersive environment of the game through interactive media can be used for the development of proficiency in foreign language (Rankin et al. 2006 cited in Rankin et al., 2008). The use of audio and graphical images has potential for understanding the meaning of vocabulary and phrases. Also, learners can dispose of the interaction with other player characters (PCs) or Non player characters (NPCs) for assistance of syntactical structure. The responses from the players to the question of the NPCs can serve as well as new vocabulary and information relevant quests (Rankin et al. 2006, cited in Rankin et al., 2008). The interaction with other player characters helps to understand how to respond appropriately and at the same time to have an engaging conversation. All the displayed and heard information create an immersive learning environment that can be used for communication in the target language.

#### **2.4.4 Shooter games**

The shooter genre consists on games of one or more players or one player and a computer-controlled player. Players are provided of many kinds of projectiles in order to shoot at each other. One of the basic points in these games is that players have to shoot the opponents without getting shot so maneuverability and sometimes the outwitting of the opponent are essential (Wolf, 2000 cited in Erlebachová (2017)).

The contribution for the English language development depends on the game if it is played in single player or multiplayer. Players play in single player mode when they want to understand the story of the game which can be actively engaging in English listening or reading activity.

In the case of multi-player mode, in general, players have to choose if they want to play against other player or versus the computer. After that, they have to choose in what battle mode they want to play (for example, death match, domination, capture the flag, free for all). Each mode has different game mechanics and goals. There can also be different kinds of characters such as assault, medic, engineer and scout. Each one has descriptions when choosing them.

After choosing the mode and the class, players can start playing. There are games which teams can have 32 players so communication can be difficult but extremely important. The main point of communication is reporting enemies' positions. Regularly games of this genre include voice chat for fast communication. Players are more willing to

communicate in English even when they are not motivated to communicate in other situation. Good communication can lead the team to win.

## **2.5 Related studies**

DeHaan (2013) in his book *Video games and second language acquisition: six genre case studies*, he provides six cases where he focused on video games that may be able to develop language learners' skills, depending on the games and how students used them. In this section, two cases of his research will be provided.

### **2.5.1 Action/adventure game case**

In this case, a Japanese high school student played an English action adventure video game during a month and wrote a diary. It was investigated how the game would help her to improve her English skills.

#### **Subject**

The subject was a 15-year-old Japanese female from a high school student. She started to take English conversation classes she was seven years old. She had been in Australia. She was not into studying English very much, and the most important skill for her was listening. She started playing video games when she was eight years old. She played video games approximately three hours or more per week. She believed playing English video games would be good for improving her English skills.

#### **Instruments**

Six instruments were prepared for the study: Introductory questionnaire, Vocabulary test, Grammar test, Observation questions, Gameplay diary, and Interview questions.

## **Results**

From the results of the instruments, it was found out that in the vocabulary part, in the pre-test she got 12 out of 65 correct answers and in the post-test she got 20 out of 65. She did not only learn eight new words but also she could understand the difference between the noun strange and the adjective strange. The grammar part consisted in 15 questions in which she got 13 correct answers in the pre-test. In the post-test she got the same number of correct answers. DeHaan got from her diary how she felt about her skills, she self-rated with 3.4 for reading skill, 3.3 for grammar, listening 2.9, and vocabulary 2.7. Additionally, the learner believed that games are kind of useful but for her some words of the game are just used in there and that some of them were slangs which did not seem very useful to her. Although at the beginning and during the gameplay she had good comments toward learning with videogames, at the end she said that as she was progressing, she was paying more attention to the game's story than concentrating on the language.

### **2.5.2 Role play games case**

In this study, in order to investigate what was necessary and effective to learn a foreign language, a student was asked to play a role play game during a month and write a diary.

## **Subject**

The subject was a 15-year-old Japanese female from a high school student. She had been studying English for four years and she mainly learned grammar at school. She said writing skill, especially grammar knowledge, was the most important but she was not very good at writing even though she was good at reading. She had played her first video game when she was eight years old. She played video games once or twice a month. She often used the internet to read some blog. She also said she had never played any English video games. She hoped for an improvement in English skills by playing an English video game.

### **Instruments**

Six instruments were created for this study: introductory questionnaire, vocabulary test, grammar test, observation questions, gameplay diary, and interview questions.

### **Results**

In the case of role play game, the vocabulary test the learner got 22 correct answer out of 50 in the pre-test and 25 out of 50 in the post-test. In the part where the learner was asked to translate from English to Japanese and from Japanese to English, the learner learned 4 words that are used in the game. In the part where the learner was asked to choose the option that suited the word, one of the answers was right in the pre-test and wrong in the post-test. Other two questions were wrong in the pre-test and right in the post-test.

In the grammar test, in the fill in the blanks part, she answered correctly two sentences that were incorrect in the pre-test. In the part where she had to translate sentences from Japanese to English, she answered correctly one of them in the post-test. In the part where she had to translate from English to Japanese, she answered correctly 2 of them in

the post-test. On the other hand, in the part where she had to translate Japanese sentences, she answered correctly one of the in the pre-test but wrong in the post-test.

