The Influence of Language Contact through Video Games on FL Acquisition: A Critical Overview

Ćaleta, Filip

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2023

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:083731

Rights / Prava: In copyright/Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-05-15**

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet Osijek

Dvopredmetni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Filip Ćaleta

Utjecaj jezičnog kontakta putem videoigara na usvajanje stranog jezika: kritički pregled

Završni rad

doc. dr. sc. Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić

Osijek, 2023.

Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

Dvopredmetni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i njemačkog jezika i književnosti

Filip Ćaleta

Utjecaj jezičnog kontakta putem videoigara na usvajanje stranog jezika: kritički pregled

Završni rad

Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti
Znanstveno polje: filologija
Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić

Osijek, 2023.

University of J.J. Strossmayer, Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and
German Language and Literature

Filip Ćaleta

The Influence of Language Contact through Video Games on FL Acquisition: A Critical Overview

BA Thesis

Supervisor: Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2023

University of J.J. Strossmayer, Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

Double Major BA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and
German Language and Literature

Filip Ćaleta

**The Influence of Language Contact through Video Games on FL
Acquisition: A Critical Overview**

BA Thesis

Scientific area: Humanities
Scientific field: Philology
Scientific branch: English studies

Supervisor: Dubravka Vidaković Erdeljić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2023

Prilog: Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti i o suglasnosti za javno objavljivanje

Obveza je studenta da donju Izjavu vlastoručno potpiše i umetne kao treću stranicu završnoga, odnosno diplomskog rada.

IZJAVA

Izjavljujem s punom materijalnom i moralnom odgovornošću da sam ovaj rad samostalno napisao/napisala te da u njemu nema kopiranih ili prepisanih dijelova teksta tuđih radova, a da nisu označeni kao citati s navođenjem izvora odakle su preneseni.

Svojim vlastoručnim potpisom potvrđujem da sam suglasan/suglasna da Filozofski fakultet u Osijeku trajno pohrani i javno objavi ovaj moj rad u internetskoj bazi završnih i diplomskih radova knjižnice Filozofskog fakulteta u Osijeku, knjižnice Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku i Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu.

U Osijeku, _____4. ruj 2023.____

Filip Čaleta, 0122236578
Ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

Table of Contents

The Influence of Language Contact through Video Games on FL Acquisition: A Critical Overview

Abstract

Foreign language acquisition (FLA) through video games has been widely researched in order to assess its impact on the development of foreign language skills and examine its effectiveness in enhancing foreign language learning. This paper discusses the viability and benefits of language contact in video games, as well as its accelerative effects on FL acquisition. Firstly, an explanation of language contact and FL acquisition is provided, through definitions by Thomason (2001) and Eddy (2011). Secondly, the concept of FLA is further explored through video games as a medium for language contact, detailing the idea of learner motivation and engagement as critical roles in FLA, inspecting the broadening of vocabulary in FL learners through games, as well as discussing the development of language skills observed in such learners. Finally, this paper covers the potential value of FL teaching through the medium of video games, while focusing on the prospective future and possibility of video games becoming a valid teaching tool alongside contemporary study material. Modern language acquisition has been made readily accessible to almost all FL learners with access to the internet and contemporary technology, with video games being one of the least likely, yet at the same time strangely attractive and effective approaches to foreign language learning. The concluding section summarizes and validates the positive influence of this approach to FL acquisition, through improved vocabulary, lessened insecurity and anxiety, as well as establishing games as a safe-space where learners are privy to feedback and improvement.

Keywords: FL acquisition, video games, learning through video games, language acquisition, language contact

1. Introduction

The importance of foreign language acquisition (FLA) in the modern age of the internet, which has connected a large percentage of the world, has become exceedingly apparent, as various companies all around the globe show expectations of far greater linguistic comprehension and productivity from their potential hires, as well as many societal gatherings and events presuming a tier of communicative skill which many do not possess. The main goal of this paper is to explore and argue for the idea that FLA can be accomplished through language contact found in various video games, whether through single-player story-based experiences or cooperative multiplayer games by allowing for multiple users to communicate, while at the same time experiencing media which is often not in their native language. As most modern game experiences base both their stories and general systems on English – which is considered a lingua franca, having been accepted in almost all walks of life (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 112) – this paper will almost strictly focus on the acquisition of English vocabulary and basic language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking through exposure to video games. In order to understand the way how exposure to video games and the common language contact found while playing them affects FLA , multiple works and articles are cited and used to establish a general consensus on the efficacy of the implementation of games into language training and development – with the majority of cited works focusing on general acquisition of English, as well as the acquisition of a broader vocabulary. As argued by Rudis and Poštić (2017: 113) more modern, and as such more complex games, have become the source of both passive and active language interaction, by providing an advantage over the conventional learning method of "exposure to movies and books", granting players the chance to actively participate in lore-filled worlds which effectively demand a certain level of communicative skill in order to be fully appreciated. Firstly, the concept of language contact and FLA will be introduced. Secondly, the paper will showcase the mentioned concept through the medium of video games, focusing on the engagement that these games offer, as well as showcasing the effects on vocabulary learning and the overall development of basic EFL language skills. Lastly, the possibilities of integrating games into the future of language acquisition and learning will be displayed.

