

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**  
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**Using RuneScape for Language Acquisition Purposes in an Upper  
Secondary EFL Classroom**

**MA Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

This MA thesis discusses the effects of using an online game on the English language skills of upper secondary school students using the MMORPG RuneScape. Youngsters spend a great deal of their time on playing online games and, as education is often referred to as a key arena for radical change, educators are encouraged to incorporate the Internet into their lessons in a way that matches the students' interests while also aiding the learning process.

The theoretical part of the thesis gives an overview of previous research done in the field, presenting the results of researchers who have used both online and video games to teach English vocabulary as well as the participants' opinions on the subject.

The empirical part of the thesis is based on the case study conducted among 14 students aged 17-18 at Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium in which the students played RuneScape once a week for four weeks and were later interviewed to learn about their views on using commercial games in a conventional classroom environment and whether they thought RuneScape was suitable for language learning. The findings of the case study are analyzed in the context of the material provided in the literature review.

**Keywords:** teaching vocabulary, online game, upper secondary school students, English as a foreign language (EFL), teaching English

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## Introduction

The idea that technology greatly influences our lives has been repeated so many times that it has become almost a cliché. Indeed, technology is evolving more rapidly now than ever before, and these advancements demand new approaches and practices in different aspects of our everyday lives, including education. After all, according to Bennet & Maton (2010: 3), education is “a key arena for radical change”.

The idea of ‘digital natives’, a generation of tech-savvy people fluent in digital technologies, has become incredibly popular. This idea has been discussed ever since the terms ‘digital natives’ (Prensky 2001) and ‘the Net Generation’ (Tapscott 1998) were first introduced. These terms imply that the new generation is completely different from all the previous ones and suggest that the educational system cannot fully cater to the needs of these tech-savvy students. Dede (2005) and Oblinger (2005) claim that there is a portion of the population who are very skilled technology users, and for that reason, they are essentially different when it comes to their behavior and things they like from those who do not use technology regularly, or at all. The number of these skilled technology users is higher among younger generations.

Educators are unable to teach youngsters in a way that the students would find interesting and could relate to in terms of the teaching methods and tools. Bennet and Maton (2010: 4) sum up the main argument of those supporting Prensky (2001) and Tapscott (1998) as follows: “/.../ Radical change in education is needed because our traditional institutions do not meet the needs of a new generation of ‘tech-savvy’ learners.” This means that teachers need to educate themselves when it comes to using technology in the classroom, to approach today’s students. However, some other recent studies (Bennet & Maton 2010) have shown flaws in the argument that young people are radically different from older generations, and it has become unclear whether this modern-day tech-savvy

student even exists or whether we are dealing with a legend. Also, the idea of a new kind of learner is nothing revolutionary because research done in the past (Hickox & Moore 1995) shows that panicking over ‘new’ or significantly different students is in fact a recurring phenomenon in education.

It is important to note, though, that today people have easier access to technology. A survey carried out in Estonia in 2012 showed that 75% of Estonian households and 90% of families with children have access to both a computer (or a laptop) and the Internet (Sikkut 2012). This needs to be taken into account in the educational setting as well. People, and especially young children, spend a lot of time on the computer as well as portable gadgets such as tablets or smartphones, and on the Internet. Using technology and the Internet in the classroom gives students access to learning materials that would otherwise be hard to find and allows them to be in control of their own learning process by completing different tasks at their own pace. Overall, using technology is said to make learning and teaching more convenient than conducting lessons in a regular classroom environment because different learning materials are more easily accessible (Hubbard 2009: 2).

In order to take the necessary steps to change the way lessons are conducted in schools, it is important to find out what young learners actually do on the Internet and how they like to spend their time there. A study conducted by Kennedy showed that youngsters across Europe use the Internet in similar ways: as an educational resource (looking up information related to their studies and doing homework), for entertainment – games and fun – as a tool for finding information, and social networking (Kennedy et al. 2009). What is interesting here is that other online opportunities such as blogging or creating content in general – making videos, for example – are much less often taken advantage of than expected (Hasebrink et al. 2008).