From the first interview she answered that things like repetition, subtitles, story, and spoken language were good for learning. On the post interview, she stated that subtitles, story and spoken language were very helpful. From her diary, the average score of 3.9 out of 7 was gotten. She stated that the game was very good for learning and memorizing vocabulary and learning grammar. She believes that her abilities on the four skills did not improve noticeably.

Additionally, at first she was positive about how games can serve to learn vocabulary. In the post interview, she stated that she enjoyed the game and the way she studies was good. She stated that it would be better if the game had more hints for English words, repetition and translations. The disadvantage is that she finds difficult to improve her writing skills.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Chapter introduction**

This research was about videogames as an autodidactic learning tool. The purpose was to investigate what English skills the participants thought they improved more and what genre of video games are the most helpful for them. Therefore, the administration of questionnaires and interviews was necessary to collect the necessary data. During this chapter I will explain, the setting, the participants, the methodology, the instruments and the procedure I followed in order to answer to research questions.

### **3.1 Setting**

The place where I carried out this investigation was in the language department of a public university located in central Mexico. The language department offers two majors one is English language teaching and the other is French language teaching. It also offers language courses of various languages such as French, German and Japanese in which students from other departments can learn a second language. Some of the participants of this investigation were ELT students. In this case, I asked directly to my classmates if they wanted to participate.

### **3.2 Subjects**

Some of the participants were studying ELT and some other were studying other majors. Some of them were from the Japanese class where I studied and some other were contacted on the Facebook website of the language department.

There were 13 participants from the Language department, 2 from the International Relations Department, 1 from Public Accounting, 1 from Economics Department and 1 from the Physics Department. They were selected by asking two questions: “do you play video games in English?” and “do you often play those video games?”. If they answered affirmatively I would ask them to help me to answer a questionnaire.

All of them were between 18 and 23 years old. All the subjects had played videogames in English. It did not matter the genre or how much they played as long as they thought they had learned English to some extent.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

The purpose of this sequential mixed research is to make a relationship between statistical, quantitative results from various subjects and interview data for more complete results. Mixed method approach collects and analyzes qualitative and quantitative data in a single study. This is, collecting numeric information as well as text information so the database represent both kinds of information. This approach is used when the researcher assumption is to collect diverse types of data in order to provide understanding to a problem. It starts with a survey to generalize result to a population. Then open ended interview will collect detailed views from participants (Creswell, 2003).

Creswell (1998, cited in Duff, 2008) defined case study as follows:

A case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context.

The case study researcher observes individuals in order to enquire deeply and analyze the phenomena and making generalizations to the population where the individual belongs (Cohen and Manion, 1994). Zaidah (2007) pointed out a case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. It focuses on a specific geographic area or to a limited number of persons. It investigates real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships.

### **3.4 Instruments**

In order to answer my questions and to gather the kind of data I needed from the subjects, I used two types of instruments, one from the quantitative methods and one from the qualitative methods: questionnaires and interviews.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

Dörnyei (2007) pointed out that “survey studies aim at describing the characteristics of a population by examining a sample of that group. Although survey data can be collected by means of structured interviews (for example, in market research or opinion polls), the main data collection method in surveys is the use of questionnaires” (p. 101).

The reason why I chose a questionnaire for my data recollection is that I needed short answers about their opinions, experiences and likes about video games so that I could select the participants for the interviews. The questionnaire consisted in closed-ended questions, opened-ended questions and multiple choice questions and it was the first instrument I administered.

### **3.4.2 Interview**

Yin (1994) pointed out that “Interviews are of an open ended nature, in which you can ask key respondents for facts of a matters well as for the respondents’ opinion about events” (p. 84). A face to face semi-structured interview was used as my second instrument because I needed to use open ended data for more detailed answers and analyze it together with the first instrument results in order to try to answer my questions.

Furthermore, interviews are useful since they can provide historical information from the participants, useful when they cannot be observed, and allows the researcher to take the lead over the line of questions. On the other hand, the limitation of this instrument is that the provided information by the user was given in a designed place instead of the natural field setting (Creswell, 2003).

### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

My first step for conducting the interview was to contact some people who had already helped me with the questionnaire and asked them for an interview. I met all of them in the Languages department. I asked them for permission to record the conversation with my cellular phone. I asked all the questions I needed because of the flexibility of the interview; I got more information by asking new questions depending on the information they gave me. All the interviews were conducted in a friendly environment.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

After collecting the data from the questionnaire and the interview, I proceeded to analyzed them. First, after the questionnaire was administered, 4 from 6 questions results

were used to explain the result of one research question and make 3 tables. All this were made in Microsoft Word. I used questions four and five to answer my first research questions and one and six to answer the second one. Questions two and three were used as complementary information for knowing further the six participants and analyze the answers together with some theories from chapter two. Second, I transcribed the interview and took relevant information to answer my two research questions. It was used to complement the information of the first instrument in order to be more specific. Similarly, this was made in Microsoft Word.