2. Language Contact and Foreign Language Acquisition

In order to specify the ways through which video games influence language learning, a definition of the basic terms and phrases which this paper will often rely on should first be given and understood. A comprehensive definition and exploration of the two key concepts is provided: *language contact*, which, in short, refers to the interaction and influence of languages, and foreign language acquisition (FLA), the studying and acquisition of languages which are not native to learners. Firstly, understanding the possibility of language contact in video games requires knowledge of the basic definition of the term, which can be found in the following quotation by Thomason (2011):

> In the simplest definition, language contact is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time. […] As we will see, language contact in this substantive sense does not require fluent bilingualism or multilingualism, but some communication between speakers of different languages is necessary. (Thomason 2001: 1)

It should be considered that language contact extends further beyond the simple coexistence of two "languages" and their respective speakers. According to Thomason (2001), substantial language contact should entail meaningful and productive interactions and communication between multiple parties. To exemplify this notion, Thomason (ibid.) provides an example of an international study camp where two groups who speak distinctly different languages focus primarily on their own language. Despite the idea that this camp fosters interaction between languages, the majority of activities take place within their respective language groups – leading to both sides missing out on the opportunity to interact and share knowledge with each other. Thomason admits that the basic definition is flawed, as contact can happen without two parties being located in the same "area".

It is important to understand the meaning of "language" when talking about language contact, which the author exemplifies through another prevalent problem: the distinction between dialect and language (Thomason 2001: 2). A certain aura of ambiguity is mentioned pertaining to speakers of the same language, who find linguistic interactions where speakers of different dialects are unable to articulate themselves, to lead to further feelings of confusion while directly affecting the clarity of "defining" a language in this context (Thomason 2001: 2). Further sections of this paper will exclusively focus on contact between different languages, and will as such avoid the possible

confusion caused by difference in dialect. A clearer definition of "language" is necessary. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000: 721) describes language as the system of communication in both speech and writing which is used by the people of a particular country. This definition makes it easier to clarify what exactly constitutes a language.

When it comes to FLA, it first needs to be differentiated from second language acquisition (SLA). SLA is established to be the language learned by persons who live in and/or move to countries where two or more languages are spoken, with the distinction that the secondary language learned is necessary in order to communicate with other citizens of the country (Eddy 2011: 11). Eddy (2011: 11-12) defines foreign languages as being ones that persons voluntarily choose, with them not being vital means of communication inside of that speaker's environment. Eddy (2011: 12) clarifies this distinction with an example of a Swiss native who is fluent in German, undertaking the journey of learning French as a second language as opposed to a Slovak individual residing in Slovakia engaging in the process of acquiring English as a foreign language. In these instances, the former represents a scenario of language acquisition within a multilingual context, whereas the latter embodies the pursuit of a non-native language in an environment where it is not the dominant tongue. As stated above, individuals in the process of acquiring a SL have a clear advantage of being involved with the environment where the language is practiced, whilst also having regular exposure to its native speakers. FL learners on the other hand are left to adjust to and learn a language that they would normally not face in their day-to-day life, lowering the accessibility and as such making the overall process of language acquisition harder. The following sections will cover the medium of video games, and how their introduction into both the passive and active portions of language acquisition have remedied many of the restrictions placed on FL learners. Each subsection will further explore different concepts like motivation and engagement, the authenticity of the vocabulary found in video games, as well as the speech patterns learned through language contact in game environments.

3. Video Games as a Medium for FL Acquisition

The utilization of video games for the purposes of language acquisition and overall more time efficient learning of foreign languages has been well documented through surveys, leading researchers (e.g. Rudis and Poštić 2017: 126) to conclude that video games lend themselves to both a passive style of learning, as well as still allowing an active component. Furthermore, it is important to clarify that video games were not originally designed to teach language – setting aside

outliers like official, school based "learning-tools" – meaning that much focus is required to operate a modern video game, as contended by Rudis and Poštić (2017):

> Another problem that games have as a learning tool has to do with cognitive overload. If a game is too complicated or too involved, the brain simply does not have the capacity to properly play the game and passively (or actively) learn a language. (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 118)