It seems that youngsters are primarily interested in those opportunities that have something to do with online communication (browsing online discussion boards) or entertainment (such as watching videos or playing games), as opposed to active content creation. It is also false to assume that the older generation, or ‘digital immigrants’ as Prensky (2001) calls them, do not know anything about the world of technology and do not use it. A survey conducted in Estonia in 2008 showed that while young people are indeed more likely to use the Internet for communication and entertainment purposes, it does not necessarily mean that older people do not use the World Wide Web with the same activities in mind (Kalmus et al. 2011: 396-397). In addition to that, adults also see the Internet as an educational resource and use it to access information, and are therefore taking a much more serious stance on using the Internet (Siibak 2009: 10-12) than the approach that teenagers have. The difference between the younger and older generations (people aged 65 and older) seems to be that older age groups can be more reluctant to use social media and that they have less free time to spend on the Internet due to household chores, childcare, and daily paid labor (Kalmus et al. 2011: 397). Therefore, when comparing the habits of using the Internet between the older and younger generations, it could be said that the latter take advantage of the Internet wholeheartedly and see it as a way of spending their free time, while the former use it for work and finding information when necessary.

The Kaiser Family Foundation conducted a study in the United States in 2010 which revealed that the amount of time 8- to 18-year-olds spend on a computer daily is about an hour and a half. Mainly, the participants of the study used the computer for social networking, but playing games was a close second, with most youngsters spending one hour and 17 minutes on games every day. This is roughly thrice as much time that the average Estonian adult spends on the computer: about 36 minutes a day (Ots 2010).

Therefore, the results of the Kaiser Family Foundation study clearly suggest that young learners enjoy spending time online, and do so for long periods of time. For that reason, it is important for the educational system to adapt to this new kind of learner.

According to the national curricula of 2011 for Estonian basic and upper secondary schools, every teacher is expected to use contemporary information and communication technologies in the classroom in order to make their lessons more interesting and stimulating for the students. Additionally, besides teaching their subject, teachers must also be good role models for students when it comes to the importance of technology in everyday life and learning to use the Internet and different gadgets to their advantage. Therefore, it is advisable to incorporate technology and the Internet in general into the lessons, especially when it comes to the English language due to the importance of the language in the world.

English could be considered an unofficial second language in Estonia, as it is widely known and spoken: approximately 84% of Estonian students learn English as their first foreign language (Ibrus 2008). Most Estonians encounter the language every day, especially through media and global social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. Due to the status of the language, a great deal of the media consumed daily by Estonians nowadays is in English: music, movies, video games, and TV shows, but different devices used regularly such as phones, computers and tablets also have English operational systems. Moreover, the Estonian-speaking market is very small and for that reason, there is no reason for big brands to translate user manuals or additional booklets into a language that only has about a million speakers. Therefore, the average Estonian is expected to know some English to manage in their own country.

It turns out that Estonians do, in fact, speak great English: The Education First English Proficiency Index (2015), a report describing the English proficiency levels of

countries all over the world, showed that Estonia held the 7<sup>th</sup> place out of 70 countries, which is classified as having a very high proficiency level. An analysis of the proficiency index showed that, in general, young adults aged 18-25 are the best English speakers worldwide – this is no surprise considering how much time people in that age group spend on the Internet (Siibak 2009). Education First (2017) revealed that countries whose inhabitants have an excellent English proficiency level are also frequent Internet users (“the better a country’s English, the more connected it is to the Internet”). While there is some truth to that, it is more likely the other way around: the more connected a country is to the Internet, the better the locals’ English skills are. However, this also depends on the languages spoken in the country: it is highly unlikely that people who do not speak languages such as Russian, Chinese or Japanese will use the Internet in these languages; those who already speak some English will therefore use English websites in addition to those in their own mother tongue.

Finland, Estonia’s northern neighbor, was also in the top 10 in terms of the level of English spoken there. Uusikoski (2011: 5) claims that the high position is no surprise because English is very important to youngsters in the country and that knowing English is an essential requirement in becoming a member of any youth community. In other words, if one does not speak English, they will be left out and it will be harder to connect with their peers. Leppänen (2007) adds that the youth culture nowadays is very interested in everything coming from the western world, especially the USA. Young people are more interested in English-speaking popular music, films, and TV shows than the same things in their mother tongue (Leppänen 2007). This is also true in Estonia: many students in Estonian high schools watch American or British YouTubers regularly and listen to music in English. As of February 2017, “Estonian Viral 50”, a playlist on Spotify that shows the most popular songs Estonians listen to, contains only eight songs (out of 50) that are



performed by Estonian artists; only half of those are sung in the native language. Therefore, the influence of the English language on young people is very clear, as they are always surrounded by it.