### **3.7 Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter, elements for collecting information were explained. The setting and the subject were both from the same university in Mexico. After that I proceeded to recollect that information in tables to analyze them together with the theories from chapter 2. In the next chapter I will analyze all the information I gathered to try to answer my research questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I will talk about the instruments I used to answer my research questions.

### **4.1 Research questions**

Main Research Question – Do English as a Foreign Language students think they have improved English through specific videogames to learn a language? If so, how?

Contributory Research Questions- What skills do students develop when using certain genre of videogames?

### **4.2 Students' perception about the improvement of English through the use of videogames**

Playing video games is an activity that people enjoy doing and in this study I wanted to know if students believed that they had improved their English abilities. In this section, students' opinions about it will be provided.

#### **4.2.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire had 6 questions. From those 6, there are 2 questions that could help to answer my first research question which has to do with what students improved and

how. The results in the fourth question of the questionnaire showed that all the participants (n=19) believed that playing video games helped them to improve English. 11 stated that it was helpful to learn vocabulary. 3 mentioned that understanding instructions helped them to learn English, 1 mentioned that speaking with native people of the target language helped them to practice, 1 believed that videogames helped to learn unconsciously, 1 stated that video games are fun so it is easier to learn, 1 stated video games were interesting for him/her so it was helpful, and finally, 1 stated that the majority of video games are in English and that helps to practice it all the time.

<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>How they practice the language</b>
6	Write down new expressions
13	Pay attention to the pronunciation
5	Analyze the grammar in the sentences
17	Look up for new vocabulary
3	Do shadowing
7	Do notes for posterior research

**Table 4.1** Actions that students do to enhance their learning with videogames

#### **4.2.2 Interview**

I administered the interview to six participants from the 19 that answered the questionnaire. All of them shared many characteristics towards learning, others had very particular ones.

One characteristic many of them share is that they in some point after seeing or listening repeatedly amount of times some vocabulary (mainly) or phrases during the game, they start to remember it in other games or during class which represent some benefits.

...al estar tan acostumbrado a estar escuchando el inglés como que no se te dificulta cuando te toca escuchar una conversación o que el profesor te pregunte algo, se te va a facilitar (P1).

...when you are used to English it will not be hard to understand when you hear a conversation or when the teacher asks you something, it will be easier (P1).

...si estas con el juego, pones subtítulos que están en tu idioma, lo que pasa es que inconscientemente hay como frases que te llaman la atención que inconscientemente aprendes (P6).

...you set up the subtitles in your language in the game, then, there are phrases that catch your attention and you unconsciously learn (P6).

### 4.3 Improvement of skills and subskills according to genres

According to the genres the participants used to play, from the six questions of the questionnaire, there were two multiple-choice questions that could help to find out the genres they played:

<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Genre</b>
2	Role Play Game
4	Shooter Game
3	Adventure Game
3	Role Play and Adventure Game
4	Adventure and Shooter Game
3	The three genres

**Table 4.2** Students' preferences about video game genres

Moreover, in the question sixth, in which multiple answers were provided, the results were as follows:

<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Improved skill</b>
8	Speaking
17	Reading
12	Listening
1	Writing

**Table 4.3** The most improved skills among students



As for the first research question, six participants from the questionnaires were interviewed. Most of them had certain experience at playing the 3 genres. At the same time, they had preference for one of the three. Additionally, some of them provided interesting information about other genres such as playing online with other people.

#### **4.3.1 Vocabulary**

Generally speaking of the 3 genres, most participants stated that vocabulary is the subskill that can be improved the most because of various elements inside of the game, no matter the genre.

P2 stated the following:

...depende qué clase de juego juegues pero usualmente en un videojuego no van a meter vocabulario de un salón de clases. El vocabulario que ven en el salón de clases yo pienso que siempre ha sido muy reducido, es extremadamente cotidiano y tienden mucho, en las clases de repente, a poner ejercicios donde tienes que usar vocabulario que llevaras 10 años estudiando ingles pero no lo usan porque usualmente nada más usan ingles en clase, a menos que tengan otro tipo de oportunidades...

It depends on the game you are playing but it will not usually have vocabulary you normally see in a classroom. I have always thought that the vocabulary inside the classroom is limited and it is everyday vocabulary. Teachers sometimes give some exercises to students where they have to use vocabulary that will be seen again and again, but students will not use it outside the classroom unless they have an opportunity to practice English outside the classroom.

#### **4.3.2 Vocabulary, reading and RPG**

If we speak specifically about the RPG genre, even if there are certain variations on this genre depending on the people, the skill they develop the most is vocabulary. This is because of the various readable elements in the screen when playing and in some games, the constant repetition of words makes it easier to remember them.