On the other hand, the complexity of video games, and the mental constraint placed on players involved with in-game decisions creates an environment effective for learning by blending games and reality. When applied to foreign-language acquisition, games have the potential to become a valuable asset for EFL learners. They could serve as a scaffold for learners, leveraging their existing grasp of suitable dialogues within specific contexts. By 'thinking through the game', they may alleviate conversational unease, enabling a deeper engagement with English communication. The resultant reduction in anxiety, combined with the ability to anticipate dialogue, might dismantle hurdles and establish optimal conditions for fluent verbal interaction (Horowitz 2019: 386). As further argued by Horowitz (2019: 385), players, and as such FL learners, who are exposed to numerous dialogues or in-game options, develop the ability to use this gathered knowledge in real life scenarios. Through these game-to-life experiences, many obstacles for language learners can be surpassed, as learners are able to more deeply engage in conversations, associating and understanding the possible outcomes of their decisions in conversation. Video games do not always demand the full attention of prospective learners, and will often serve them with short in-game movies in order to allow brief reprieve from action while serving as stimulus for further learning. For example, Resident Evil, or Biohazard in Japan and Southeast Asia, is a horror game which heavily employs animated cutscenes in order to enhance player experience:

> Beside specific types of sentences found in the videogame, there are also 116 live cutscenes shown as well as the conversation and the subtitles to support the language learning process. The cutscene also plays the major role in reinforcing reading comprehension, conversation and listening comprehension. (Atmaja 2022: 27)

These video games, which actively stimulate their users to take part in in-game actions, additionally affect their learning skills. Harnessing the user's feelings of involvement with the characters and story, this leads to more attention being paid to written and spoken language. The phenomenon of accidental and passive learning of language through observed cutscenes and actions is also prevalent, as mentioned by Atmaja (2022: 30). To add on, although not directly, Rudis and Poštić (2017) corroborate the findings of both Horowitz (2019) and Atmaja (2022) in the ending statements and conclusion of their research. Video games offer numerous benefits for language learning. A notable advantage is their incorporation of visual cues alongside text, a feature absent in movies or books. Additionally, interactivity stands out as a vital element promoting language acquisition, as proficient comprehension of in-game events is paramount to success, motivating players to decipher game instructions. This dynamics prompts players to proactively grasp unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions, fostering an environment where learning naturally unfolds (Rudis Poštić 2017: 126). Following this, video games are seen as an engaging tool which promises high efficiency in FL learning and general language acquisition through their gameplay, cutscenes and overall stories. In the context of FLA, it is important to take note of the interests, engagement and motivation that language learners display, which is covered in the following subsection.

3. 1 Motivation and Engagement in FL Learners

Many factors negatively affect the viability of language acquisition and development through video games, as well as the possible language contact that they entail, whether through the stifled and commonly grammatically incorrect nature of chat-based interaction (Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi 2021: 64), or the variable first-hand impressions of learners wishing to employ the medium of games in their language learning. On the other hand, FL learners are said to, according to Lajtai (2022: 77), feel a sense of accomplishment and mastery over language when exposed to out-of-school learning activities like video games, positively impacting their engagement in said language learning as well as developing their expectations. Furthermore, Lajtai brings forth the theory of self-authenticity and flow:

> Important additions to the hypothesis were the concept of self-authenticity in language learning and flow. Self-authenticity as put forward by Henry (2013, Henry & Cliffordson, 2015) refers to the fact that some language learning activities are more personally

meaningful, self-relevant, and emotionally cognitively stimulating than others: learners who have ample amounts of such language learning experience (e.g. through gaming) may find in-school language learning to be inauthentic, and therefore, less useful for achieving the overall goal of language mastery. (Henry 2013, Henry & Cliffordson 2015, quoted in Lajtai 2022: 77)

Through this citation, the idea of "meaningful" motivation is brought into question, as gaming seems to be a concept intrinsically tied to the idea of "stimulating content" which persons are exposed to more so for the value of the engaging content, rather than the potential learning values, as detailed by Lajtai (2022: 77-78). To continue, various values are brought up regarding the suitability of language contact and acquisition through games. According to Reinhardt and Thorne (2016), three crucial features of video games stand out, positioning them as not only appropriate but also advantageous for facilitating language learning. These features include their interactive dimension, covering both implicit and explicit involvement; their inherent motivational appeal rooted in personal and intrinsic drive, often linked with theories of gamification in learning; and their promotion of goal-driven behavior, allowing learners to immerse themselves in language use while striving for particular achievements. Furthermore, as highlighted by Gee (2007), video games encourage meaningful, contextually grounded, and genuine language utilization (Reinhardt and Thorne 2016, Gee 2007, quoted in Lajtai 2022: 78). It can be concluded that strong motivation through video games is not only derived from their accessibility and interactivity, but also the player's personal motivation and wish for successful communication with other gamers. Video games tend to offer rich and authentic communication patterns, leading users to further explore language in order to understand relevant story narratives (Horowitz 2019: 389). The language used by characters in video games is directly embedded into contexts and situations which immerse learners, which is especially prominent in role-playing games as they often mimic real-life speech and use of language (Lajtai 2022: 201).