While most youngsters spend their time on different social media platforms – in 2016, 86% of teenagers in the United States used at least one social media website (Pew Research Center 2016) – gaming is also an important part of youth culture. The three most popular computer activities among 8- to 18-year-olds are using social networking sites such as Facebook, followed by playing computer games and watching videos on YouTube (The Kaiser Family Foundation 2010: 21). Most games – both online and those meant for consoles such as the PlayStation, Xbox or Wii – are in English and changing the language of the game to Estonian is not an option. Therefore, because almost all games played by youngsters nowadays are in English, they could provide a new and engaging opportunity for learning the language outside of the classroom (Eskelinen 2012: 5). It has been proven that high school students who have played computer games for more than 15 hours a week have significantly better English grades (Uusikoski 2011: 35), which shows that computer games have a very big part in informal learning of English as a foreign language.

Games could be used in the classroom environment to help students who are struggling with learning the target language. As Arnseth (2006) points out, learners are willing to invest a lot of time and effort into accomplishing different tasks set up in a game that are often quite difficult and time consuming. For that reason, using games in language lessons could greatly improve students' English because they would focus more on completing the tasks given to them in the game and in turn, spending more time playing and being exposed to the target language. It is not uncommon for learners who spend a lot of time playing games to already know some English vocabulary items that have not even been discussed in the classroom yet. Therefore, in some cases, some authors suggest that

playing a game in the target language could replace doing homework entirely (Purushotma 2005: 83).

To the author's knowledge, there has this far been no research on the topic of using video or online games for English language acquisition in Estonia. This thesis seeks to fill this gap by carrying out a case study on the effects of multiplayer online games on the English language skills of the students. The theoretical part of the thesis gives an overview of previous research done in the field, indicating a gap that the paper at hand will try to fill. The empirical part of the thesis is based on a case study carried out among upper secondary school students aged 17-18 at Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium, where the students were asked to play the multiplayer online game RuneScape once a week in their English classes for four weeks. They were tested twice on the same vocabulary items: at the beginning and at the end of the study to evaluate their improvement. In the tests, the students had to provide Estonian translations for the English words. The next objective of the research is to determine the students' reactions to playing a game instead of being in a 'normal' classroom environment and whether they think RuneScape is a suitable game to learn English vocabulary items. For that purpose, group interviews with the students were conducted and later analyzed in the context of the literature review.

## CHAPTER I

### 1.1 Computer-Assisted Language Learning

In his book, *Teaching & Researching: Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, Ken Beatty defines the term computer-assisted language learning (CALL) as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (Beatty 2003: 7). However, because Beatty’s definition is quite broad, attempts have been made in recent years to delineate the field more clearly (Detschmann & Vu 2015: 44). For example, Philip Hubbard (2009: 1-2) has questioned the terms ‘computer’ and ‘improve’ in Beatty’s definition. He claims that the term ‘computer’ does not only apply to simply the desktop and laptop devices people use on a daily basis, but it could also be used to label other technological devices such as personal digital assistants, mp3 players, mobile phones, DVD players, and so on – everything that contains a computer of sorts. The question of what it means to ‘improve’ one’s language skills when using CALL for language learning and teaching could be answered by looking at the term from several different aspects such as learning efficiency and effectiveness, motivation, and access (Hubbard 2009: 2).

It seems that CALL can not only help the student learn the target language faster and with significantly less effort (Hubbard 2009: 2), but it also improves the accessibility of learning materials, the convenience and overall experience of learning. Furthermore, Hubbard (2009: 2) also mentions that CALL can support students in becoming independent learners, saying that when learning on the computer, learners require less teacher time because they are generally more interested in what is going on in the World Wide Web; they can access learning materials that are more relevant to their age group.