P6 stated that:

...de tanto que tú estás en un juego, empiezas a adquirir ese vocabulario y esa fluidez de los personajes...

...you play so much that at some point you start acquiring the vocabulary and the fluency of the characters...

Apart from vocabulary, the second most improved skill was reading due to the huge amount of words that have to be read in order to continue progressing through the game. P2 stated the following:

Usualmente son los juegos donde se tiene que subir de nivel. Hay armas diferentes, las armas tienen descripciones, las armaduras y las habilidades también. Siento que te obligan a estar leyendo y aprenderte cómo funciona. Cada cosa te hace aprender mucho, sobre todo inglés.

They are the games where you have to level up. There is a variety of weapons with descriptions; the same happens with armors and abilities. I think games push you to read and learn how each thing works and at the same time you learn English.

### **4.3.3 Listening, pronunciation and adventure games**

As it was said in chapter 2, Adventure games and RPG games usually have many similarities in the elements that compound them. Talking about the reading skills, for P2 adventure games do not have many readable elements as RPG games have. P2 stated:

...depende de qué juego hablemos. Siento que suele ser más reducido; es como “tú juega y ve lo que pasa en la historia” pero no te obliga tanto a ver tus estadísticas; es más relacionado con la historia del personaje...

...It depends on the game. I think adventure games are more limited. It's like “go and play and see what happens through the story” but it doesn't push you to see your statistics. It's like more related with the story of the characters.

One important aspect to talk about is that, as time goes on, there are new elements in recent games that are not in the old ones (or at least not that developed) such as voice acting for characters that developers can use or not in their games. For this reason, improvement in the listening skill might also happen.

Poner atención a la pronunciación; por ejemplo, en los juegos de Harry Potter todo es británico. Entonces, sí tienes que poner mucha atención en la pronunciación (P2).

Pay attention to the pronunciation; for example, in the Harry Potter games all is in British English. So, you do have to pay attention to the pronunciation.

In the case of P1, he said that games are useful to enhance listening and writing and that using the subtitles to corroborate his accurateness about what he hears is very useful.

He also stated the following:

...al estar tan acostumbrado a estar escuchando el inglés como que no te hace sentir dificultad. Cuando te toca escuchar una conversación o que el profesor te pregunte algo se te va a facilitar.

...when one person is used to listening to English, it becomes easier to understand. When one listens to a conversation or when the teacher asks you something it will be easier to understand.

#### **4.3.4 Listening, vocabulary, grammar and shooter games**

Shooter games although they have similar visual and readable elements on screen, they do not have as many as RPG games or adventure games. For this reason, shooter games rely on dialogues between characters and cinematics. P4 believed that people could take advantage from cinematics to learn vocabulary, improve the listening skill and learn grammar. In the case of vocabulary, P4 stated the following:

...en un videojuego a lo mejor hay vocabulario que no entiendes. Obviamente vas escuchando las instrucciones de las cinemáticas, vas viendo la gramática, como se dicen las cosas. Entonces a la hora de tú estar en frente de un maestro que a lo mejor diga una palabra que la mayoría no entiende pero tú ya la viste en el video juego pues te ayuda también con eso, a conocer un poquito de más vocabulario, a ver gramática, ósea, podría ser una guía para estudiar...

...in a game there may be vocabulary that you don't know. You listen to the instructions from the cinematics, you see grammar, and how things have to be said. So when you are in class in front of a teacher that says a word that most of the students do not understand, you have already seen it in the game and that helps you. You know a little more of vocabulary and grammar. It may be a guide to study.

#### **4.3.5 Online video games**

During my interview some participants talked about an element that I did not consider at first. This is the online gameplay where one of the keys elements is the cooperation between real people through game characters. Some genres that were

mentioned before are compatible with this characteristic but they have some variations. The interactions among people are made through tipping in a chat or using a voice chat. In this section I will write about the same genres and what skill can be improved using them in online gaming.

#### **4.3.5.1 Online in RPG games**

Apart from the skills that can be improved that P2 stated, in the online mode, the writing skill can also be improved while interacting with other people through online gaming. He stated the following about the writing skill:

Jugando videojuegos más que nada mejoré en mi nivel de inglés escrito, porque yo, en mi caso, fui de jugar en un momento muchos juegos online...

By playing videogames I mainly improved my writing skill. That is because at some point in my life I played too many online games...

P2 explained how he improved:

Entonces con el tiempo de estar jugando, pensaba “¿ah como se dice eso?... ah se dice así” y luego “espera, ¿cómo lo sé”? Eso es por la repetición tan cotidiana de las conversaciones de las personas porque usualmente en los juegos online tienen como chats públicos para que vendan sus cosas, todo tipo de cosas y estar viendo todos los días eso, sus pláticas acerca de cosas de la vida, de política en el juego que no sé ni por qué, ese tipo de cosas como que te ayudaban a aprender.