3. 2 Broadening Vocabulary through Video Games

To understand the viability of vocabulary development via language contact in video games, a distinction must first be made regarding "game-only" vocabulary and socially viable real-world language. For this reason future subsections will delve into the development of specialized and technical language through gaming (Gee 2011: 106), which refers to language used in specific

settings or fields – exemplified by various games having phrases and vocabulary exclusive to them, which players are urged to understand. The language that is most prominently used by players during their online gaming activities, gamerlect or gamer argot (Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi 2021: 51) is often assumed to be lacking in day-to-day communication activities that learners may face; it consists of short and concise phrases meant to facilitate on the spot communication (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 113). Furthermore, in the international research findings mentioned by Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi (2021: 51), native Chinese gamers were reported to prefer English – a foreign language – whenever any international students – or in general, learners – were participating in their online gaming interactions. Participants of a related study employed diverse approaches, utilizing blogs, group chats, and recorded gaming sessions. Additionally, they compiled a list of technical terms extracted from game content. This investigation further highlights the critical role played by game-related texts, both in their native language (L1) and a foreign language (L2), as foundational resources for language acquisition (Arnold-Stein, Hortobágyi 2021: 52). Through this research, a consensus can be made that game-texts have allowed these students to broaden their vocabulary by serving as an external language corpus for not only their native language, but also the targeted foreign language of the games that learners are exposed to. Additionally, the willingness of students to engage in language contact with "foreign" players allows for quicker acquisition of the practical vocabulary often used by experienced players to communicate, as derived from Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi's findings (2021). Another valid analysis comes from Rudis and Poštić, who cover a 2011 article by Reinders and Wattana, discussing a 2010 study by deHaan, Reed and Kuwada. The study aimed to compare vocabulary growth between participants actively engaging in gameplay and those merely observing it. Surprisingly, the findings revealed that individuals who solely watched gameplay exhibited better results than those actively playing. Consequently, the researchers concluded that interactivity is not guaranteed to enhance language learning (Reinders 2011). Nonetheless, the authors highlight certain study limitations. Firstly, language wasn't the primary focus in the game's objective, hence vocabulary comprehension wasn't imperative. Secondly, the game's genre lacked a narrative element, which typically demands players to grasp instructions and respond accurately to challenges (deHaan, Reed, Kuwada 2010, Reinders 2011, quoted in Rudis and Poštić 2017: 115). An important distinction is made through these findings, although self-explanatory, the value and possibility of FL acquisition through video games heavily relies on the variance and quality of different games and the possible genres that they entail. To add to their findings, it is important to distinguish "academically" viable games

from games which require lacking or non-existent interaction between the learners/players and the textual elements found within games. Another beneficial aspect in vocabulary development, as stated by Rudis and Poštić (2017), is the interactive element of video games, which serves as the most accessible point of exposure to foreign vocabulary. In line with Reinders and Wattana's (2011) perspective, successful language acquisition requires generating "comprehensible output" alongside receiving "comprehensible input" of the language being learned. This criterion accurately characterizes specific video games, as they typically offer an extensive English vocabulary and numerous chances for players to utilize this vocabulary in interactions with other players (Reinders 2011, quoted in Rudis and Poštić 2017: 115). Overall, it can be concluded that games which offer an interactive narrative, which additionally allows for communication between multiple players, or players and game characters, promises to be an influential and effective way of broadening the learners' word bank. In specialized game contexts like RPGs (role-playing games) or simulations, learners acquire game-specific vocabulary (e.g., terms like experience points, stats or "taking turns" in RPGs), while multiplayer games foster shortcuts and abbreviations through exposure to gamerlect. General language vocabulary is gleaned from more accessible game genres; action-adventures offer everyday language exposure and puzzle games encourage problem-solving language. This newly acquired vocabulary improves the learners' in-game communication skills, while simultaneously allowing for this knowledge to be used outside of game environments.

3. 2. 1 Language Authenticity

The authenticity of vocabulary acquired through video games is commonly brought into question, as many educators and parents still associate games with negative tendencies, dismissing them as invalid sources of information for language acquisition. In contrast to this belief, further inquiry has found the exact opposite to be true. For over ten years, educators have considered video games as a promising way to improve learning and establish genuine learning environments. Some qualitative researchers argue that engaging with video games can offer immersive experiences linked to real-life scenarios, allowing learners to apply them to grasp a specific subject matter (Horowitz 2019: 385). Prominent examples of authentic language use in video games often come from narrative long-form experiences that are more akin to movies or theatrical performances, rather than conventional games which require full user attention (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 123). The value of such experiences is exemplified through many action-adventure titles. Titles such as GTA

V and Tomb Raider offer abundant opportunities for language acquisition. In contrast to other games, these types of games predominantly expose players to spoken rather than written language. This not only offers contextual cues for comprehending unfamiliar words but also serves as a valuable auditory resource for enhancing speaking skills. This aspect is particularly evident in Tomb Raider, where all characters communicate with precise pronunciation, devoid of any distinct accents (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 124). On a final note, video games can be "trusted" to effectively influence FL acquisition through the broadening of learner vocabulary. High value titles offer an authentic experience of acceptable language use with proper pronunciation in immersive contexts relevant to the learners' motivations and interests (Lajtai 2022: 78).