Overall, Hubbard’s idea of CALL is slightly different from Beatty’s: because Ken Beatty’s definition was so broad, Hubbard (2009: 2) claims that in some cases, using computers in the classroom might actually not automatically lead to language acquisition,

but rather improves the learning conditions, which, in his own words, “can in some cases impede progress”. This means that if students are given a task on the computer that they are not interested in, they might push it to the side and do something else online instead. Therefore, the ‘assistance’ of a computer is there, but it is not used to learn the target language.

However, when CALL is used in the intended way, which is to help students pick up language skills and knowledge faster, there is a variety of activities that can be used to make the process more enjoyable for the learner. Stephen Bax (2003: 21) mentions many types of CALL activities, including gap-filling and matching exercises, crossword puzzles, web publishing, online communication, web-based dictionaries, and computer games among others. While CALL has generally been compared with conventional classroom teaching, calling the former a completely separate method, Beatty (2003: 13-15) claims that the two have since been blended into one, with CALL complementing traditional teaching, which uses textbooks and workbooks. English teacher Pearson Brown has come up with a way to blend CALL with conventional classroom teaching with the release of his very popular e-book titled *English Grammar Secrets*, which contains explanations of different grammar topics, and each topic is complemented by online exercises. These exercises are incredibly useful when teaching a new grammar topic in English language lessons: most of them are either gap-filling or matching exercises – typical CALL activities as mentioned by Bax (2003: 21) – and they can be used to break up the traditional language lesson which focuses mostly on textbook and workbook exercises. Computers have become a firm part of schools, and according to the National Curricula of Estonia (2011), teachers are expected to know how to use computers and technology in general in their lessons, and do it regularly.

Perhaps the most researched area in the field of CALL is computer mediated communication (CMC). The reason CMC is so popular among researchers is that human-human interaction is more natural through CMC and because of that, it is closely related to online games where learners can communicate with people from all over the world (Eskelinen 2012: 5). CMC means that computer-based discussion may take place without necessarily involving learning – according to Beatty (2003: 62), the opportunities for students to learn something new are there, but language acquisition is not the goal. An example of CMC would be using online chatrooms or playing a multiplayer game where the player must communicate with native speakers of the target language, or with peers who do not speak the target language – in this case, English – as their first language. Beatty (2003: 62) calls this situation ‘engaging in negotiation of meaning’, which means that the players must make sure they have understood a vocabulary item or a sentence the same way in order to communicate successfully. Beatty (2003: 81-82) also relates negotiation of meaning to the idea of comprehensible input – students need to be provided with language that they can understand; something that is very important in language teaching where the input must meet students’ level of comprehension for them to move on and improve their skills.

Because CALL can be used in several ways and has quite a few rapidly growing subfields (CMC, CALT, CALICO, ICALL), researchers have started to call it a “complete method of learning a language” (Beatty 2003: 8; Hubbard 2009: 12-15). CALL can be used with both weaker and more advanced students to either help or motivate them in the learning process. Although it may be hard to find the suitable level of difficulty for students when using computers to aid the language learning process, this problem could be solved by testing the learners before having them work on a computer or allowing them to select the level that

they find suits them best. However, it cannot be assumed that the students have all the necessary skills to use different materials available in the most effective way, or know how to choose between them (Hubbard 2009: 14). Even though the biggest strength of CALL is that it allows learners to become independent and work on their language skills anywhere and not only at school, they need to be guided in the process (Beatty 2003: 10). More attention should be devoted to overseeing what students do on the computer, and help them choose which content could help them become the most successful in terms of language learning (Hubbard 2009: 14). When this is done correctly, students can direct their own learning process, and learn critical skills while doing so (Hubbard 2009: 14).

## **1.2 Digital Game-Based Learning**

Digital Game-Based Learning (DGBL) is a rapidly growing field in which video games are used in education as well as in acquiring knowledge and skills (Eskelinen 2012: 6). The difference between CALL and DGBL is that in the case of the former, the computer is used to assist the student in the learning process, whereas in DGBL games are generally the main form of teaching. It is also important to discuss the difference between the games used in DGBL and traditional classroom games used in language lessons. When the terms ‘game’ or ‘gaming’ come up in the context of learning, they mostly refer to non-digital games. Board games, role-playing games and simulations are used in a great deal of language classrooms, often as oral exercises (Eskelinen 2012: 6). When it comes to DGBL, the term already suggests what kind of games are meant: according to Prensky’s (2001: 146) definition, a digital game in the context of learning is “any learning game on a computer or online”.