When I played video games there was a situation when I was like “How do you say it?...oh, like this” and then I was like “wait, how did I know that?” It is for the repetition of everyday conversation among people. Usually these videogames have public chats where people can sell objects. They even talk about how things are going in their lives and politics. I don’t even know why but when you see that sort of things everyday it can help you to learn.

P2 did not mention if it was helpful for reading but it may be implicit since there is the need of reading text.

#### **4.3.2.1 Online in shooter games**

Similarly with the online in RPG games, P4 improved his writing skill by participating in conversation with English native speakers. He stated the following when I asked how many years he had been playing shooter games online option:

...6 años pero me empecé a meter de lleno a traducir las conversaciones de las personas de otras partes del mundo hace 4 años.

6 years and 4 years ago I started to get into translating the conversations of the people from many countries.

Additionally, P4 gave some information about his brother:

...mi hermano menor es fanático de jugar en línea y él empieza a traducir los cuadros de texto de esos videojuegos porque luego ve que hay extranjeros que empiezan a poner "hahaha" y ese tipo de cosas, y él por su interés por querer saber de qué se están riendo empezó a traducir, a leer...

My little brother is fanatic of playing online. He started translating the dialog box in those videogames because he saw foreigners writing "hahaha" and that sort of things. He was curious about why they were laughing and he started to translate, to read...

He is so committed that he investigated unknown phrases he read in the game. He had been playing enough that he could even give a quick answer to other people:

...él tiene que investigar las frases en inglés y con el tiempo que ya lleva jugando ya es capaz incluso de leer, entender lo que dicen y contestar.

He investigates what the meaning of the phrases and with the time he has been playing he can now read, understand what people write and give them an answer.

On other hand, for P5, writing and reading skills can be improved very little if she compares them with how much speaking and listening skills can be improved through interacting with foreigners.

Not just from the game's audiovisual elements such as characters dialogues, vocabulary and slangs, but P5 also takes advantage from interacting with other people:

En los juegos de modo historia, la comprensión de lectura es lo que más se practica, y en juego de plataformas en línea creo que lo que más practica uno es speaking y listening para lograr practicar con otras personas nativas...

In story mode you can improve your reading comprehension. In the case of online platform you can practice your speaking and your listening because you can interact with native people of the target language...

P5 also mentioned that as foreigners use informal expressions to interact with each other, argots and slangs can be learned.

También sirve demasiado para aprender slangs porque la mayoría de los profesores no te van a decir “vamos a dar una clase de argot, de slang, de lenguaje coloquial” porque no es lo que se usa comúnmente en la formalidad pero se puede usar con amigos.

It is useful to learn slangs because most of the teachers are not going to give classes of slangs and argots because it is not used in formal interaction but it can be used with friends.

#### **4.4 Disadvantages of using video games**

All the participants believed that even if games can be useful for the improvement of certain skills, there may be disadvantages.

In the case of P1, the constant apparition of unknown phrasal verbs made him invest too much time to find the meaning. Also, although it can be helpful to improve skills, it can also cause addiction and one might start focusing more on the gaming than in the language; this happens in shooter games in online mode.

For P2, the great disadvantage was that in the RPG genres the invested amount of time is huge but at the same time you can learn a lot.

P3 stated that playing one videogame is not enough so it is necessary to play more. Other disadvantage he mentioned was that the vocabulary and phrasal verbs that are used in videogames cannot be used in formal conversations. In the online mode he stated that native people say words that may intimidate people who are learning a language. Additionally, P3 stated that RPG genre is not for people who want action immediately.

P4 stated that when there were three words that were difficult, he needed to search for the meaning. However, when there were more than three words he started feeling frustrated and if he did not know more words he even stopped playing for a while. Also, when he was talking about shooter games in online mode, he stated that he was a little afraid to communicate to native people so he did not participate as much as his little brother

did. There were times when people helped to write better but other times there was not feedback.

P5 similarly to P2 stated that the investment of time in playing shooter games online is huge.

P6 also stated that RPG games require too much time and shooter games not much. At the same time, she said that it is not good for learning grammar, which indeed, most of the participants thought that way. P6 also played shooter games in online mode. She mentioned that she preferred to ignore everyone because there were too many quarrels among team mates, which frustrates P6's gaming.

#### **4.5 Findings based on language acquisition theories**

With the information I gathered from the subjects, I have found some relationships with some theories from chapter 2.

##### **4.5.1 Behaviorism**

As it was paraphrased from the work of Lightbown and Spada (1999) in chapter 2, "All learning, whether verbal or non-verbal, takes place through the same underlying process, habit formation. In any context, whenever people are talking, they receive linguistic input", in RPG and adventure games, players cannot talk back to a fictional characters but still they receive a great amount of input from the game. Also, according with the quote, they cannot form habits because they cannot interact normally and thus lead to not repeat or imitate, but during the research I found out that some of them actually imitated or repeat using their mouths or in their minds. Moreover, they seem to remember vocabulary and sentences.

About the concept reinforcement and punishment, probably there is nothing similar to those because the player cannot be corrected by game, not unless until the talk with someone else.