3. 2. 2 Value of specialized Game Jargon

As previously mentioned, game jargon is not a direct utilization of general language; it facilitates precise communication and primarily enriches the understanding of gameplay mechanics and game strategies. Gee (2011: 106) touches on this notion in his explanation of the increasingly more complex language used in children's popular culture. Through the example of a card game, which has been digitized and made available in the form of a video game, called *Yu-Gi-Oh*, the utilization of specialized language in game environments is made apparent:

> [Example of a card]
> Description: FLIP: Destroys 1 Magic Card on the field. If this card's target is face-down, flip it face-up. If the card is a Magic Card, it is destroyed. If not, it is returned to its face-down position. The flipped card is not activated. (Gee 2011: 107)

It is important to understand that, while the words used in the description of the card might be "generally known" in the broader spectrum of English speakers, e. g. "destroy", "field", "face-down", "flip", "activated", players of the game are required to understand the contextual and specialized meaning of each term. Yu-Gi-Oh as a game has a strict rule-set and requires intricate knowledge of its systems, allowing for experienced peers to assist in the studies of others through interaction and socialization (Gee 2011: 109). To further exemplify and clarify the value of such game design, another example is offered:

> [Example of a card]

Description: When this card is Normal Summoned, Flip Summoned, or Special Summoned successfully, select and activate 1 of the following effects: Select 1 equipped Equip Spell Card and destroy it. Select 1 equipped Equip Spell Card and equip it to this card. (Gee 2011: 107)

When compared to the previous example, a clear complexity is observable, with each term being exclusive to the game itself, the necessity to understand the specialized meanings of regularly used words is expected. In summary, both players, as well as observers who learn without direct engagement, are able to acquire a broader word bank, whether through specialized or generalized vocabulary, while engaging with other learners/players: through trading, interpretation of rules or the discussion of game systems (Gee 2011: 108). Lastly, an example from Gee's personal life clearly shows the ability of games to allow children of young ages to quickly pick up on language tendencies. According to Gee (2011: 110), his child learned to read through playing Pokémon games on the Nintendo Game Boy at the age of five, with his parents assisting in reading the text. This experience not only taught him basic reading but also exposed him to complex language similar to what he would encounter in school later on. Gee acknowledges that while his son acquired various reading skills from different activities, he isn't advocating for solely focusing on early literacy in specialized languages. Although not directly relating to development of vocabulary, through this example of early-learning strategies within video games, a clear pathway to developing early reading and language comprehension can be applied in the process of FL acquisition. As the quality of games improves with time, so does the writing and the style, allowing for the active preparation of foreign students to the intricacies of the target language directly through the involvement in video games, as can be discerned from Gee's (2011: 110) findings. Further analysis of the improvement of overall language skills is covered in the following subsection

3. 3 Acquisition of Language Skills

The possibility for accelerated acquisition of a broad range of vocabulary is substantiated through the various research and citations found in the previous section, cementing itself to be one of the primary results of adapting games into learning. To further argue for the imminent effect on learners, this section covers different aspects of language skills and values, as well as possible misconceptions which may stem from language acquisition through video games. Alongside specialized language, different linguistic and grammatical concepts are relevant to this discussion:

Sociolinguists have already noticed the exploitable factors of IT and video gaming English, such as the frequently used expressions, content nouns, basic verbs, and sentence patterns. For instance, in the commonly named shooter games the simpler, yet descriptive up-to-date English is utilized, which contains several action verbs and content nouns from the spectrum of military, medical and mapping domains. The current version of English commonly used on the internet can be supplemented by language items which any gamer can develop to a quite high level of proficiency, through successful communication in various virtual circumstances. (Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi 2021: 51)

The wide reach of video games and the surrounding communities they develop manages to create an environment ripe for the attaining of language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, as such, it can be acknowledged that the various aspects noted by Arnold-Stein and Hortobágyi (2021: 51) are viable for academic "exploitation". The mentioned terminology and concepts include specialized language and phrases, which learners can adapt to in-game interactions. These linguistic items contribute to the overall language that is used in online-gaming, while at the same time developing foreign gamer's proficiency in specialized English speech patterns. Furthermore, through the experience of Puerto Rico learners, research findings by Horowitz (2019) clarify the necessity for players to understand the contextual meaning of English phrases in-and-out of games, as the proficiency in the foreign language (English) shows a greater rate of success for students who were involved in video-gaming. Horowitz (2019: 402) reports on a study that highlights the significant implications of its findings for Puerto Rican ESL learners striving to attain proficiency in English for success in various social and professional settings. The importance of strong English communication skills cannot be underestimated, as these learners require the ability to effectively engage in conversations and interactions. Without ample exposure to the language and consistent practice opportunities, achieving proficiency becomes challenging. This, in turn, can negatively impact students' willingness to communicate in English. Furthermore, numerous professions incorporate specialized English terminology and jargon, necessitating a high level of literacy and pronunciation skills. Considering the prevalent use of Spanish on the island, Puerto Rican ESL learners face a substantial need to enhance their English language abilities, however, the local environment may not provide the ideal conditions for them to develop these skills (Lems, Miller and Soro 2017, quoted in Horowitz 2019: 402). These findings exemplify the