Researchers (Gee 2007; Purushotma 2005; Ranalli 2008; Squire 2005) have shown that commercial games – games that were originally created for entertainment purposes –

could also be used for learning and they often turn out to be more effective and interesting for students than games designed for teaching and learning. For example, a game like Full Spectrum Warrior is just an entertaining game when a regular consumer buys it, but when a soldier plays the professional training version, it immediately becomes a learning game (Gee 2007: 4). Such a comparison shows that good video games can incorporate good learning principles. Gee (2007) goes on to explain that games have several properties that could, in turn, aid students in the learning process and be better ‘teachers’ for the youngsters.

Video games lower the consequences of failure (Gee 2007: 6). Failure is something that students seem to be very afraid of for many reasons: firstly, the student might not want to answer the teacher’s question out of fear of being wrong; secondly, if the student does happen to be wrong, they might be afraid of the reaction of their peers. It is difficult to pinpoint the reason why students are afraid to make mistakes, but when playing a digital game, that fear seems to decrease dramatically or disappear altogether. In the game, nothing bad happens to the player when they fail: they can just start over from the last saved game and improve themselves until they pass the level or mission. Therefore, players are encouraged to take risks, to explore, and try new things (Gee 2007: 6). When the player gets to the end of the game, they can use their initial failures as ways to gain feedback about their progress and beat their opponent. This might help the student realize that failure can actually be a good thing and not just in the game but in the classroom environment, too.

Some digital games such as World of Warcraft offer the option of playing in teams. In these games, each player has a specific set of skills that they must work on and develop, but they also have to take into consideration their teammate’s abilities and skillset in order to work with them successfully and reach the goal that has been set for them in the game.

Gee (2007: 10) calls this ‘cross-functional understanding’ and adds that this is especially useful for teaching students how to work in teams and to accept other people: “people are affiliated by their commitment to a common endeavor”, making other factors such as race, class, or gender irrelevant. The desire to achieve their goal and be successful in the game is strong enough to make the players work with each other to find solutions to the problem they are facing in the game. This could also cross over into the classroom environment and group projects could become easier for the teacher as well as the students.

Gee (2007: 8) points out another advantage of games that is especially relevant and important in the context of foreign language learning. The researcher claims that people only really know the meaning of a word and can explain it themselves when they can associate it with something: an experience, an image, or an action. For that reason, it is necessary to give new vocabulary items situated meanings and not just verbal ones; what is more, teachers must also consider that some words have different situated meanings depending on the context (Gee 2007: 8). Using images and actions to learn new vocabulary items seems to only be done with beginners – children who are new to the target language often draw pictures to symbolize the new words they are learning – but not with more advanced learners. The reason why digital games are so useful for learning new vocabulary is because they “always situate the meanings of words in terms of the actions, images, and dialogues they relate to” (Gee 2007: 8). Furthermore, games also show how vocabulary items vary depending on the action, image, or dialogue, Gee believes teachers should do more of.

Similarly to CALL, DGBL should not completely replace using traditional classroom learning and language lessons, but complement it. Prensky (2001: 19) encourages teachers to take learning approaches that really engage students and promises



that although they might have to change their beliefs on language learning and teaching, it will be beneficial in the end when the right tools – games – are used.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

The idea of using video games as learning activities has always gone hand-in-hand with conventional approaches to teaching and learning. However, the games used in the classroom nowadays differ greatly from those that the previous generations played when they were students. With technology advancing so quickly, it is necessary for teachers to keep up with the trends and try to incorporate students' new interests into the learning environment. For that reason, more and more teachers have started to use technology in their lessons, and more specifically, different kinds of online and video games. The idea of incorporating both online and video games into language lessons has interested many researchers. The aim of this literature review is to give an overview of what has been done in the field so far – what methods have been used and what results these studies have shown. Since this type of study has not been conducted in Estonia as of writing this paper, no Estonian sources were used. This also indicates a gap in the research that the present thesis tries to fill with this case study.