On the other hand, in the case of the MMORPG, MOBA, and online shooter games, where the player can interact with others, using keyboard in the chat window or interacting by voice, or both. Thus, the form of habits looks more conventional in those genres. Similarly, reinforcement and punishment are more evident during the interaction among players.

#### **4.5.2 Cognitive theory**

As mentioned in chapter 2, Lightbown and Spada (1999) stated that the cognitive theory sees “second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge system that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding” (p. 25). The constant vast information that the players received by the game and other people online, eventually makes them able to understand, mainly vocabulary automatically. Similarly, in the case of grammar, the subjects seem to recognize the structure of the sentences in their English classes or when they find English material in other places thus making easier to understand and use it even if they have not studied it consciously.

#### **4.5.3 Creative construction theory**

The paraphrased work of VanPatten and Williams (2007) "Learners can make unconscious hypothesis from the input, which at the same time, are part of the innate mechanisms process." It is one of the main points that resemble some of the results of the research. In this theory, writing or speaking is not necessary for learning but hearing and reading.

Mainly in RPG, action and adventure games, there is little or no necessity to speak or write



but to read and hear. After some time of playing, eventually it will be easier for players to write and speak. In contrast, the accuracy will vary to player to player and the played time.

#### **4.5.4 The acquisition-learning hypothesis**

The players from the research received a great amount of information from the game, not with the purpose to teach language rules but for the game experience. Thus, players are not aiming to learn in first place but to understand the game and play. This is one of the main ideas from this hypothesis; learners learn the language with no attention to form, especially in online platforms where there is a real interaction with other players. It seems it happens in RPG, adventure, and single player shooter games although there is not interaction with real people. Again, how much one can learn varies from player to player.

#### **4.5.5 The affective filter hypothesis**

Usually, players are very motivated to play a game they like. This happens because they like the characters, the story, and the game mechanics. They are willing to keep progressing and know more about the game. This help to keep the affective filter low, thus allowing to understand better the input as they are having fun. In other cases, when games become harder, they are still willing to progress in the game is they like it. In other cases, it is considered as a challenge. Even if they are still receiving the same input repeatedly, the affective filter starts to affect negatively the progress of the acquisition progress. In the worst of the cases, player will stop playing indefinitely or definitely depending on how much they like the game and how hard it becomes.

#### **4.5.6 The second language interactionist view**

The interactions with native speaker are not given in RPG, adventure, and single player shooter games but they are in MMORPG, MOBA, and shooter games in multiplayer mode. In MMORPG games, at first, the interaction with native player tends to be by writing. For writing, there are rooms made for specific purposes such selling stuff, making groups for quests, and for any topic you want to write. When players form groups for going to quests, or a group of friend, they tend to require a faster communications way which is speaking. This represents a good opportunity to interact with native speaker. Although there are other factor that may affect negatively this which is the shyness for instance.

In MOBA games, the interaction by writing is minor. It used mainly to put static information to be use by the team. This genre requires faster interaction all the time to have more possibilities to win the match although it can be expendable.

In the case of shooter games in multiplayer mode it is similar the MOBA games except the game mechanics are different.

All the subject of the research appointed that at first it was difficult to understand what native people were talking about and that eventually they were able to understand and imitate the way they communicate. Some of them even searched for the meaning of words by other means such dictionary or internet.

#### **4.6 Chapter conclusion**

In this chapter I tried to relate the information from interviews and questionnaires in order to answer my research questions. Although the participants have preferences about the three genres, according to the information, most of them tended to learn more vocabulary. I also analyzed the information to relate skills and subskills to each genre. I

also mentioned, according to each participant, the disadvantages about learning with videogames. Such is the case of being overwhelmed with vocabulary or get tired of focusing on the language and start playing ignoring English in the game. In the last part I tried to relate the gathered information from players with some acquisition theories.

In the following chapter, the conclusions, limitations and suggestions for further research will be provided.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

The original idea for this study was to analyze in what degree video games can be useful to players to learn the English language. Trying to answer my research questions, I found out data for analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of learning English with using videogames of six participants who had preferences to certain genres. I found out that all of them have some similarities even if they like different genres. In this chapter I will summarize all the findings and limitations for this kind of learning which includes the analyzed information recollected from the instruments presented in chapter four in order to answer my research questions. I will provide some conclusions and information for further research.

### **5.1. Summary of the results**

I started thinking about some ideas since I was interviewing my six participants. The first thought I got was that I was not expecting that all of them played or had played their games online together with native speakers. When I analyzed the information they gave me, I understood that depending on the personal characteristics of each person, they had some variations on the result they got from gaming online. Some of them were comfortable playing online and speaking with unknown people at first. Others were not that comfortable in doing the same action and just communicated by writing. In both cases they stated they believed they had mainly improved their speaking and writing skills respectively.