importance of connecting learners to the FL that they wish to study, as the mentioned dominance of natively spoken languages in "isolated" regions like Puerto Rico can lead to lacking active education of foreign languages through schools. To conclude, online video games offer the chance for speakers to interact with, and passively acquire their target FL through exposure to vocabulary and commonly used phrases, as stated in previous subsections. Another source which confirms the potential of video games in language acquisition is a study conducted by Singaravelu (2008). This research based its findings on the test results of Panchayat Union Middle school, located in the city of Vattar. Students were divided into two groups, with one covering conventional education methods, and the other focusing on game exposure in learning grammar (Singaravelu 2008: 50-51). The key findings come from standardized tests written by the two groups of Vattar students. At Panchayat Union Middle School, English students were found to encounter difficulties in grasping English Grammar concepts. In the written exams, a notable distinction appeared in the achievement mean scores of English pupils between the post-tests of the control group and the experimental group, the latter being exposed to video games. Moreover, a significant disparity is observed between the pre-test and post-test achievement mean scores of the experimental group in English Grammar, showing much better results. Evidently, employing Video Game Based Learning for English Grammar exhibits substantial enhancement, as indicated by the test outcomes (Singaravelu 2008: 51-52). The findings of this study clearly showcase the potential benefits of incorporating video games into the system of education for FL learners. As a result, it can be concluded that traditional methods of learning were proven to have significantly worse results, with the concluding message of the study being the promotion and support of game-based learning of English grammar, which would accelerate and further improve FL acquisition. The noted findings have proven the viability of incorporating video games into the day-to-day learning of foreign languages, yet it is necessary to note that traditional methods of education and language teaching still hold the important role in refining linguistic skills. Learners' reception to feedback and possible anxiety is covered in the next subsection.

3. 3. 1 Feedback and Anxiety in FL Learners

Firstly, to understand FL learners, it is important to remember that many speakers (of any language) will mention that public speaking will often lead to stress and anxiety, especially in classrooms of foreign learners (Horowitz 2019: 382). A group of scholars (Awan et al: 2010) suggested that concerns related to pronouncing words incorrectly, apprehensions about speaking without

preparation, and worries about making grammatical errors were all significant challenges for individuals learning Pakistani languages. In a similar vein, Mak (2011) explored how anxieties stemming from the possibility of receiving unfavorable judgments, being corrected during speech, and engaging in self-criticism had a considerable impact on the anxiety levels of Chinese students learning English as a Second Language (Awan et al. 2010, Mak 2011, quoted in Horowitz 2019: 382). It is evident that individuals are willing to acknowledge that issues related to expressing themselves, using correct grammar, and maintaining a smooth speech flow significantly shape their expectations and anxieties regarding language learning. This fear can stem from cultural differences or overall acceptance of foreign learners to e. g. English. To combat these inherent fears that learners may face, video games make it possible for them to come to terms with their anxiety through active interaction in low-stress environments with other foreign or native speakers of the targeted language:

> The use of standard English during online multiplayer video gaming may not carry with it the sense of risk inherent in using the language in a formal classroom setting, because there are no judgments made about usage and no evaluations tied to it. The fact that learners can use English correctly or incorrectly, without the risk of failure or criticism, may encourage them to use it more and thus create a sort of English language comfort zone in which they maintain the behavior consistently. Some researchers (Henderson et al. 2009) theorized that the video game virtual avatars used by learners offered them a sort of virtual shield that, protecting against the threat of negative evaluation and embarrassment, reduced their anxiety levels. (Henderson et al 2009, quoted in Horowitz 2019: 386)

Furthermore, in contrast to classroom settings where expectations and the physical presence of others can inflict fear and anxiety in learners, games provide informal environments in forms of multiplayer games which allow users to engage with others in safe communication while alleviating stress (Horowitz 2019: 402).

Feedback is a necessary step for learners to quickly adapt and improve their language, which stimulating action-packed games tend to enforce. A prime example of this is the perspective presented by McClarty (2012) and her collaborators, who argue that the process of failing is an essential component of the learning journey and emphasize the crucial role of immediate feedback.