Video game enthusiasts claim that children learn many important skills through gameplay, which means that computer games can make formal learning more pleasurable, motivating, and ultimately, effective (Mitchell & Savill-Smith 2004). This conclusion was drawn based on a review of the literature written on the use of video and computer games for learning by Alice Mitchell and Carol Savill-Smith in 2004. For example, simulation games such as Doom II or Sim City were said to provide learning contexts that were relevant and attractive to the learners. These types of games require active participation and if the context is appealing for the students, they are more likely to spend more time

playing the game which, in turn, “affords opportunities for the learning material to be integrated into cognitive structures, thereby aiding long-term retention” (Mitchell & Savill-Smith 2004: 26). Arnseth (2006) points out another compelling feature of gameplay: “both children and adolescents seem to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in accomplishing tasks that could often be very difficult and time consuming.” Therefore, it would be feasible to use games as a way of learning because it would not feel like work for the students: to them, it would seem as if they are playing a game for fun. Furthermore, another literature review (Kirriemuir & McFarlane 2004) on the topic of using games for learning revealed that teachers and parents are starting to recognize that computer games might be able to support the development of several valuable skills such as strategic thinking, communication, and group-decision making among others. When playing in groups, children take on the role of teachers: they offer advice, hints, and tips for the other students when necessary and communicate with each other in order to complete the tasks given to them in the game (Kirriemuir & McFarlane 2004: 19).

In 2005, Kurt Squire from the University of Wisconsin-Madison tested whether a simulation game could be used in the classroom in order to offer the students more variety in terms of how the material was served to them. In his study, Squire used the historical simulation game *Civilization III* in the classroom to teach his students history and geography. The game “packs 6000 years of history into one game” (Squire 2005) and includes hundreds of game concepts, has six different government types, and 13 terrain types. Squire mentions that, to his surprise, about one quarter of the students decided not to play the game and participated in reading groups instead. The learners explained their decision by saying that the game was too complicated and uninteresting for them. On the other hand, those students who were “not good in school” enjoyed playing the game and found it to be a “perfect” way to learn more about history. What is more, they went as far

as saying it was the highlight of their school year. Kurt Squire speculates that the students who liked playing the game felt this way because Civilization III provides a way of replaying history and consider hypothetical historical scenarios (Squire 2005); furthermore, he claims that because Civilization III is centered around planning, building, managing, and competing with other civilizations, it was suitable for those students who had an interest in these things (geography, mathematics, and managing virtual societies).

At the end of his study, Squire concluded that it is difficult to find a game suitable for everyone because people are different, and they have different preferences and interests. He also claims that games are not a “silver bullet” for education for that same reason: not all students will find the same game appealing or think that games should be used in the school environment in general. In his study, it was revealed that the successful students were worried that their “more traditional school-based expertise” was not valued or honored in the classroom, and did not see how playing a game would help them do well in exams or succeed in university (Squire 2005). This is an important point for educators to consider in the future when choosing a game for their students to play: according to Squire (2005), the real challenge is to change the cultures of the schools to be more focused on learning itself and not so much on the traditional learning methods of using only a textbook and workbook in class. Instead, teachers should be encouraged to use different methods and try introducing a variety of games, and see how students react to them.

When it comes to using games for language acquisition, one of the most recent studies conducted in this particular field comes from Jørgen Haug Theodorsen (2015), whose aim was to find out if commercial video games could be used in English language lessons to help the students acquire the language. He focused on 44 students ranging from 11 to 13 years of age in his study, which featured the game Black & White. Black & White is a simulation game in which the player is a young god who is able to perform tricks in the

game such as “making it rain, casting fireballs or summoning a flock of doves, controlling and training your pet creature, and caring (or not caring) for /.../ a tribal village.” (Theodorsen 2015: 12). The game was chosen because it includes a tutorial, meaning the participants of the study experienced the same situations in the game, which in turn made it possible to test the learners with a translation exercise on the same vocabulary items (14 nouns and 14 verbs) before and immediately after playing the game. The students played the game for an hour and a half straight, meaning there was minimal exposure to both the game and the English language during the playing session. The participants of the study also took turns watching a recorded gameplay session and playing the game themselves: those who played the game first watched a video of someone else playing, and vice versa. Despite the fact that they did not get to play the game for a long period of time (only 90 minutes), the students still managed to learn new vocabulary items, as pointed out in the study: the participants of the study translated 623 words in total and 80 of those were proven to be instances of learning (Theodorsen 2015: 18, 24). Theodorsen claims that if the students had played the game for several sessions instead of one long session and revised the vocabulary items regularly using conventional learning methods, the learning effects of the game would have been even greater.