Another thing I noticed was that as they were comfortable with the game, they were more willing to search for new vocabulary or grammar. When games were challenging and fun players acquired some new elements from the language of the games, they learned some elements consciously too. When the game started to get harder and it required many attempts to perform some actions or to carry out some tasks, players tended to stop focusing on the language and concentrated on the game itself. At the same time, this does not mean they stopped learning but the probability to remember the words after the game was played was low.

According to the article of Rankin et al. (2008) about the 4 characteristics of online games that can help players to learn a second language which I used in chapter two, when players play with through characters, their identities are masked. They do not feel the anxiety they would feel when speaking exposing themselves. This allows them to interact with native speakers in online game. In my research, although they used another identity, some of them limited themselves when interacting with native speakers by just writing or speaking the least they could. One of their reasons was that they were afraid of native people making fun of them because of their accent or grammar errors. The other reason is that, because of the characteristics of the game, there can be quarrels among members of the same teams. When this happens, it may discourage players to interact with other because they feel uncomfortable or they want to avoid quarrels. In this cases they preferred writing.

For all the participants except for one, the skills, or in this case, the sub skill that they believed they developed the most was vocabulary, especially in Role Play Games. The amount of information that is displayed can be enormous. As it was stated in chapter 2, the

huge variety of visual elements and other helpful tools such as cutscenes which provide language elements. When those are repeatedly exposed to players, they can be integrated to short term or long term memory depending on other factors such as how comfortable they are when playing.

## **5.2 Limitations of the study**

In order to get all the information for this research, questionnaires and interviews were carried out. Although it helped to accomplish my objective of answering my research questions, there were some limitations during the study.

First, I believe that the sample population was not big enough for a more accurate research. There are many people with different point of views, different games preferences, life circumstances and personalities, and also differences in how each person is good at learning a second language, with and without using videogames.

Third, I do not have enough experience at getting information by interviewing. For that reason there might be times where participants could be put on some pressure unintentionally to answer in certain way. This might had change their final answer from his original one. The way I made new questions during the interview was not in order to put pressure on them but to try them to remember or consider new information that they were ignoring.

Finally, the results and conclusions of this research cannot be applied for everyone. As stated before, there are other genres that were not taken into account because of the lack of time. Also, the accuracy of this research might be limited because of the low number of

participants. For this reason, although I consider this is modest proof of advantages and disadvantages of learning with videogames, the results cannot be generalized.

### **5.3 Further research**

There are some points where I got interested during the search. I believe that those can be taken into account for further research. My suggestions for further research are the following:

- I really find interesting to do this research not just with English but another language. As a Japanese language student, I wanted to do this but because of the lack of time and because there are really few people who study Japanese with videogames I could not do it. Thus, I suggest doing a similar research based on more foreign languages.
- All the participants were from the university so their age ranged from 18 to 24 years old. It would be interesting to contrast their answers with the ones of students from high school.
- In this research I just included three genres. I consider that including more of them can make the research more complete.
- Furthermore, having a wider sample of participants for the questionnaire and for the interview could provide more information and therefore a more accurate analysis could be carried out.
- Finally, it would be a good idea to add a new question in which participants evaluate themselves how angry they could become when they are playing a hard level and how they believed it can affect their leaning.

### **5.4 Personal reflection**

In order to make this thesis, I went through some stages, each one of them was a challenge for me. In this section I will write a reflection about it. First, I had to decide my topic. Second, I will mention what I thought during the development, and finally my thoughts toward the end. At last, I will describe my overall thoughts for finishing this project.

When I started studying in my language department, there were teachers that told us to start thinking about our thesis because although it was very early, it was a good idea to pay attention and discover what topics we liked. This was because it would be easier to accomplish and enjoy the process of doing a thesis. Probably they wanted to motivate us to find what we liked about the career but in my case it made me feel insecure about my future. At first, I did not like the career too much, I chose it because English was relatively easy for me to understand and also because learning Japanese was my main objective. Furthermore, having watched my sister doing her thesis, hearing people they had problems choosing their topics, and also hearing it was troublesome and it made me really feel insecure about the future.

I went to Japan as an exchange student during a year. It was my main objective to learn Japanese and learn about the society in that country. I thought my Japanese language skills would not be as good as the other exchange students but it was a surprise to me that they were not that good as I thought. Then I met a Spanish friend. I remember most of the exchange students studying with the book and trying to speak with Japanese people while committing a lot of mistakes and therefore shifting to English. But the Spanish guy was very different. I never saw him studying using books but instead he was learning through playing videogames. He told me that he learned some grammar from the books but he used videogames for all the rest. Also he told me that his method frequently required a lot of



patience for searching meaning but the results were really good. He was the best speaker among the European and American students. After that, I thought I went through a similar case but I was not that committed to learn which means I did not have enough patience for searching each word I did not know. Even with that, I considered that my English skills were good enough without paying too much effort during middle school and high school.