In the context of online gaming communities, participants frequently engage in repeated attempts at objectives collectively, allowing them to collaboratively plan attacks and tactics based on past failures. Similarly, a significant number of respondents expressed their willingness to seek clarifications from peers to successfully accomplish tasks. This insight suggests that by revisiting game-related activities and seeking aid in English, individuals gain enhanced opportunities and practice to engage with the target language (McClarty 2012, quoted in Horowitz 2019: 401). To summarize, learners are able to repeatedly engage with concepts that they are facing in games through mistakes and informative feedback, while simultaneously searching for further information in order to better themselves and succeed. This leads users to interact with their target FL (English in most cases) in order to acquire further knowledge while absorbing critique.

4. Integration and Future of Video Games for FL Acquisition

The implementation of video games into the FLA classroom setting must first be understood from the viewpoint of students, and the general idea behind games as a whole, as games represent entertainment first, with the possibility of education being a bonus. Keeping this in mind, an attempt to integrate games into students' study material has already been observed by Gee (2011: 118-119) in his analysis of a "game" which allows users to explore State Street, the study material in this case being the geography of the United States. In Shaffer and Beckett's 2004 geography curriculum, MadMod functions much like SimCity, operating as a game. Video games are essentially simulations with defined "win states" tied to players' self-set goals. Here, students have particular objectives, and the game allows them to assess their progress towards accomplishing those objectives. Concurrently, the game is seamlessly integrated into an educational system that ensures these objectives and the methodologies utilized to achieve them mirror the authentic practices and cognitive paradigms of urban planners (Gee 2011: 119). MadMod as a system and effective teaching tool represents a promising future for other non-geographic pathways of education, with interviews additionally reporting that students not only enjoyed but also developed a better understanding of the studied material when it was delivered to them in game form (Gee 2011: 119).

In order to implement games as a language learning tool, it should be considered that passive acquisition takes preference over active studying when speech and vocabulary is concerned. Players do not focus solely on the "study material", but rather engage with it as they compete in

games. Furthermore, games are considered a leisure activity, as such, learners should be prompted to "try" games for their actual function of entertainment. Previously cited studies have shown how stress and expectations in school environments negatively impact FL acquisition; this notion is corroborated by the next citation:

> So, learning a foreign language while playing video games is very effective because it is highly motivating due to its entertainment value, and there is no pressure or evaluation methods that could deter players from openly engaging in using the language. (Rudis and Poštić 2017: 115)

Furthermore, in order to implement games directly into school systems, if the demand for this method is met in the future, school as well as FL learners would have to physically own technology which could emulate or display games. Ownership of computers, which relates to the described technology, has steadily become less relevant, as modern technological advances make in-school game learning immensely viable. The potential rise and availability of this approach to learning has been documented by Casañ Pitarch (2018). This phenomenon finds its rationale in the concurrent progressions in technology. Evidently, there has been a transformation in the requisites for engaging with video games, paralleling the advancements during this period. An illustrative instance lies in the obsolescence of the mandatory need for computers within the classroom setting. These machines once posed spatial constraints and placed fiscal obligations upon educational institutions, entailing expenditures for acquisition and upkeep. However, the contemporary landscape has evolved to a point where a considerable portion of students, particularly at the tertiary level, possess personal smartphones, laptops, or tablets. These devices not only serve individual purposes but also boast portability and wireless internet connectivity. This confluence of attributes enables students to undertake tasks independently and remotely. Moreover, the proliferation of applications and games across digital marketplaces further exemplifies this transformation. These resources, procurable through online platforms, now exhibit a significantly expanded array. They not only offer diverse options but also manifest a trend of cost reduction, rendering their acquisition more financially viable compared to historical norms (Casañ Pitarch 2018: 1151). With technology advancing year to year, it is fair to presume that the process of language learning will one day be akin to the systems of progression that we find in games even today. Researchers (e.g. Casañ Pitarch 2018: 1151) have also predicted long since that the process

of learning will take on the form of a game at some point, as long as suitable systems of goals and rewards are designed around it:

> One of the first researchers who described the characteristics of serious video-games was Malone (1981). In this sense, this author suggested that serious video-games need to establish clear meaningful learning and playing goals for the students, and providing continuous feedback on their progress. As its video-game nature, the difficulty must be adapted to the learners' skills and rise progressively according to the learning aims. Besides, it should also provide elements of surprise to break monotony. (Malone 1981, quoted in Casañ Pitarch 2018: 1148)