He stresses that although his study had positive results, it cannot be said whether video games are actually more effective for language acquisition than reading or watching TV shows and movies because that question would require a more extensive study (Theodorsen 2015: 24). This seems to be a valid point because the participants of Theodorsen’s study played the game for an hour and a half, meaning they were only exposed to the vocabulary items for that period of time and the students did not experience the words more than once (Theodorsen 2015: 13). In Theodorsen’s own words, Black & White would have helped the learners acquire the words the researcher intended them to if

they had played the game several times instead of just one. Therefore, it could be said that being in a conventional English language lesson would help the students memorize new vocabulary items more quickly because the students would be exposed to them regularly.

Two researchers from the United States of America – Jim Ranalli and Ravi Purushotma – reached a similar conclusion to Theodorsen’s and claimed that exposing learners to the same vocabulary items repeatedly would grant even better results. The authors took on the task of using the popular simulation game *The Sims* for foreign language learning and teaching. Their main interest was to show that content designed only for entertainment purposes could actually serve as a “natural and context rich language-learning environment” while still being fun, and engaging students who previously had no interest in learning (Purushotma 2005: 80; Squire 2005).

Jim Ranalli (2008) describes how he used *The Sims* with 9 undergraduate level students with different L1 backgrounds to assess whether playing the game along with using supplementary materials (a vocabulary list consisting of 30 words, a dictionary, cultural notes, and vocabulary exercises) would help them improve their English language skills. Ranalli (2008: 443) was also interested in finding out the students’ opinions and reactions to playing a game instead of being in a conventional classroom environment. The game was chosen because, although the Sims (the virtual characters in the game) speak an undistinguishable language called Simlish, the players are exposed to a great deal of written English language in the instructions, the shopping section in the game and the activities that the virtual characters can do (“take a shower”, “get mail”, “go to work”). Ranalli asked the students to work in pairs based on their level of English, but made sure the members of the duo did not speak the same language as their mother tongue – this was done to ensure the participants would only communicate with one another in English (Ranalli 2008: 443). The participants of the study were tested before starting the

experiment, after each playing session, and at the end of the experiment to measure their progress.

Tests were created to evaluate the participants' existing English skills before playing *The Sims* and to see if they had acquired any of the 30 words on the vocabulary list the author expected they would learn after having played the game for four sessions (Ranalli 2008: 444-445). The analysis of the results of these vocabulary tests showed that playing the game and using supplementary materials did, indeed, contribute to English vocabulary acquisition. The students also mentioned that they enjoyed using the supplementary materials and they were helpful when playing the game. Overall, the students seemed to find playing *The Sims* a fun way to learn the English language, but some mentioned that they found the game quite challenging and would need more time to get used to it (Ranalli 2008: 449-450).

Ravi Purushotma (2005) shows that he reached the same result as Ranalli when using *The Sims* to teach himself German. Purushotma had to take a German course during his university studies and, while playing *The Sims*, he noticed that the vocabulary presented in the game contained several of the same words as the German homework he should have been doing instead. Purushotma quickly realized that the language of the game could be changed to German instead of English and he decided to try playing the game instead of doing his German homework. When learning new vocabulary items in his German class, Purushotma already knew the words from playing *The Sims*, and could recall the contexts in which the words were used (Purushotma 2005: 80). Both Ranalli's students and Purushotma's personal experience prove that playing a simulation game such as *The Sims* in which the players encounter real-life situations and everyday vocabulary is, indeed, a beneficial tool for acquiring a foreign language as it helps students remember not only the vocabulary items, but the contexts associated with them as well as the animations

used in the game itself (Purushotma 2005: 80). The results of Squire's study support this claim, showing that some students found Civilization III a very useful and interesting tool for playing through history instead of just reading about it (Squire 2005) because it helped them realize why some events in history happened the way they did through replaying different scenarios and managing communities. All three authors agree that commercially produced simulation games can indeed help students improve their second language vocabulary and expand their knowledge in other areas (for example, history in the case of Squire's study). It is fun for students and creates a stress-free learning environment. However, in order to use games successfully in lessons, students need to be guided and supported in the process, and the instructor needs to make sure the game is relevant to the students and interests them as well (Ranalli 2008: 441, 453; Purushotma 2005: 86; Squire 2005).