During my Research Seminar courses, I talked about my experience in Japan with my teacher. From there my ideas for my thesis research started to take shape but still I felt insecure because I forgot about many classes I took during the ELT program. After regular consulting and guidance of my thesis director I started to do the draft of my project little by little. I felt inspired because it was a topic that I really liked but my main inspiration was to finish this work in order to start working as a translator.

When I started working I was doubtful about the way a thesis has to be written. During the entire chapter, with the outline my thesis director gave me and her feedback I did not have problems for choosing the direction. Chapter I was the easiest and did not take too much time, I just had to work on the outline and write in order my ideas of my research. Chapter II was a lot more difficult because I had to read many books to find the theories that would support my research, take the relevant information and organize it in a coherent way. It was difficult considering that during the career I barely went to the library. For this reason I was not used to write using the APA style and add references. Perhaps this was one of the hardest activities I had to do. Chapter III was the second easiest chapter after chapter I. I just had to use the information from one source, add another one without forgetting to add the references. Writing the chapter IV using the collected data and linking it to the theories of

chapter II was not that hard. It was just a matter of organizing all the information. I did the best I could to make it comprehensible.

My feelings after writing this were of relief because of all the pressure to finish. At first I wanted to write a really modest thesis. Over the time I really wanted to search for more information to make my project more complete. As I was searching for information, I discovered that the theories of second language acquisition were very interesting. I enjoyed reading most of them. I would have really liked to write more about the relationship between the theories with the data I got from the participants. Now, I have some interest in doing another research related to this one but I am no sure. During the development, I learned the general content a thesis must have and the efforts we have to do to finish it. I observed that I still have few grammatical errors, sometimes I could notice them myself but sometimes it was my thesis director who noticed them. It was embarrassing. I have to practice more my writing skills. Finally, even it is a modest thesis, I am glad I was able to complete it. I really appreciate all the people that helped to do this.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire about learning English through video games

### BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

#### FACULTAD DE LENGUAS BUAP

La finalidad de este cuestionario recolectar información sobre el aprendizaje del inglés por medio de los juegos. Esta información sea usada solo para fines de investigación y será estrictamente confidencial. ¡Gracias por tu cooperación!

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Institución: \_\_\_\_\_ Carrera: \_\_\_\_\_ Sexo: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instrucciones:** Lee cuidadosamente el siguiente cuestionario y marca con una X la respuesta de acuerdo a tu criterio. Puedes seleccionar más de una opción.

1.- ¿Qué género de video juegos sueles jugar?

- a)  Role play game      b)  First/Third person game      c)  Adventure game  
d)  Otro

2.- ¿-Qué tan frecuentemente juegas esos juegos?

- a)  Muy frecuente      b)  Frecuente      c)  Ocasionalmente      d)  Rara vez

3.- ¿Por qué juegas videojuegos?

- a)  Porque es divertido      b)  Para practicar inglés      c)  Para distraerme  
d)  Otra: \_\_\_\_\_

4.- ¿Crees que jugar video juegos te ayudara a aprender inglés? Si/No ¿Por qué?

5.- ¿Qué haces para estudiar mientras juegas? (Puedes seleccionar más de una opción)

- a)  Apuntes de expresiones nuevas      b)  Poner atención a la pronunciación

- c)  Analizar la gramática de las oraciones      d)  Búsqueda de nuevo vocabulario  
e)  Practicar shadowing      f)  Apuntes de gramática, vocabulario, y/o expresiones  
díficiles para posterior estudio      g)  Nada

6.- ¿Qué habilidad mejoras más cuando juegas esos juegos?

- a)  Speaking      b)  Reading      c)  Listening      d)  Writing

Por favor, si es posible apóyame con un poco de tu tiempo para llevar a cabo una breve entrevista. Proporcióname un medio de contacto para llevarlo a cabo posteriormente.

Teléfono:

Correo:

### **Appendix B: Interview questions**

- 1.- Dependiendo de los géneros que más suele jugar, ¿cuáles son los elementos en esos videojuegos que más aprendizaje te pueden atribuir?
- 2.- En cuanto lo que haces para estudiar mientras juegas, ¿realmente haces todo esto? ¿Lo haces siempre que juegas?
- 3.- ¿Realmente sientes que has mejorado? Si es así, ¿cómo sabes si has mejorado tus habilidades (una o varias)?
- 4.- Crees que si juegas los juegos sin poner nada de atención en el idioma inglés podrías lograr aprender algo ¿Por qué?
- 5.- ¿Crees que usar videojuegos para aprender presenta ventajas en contraste con la instrucción de un profesor en el aula y los métodos más recurrentes? Si es así, ¿por qué? ¿Qué ventajas presenta?
- 6.- De la escala del 1 al 5, siendo 1 no apoyar nada y 5 con total apoyo, ¿aconsejarías o apoyarías a alguien a que juegue videojuegos para aprender inglés? ¿Por qué?
- 7.- ¿Crees que los videojuegos podrían ser una buena opción para aprender inglés? ¿Por qué si o no?