The citations and research covered in this section show the clear accessibility and versatility of video game-based language learning. On a last note, the intricacies of games allow them to be effective tools of not only general, but also language-based teaching/learning, with modern gaming and operating systems becoming easier to access for many, the potential for this medium of language contact to become an integral system for FL learners seems exceedingly probable.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, language contact through the medium of video games is a viable and potentially game-changing method of teaching languages, especially English, to foreign students. Numerous statements and research have shown the vast array of potential uses for game-based learning. Many authors argue that through exposure to video games learners can achieve rapid improvement in vocabulary and speech, whether through communication with strangers online, or through the analysis of the strong narratives and deep lore that story-based games offer their players. Adapting gaming into student routines has also dispelled many of the insecurities and anxieties that foreign learners may face when having to participate in active communication. Online game spaces provide a less restrictive and less professional environment for speakers to take part in. Foreign learners have the ability to avoid unnecessary judgment and receive almost immediate feedback on their mistakes. This notion, combined with the bright and promising future that school-incorporated game environments could provide, shows the true value and worth of this understudied approach to education. As the education system and modern technology advances, video games are constantly proving themselves as an excellent source of entertainment and language exposure for persons all over the globe who wish to better themselves and excel in their pursuit of knowledge.

6. References

Arnold-Stein, R., and I. Hortobágyi. 2021. Translanguaging, Diglossia and Bidialectalism in the Video Gamer Argot. Papers in Arts and Humanities 1(2). 47-67.

Atmaja, Theodore Alexander. 2022. Improving Foreign Language Learning Using Video Games. Bless: Bilingualism, Language, and Education Studies 2(1). 22-31.

Awan, Riffat-un-Nisa, Musarrat Azher, Muhammad Nadeem Anwar, and Anjum Naz. 2010. An Investigation of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Its Relationship with Students' Achievement. Journal of College Teaching and Learning 7(1). 33–40.

Casañ Pitarch, Ricardo. 2018. An Approach to Digital Game-based Learning: Video-games Principles and Applications in Foreign Language Learning. Journal of Language Teaching and Research 9(6). 1147-1159.

Eddy, Eva. 2011. On the interconnections among selected aspects of English grammar in Slovak learner's acquisition. Prešov: Prešovska univerzita.

Gee, James Paul. 2007. Good Video Games and Good Learning: Collected Essays on Video Games, Learning and Literacy. New York: Peter Lang.

Gee, James Paul. 2011. CHAPTER FIVE: Reading, Language Development, Video Games, and Learning in the Twenty-First Century". Counterpoints 387. 101–127.

Henderson, Michael, Hui Huang, Scott Grant, and Lyn Henderson. 2009. Language Acquisition in Second Life: Improving Self-Efficacy Beliefs. (Paper presented at the 26th Annual ASCILITE International Conference, Auckland, 6-9 December 2009).

Henry, Alastair. 2013. Digital games and ELT: Bridging the Authenticity Gap. In Ushioda, E. (eds) International Perspectives on Motivation. International Perspectives on English Language Teaching. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Henry, Alastair & Cliffordson, C. 2015. The impact of out-of-school factors on motivation to learn English: Self-discrepancies, beliefs, and experiences of self-authenticity. Applied Linguistics 38(5). 713-736.

Horowitz, Kenneth S. 2019. The Effect of Massive Multiplayer Online Video Games on the Willingness to Communicate and Communicative Anxiety of College Students in Puerto Rico. American Journal of Play 11(3). 379-410.

Jonathan, DeHaan & Reed, W.M. & Katsuko, Kuwada. 2010. The Effect of Interactivity with a Music Video Game on Second Language Vocabulary Recall. Language Learning and Technology 14(2).

Lajtai, Ádám. 2022. The potentials of video games in the process of English language learning and the practice of language teaching in the Hungarian context. Doctoral dissertation, Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University.

Lems, Kristin, Leah D. Miller, and Tenena M. Soro. 2017. Building Literacy with English Language Learners: Insights from Linguistics. New York: The Guilford Press.

Mak, Barley. 2011. An Exploration of Speaking-in-Class Anxiety with Chinese ESL Learners. System 39(1). 202–214.

Malone, T.W. 1981. What makes things fun to learn? A study of intrinsically motivating computer games. Pipeline 6(2). 50-51.

McClarty, Katie Larsen, Aline Orr, Peter M. Frey, Robert P. Dolan, Victoria Vassileva, and Aaron McVay. 2012. A Literature Review of Gaming in Education. New Jersey: Pearson

Oxford: Advanced learner's dictionary. 8th Edition. 2000. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Reinders, H. and Wattana, S. 2011. Learn English or Die: The Effects of Digital Games on Interaction and Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language. Digital Culture & Education 3(1). 3-29.

Reinhardt, J., & Thorne, S. L. 2016. Metaphors for Digital Games and Language Learning. In F. Farr & L. Murray (Eds.), Routledge Handbook of Language Learning and Technology. 415-430. London: Routledge.

Rudis, Domas and Svetozar Poštić. 2017. Influence of Video Games on the Acquisition of the English Language. Verbum 8. 112-128.

Singaravelu, G. 2008. Video Game Based Learning in English Grammar. Journal of Educational Technology 5(3). 49-53.

Thomason, Sarah G.2001. Language Contact: An Introduction. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.