Satu Eskelinen (2012) also looked into how video games can be used for foreign language acquisition and attempted to determine their effectiveness, but from a different perspective. Eskelinen (2012) conducted her study using a game called the Kingdom of Loathing, which is a free online role-playing game and its main language is English. The "[the game was mainly chosen] based on the extent of the linguistic content" (Eskelinen 2012: 13) as the game itself is mostly text-based with illustrations; the characters in the game are stick figures that appear to have been drawn by hand.

Differently from most research done in this field, the purpose of Eskelinen's study was not to measure whether the students acquired any new vocabulary items through playing the game, but to explore how video games could be used in language teaching in general. For that reason, the researcher looked at the reactions of the participants of her study in an attempt to draw more attention to the learner perspective. Furthermore, because video games are considered to be mainly informal (Eskelinen 2012: 13) and the

conventional classroom situation formal, the author also tried to find a bridge between the learning environments. The participants of Eskelinen's experiment were two male high school students who volunteered to take part in the study based on the main requirements: they had both studied English before, but had not played the game Kingdom of Loathing. The students played the game for two full hours at a time, filled out a questionnaire before and after playing the game, and were later interviewed. In the interview, both participants mentioned that the game could mostly be used to teach new vocabulary, and perhaps even grammar, with one student stating he noticed more complex sentence structures in the game than those he had encountered in the classroom (Eskelinen 2012: 19-20). Both students agreed that although the game could be used to teach some English language skills, it should not completely replace teaching and learning in a classroom environment; what is more, one participant thought that games should not be used too often because "their novelty value would be lost" and variety in the lessons is more important (Eskelinen 2012: 20).

Another Finnish researcher, Olli Uusikoski's (2011), research had similar results. He considered the students' personal opinions on playing video games while also exploring the influence of playing games on the learners' English grades, meaning that if the student were good at the language, this would also show in their grades. Uusikoski conducted a study in 2011 which aimed to determine whether there was a connection between playing video games and having good English grades among Finnish high school students, and explore the reasons for that connection (Uusikoski 2011: 6). To do this, he conducted a survey which consisted of 20 questions among 495 high school students from Southern Finland aged 16-20. The results of Uusikoski's survey showed that the students who played a lot of video games had significantly higher grades in their English class than those who did not play games in their spare time. The author also found a connection



between the types of games that were considered to be the most instructive language-wise: role-playing and simulation games (Uuskoski 2011: 56).

It was also revealed that the learners themselves noticed the difference: Uuskoski explicitly states that “out of the very active gamers who play more than 15 hours a week, 89% felt that gaming has improved their English skills” (Uuskoski 2011: 56). Furthermore, the students found that the language skills that had developed the most by playing video games were understanding English words, followed by listening and reading. Such a result does not come as a surprise because in a great deal of online and video games, the player does not need to produce the language – they only need receptive skills such as reading and listening, which in turn would help the player memorize certain vocabulary items as well. However, Uuskoski also claims that the results of his study do not indicate that playing a lot of video games always results in having higher grades in English, “but it is certainly one explanation” (Uuskoski 2011: 57). The claims cannot be stronger because there is not enough research on the topic. Therefore, Uuskoski does not claim that learning in a regular classroom environment is not useful, but stresses that educators should take the idea of using games in their classrooms more seriously (Uuskoski 2011: 58), and perhaps combine the two:

Teachers should not only give their students the occasional book reading assignment, but also smaller reading, watching, listening and playing assignments. Students should be allowed to engage in the extramural English [the English learners come in contact with outside of the classroom] activity of their choice and they should be given more credit for their extramural English activities. (Uuskoski 2011: 58)

Face-to-face lessons and learning the English language online were compared in Florence Wai-Man Yip’s research paper, published in 2003. In the study, two websites meant for learning English vocabulary (The Professional Word Web and The University Word Web) were chosen, both of which give users the option of learning the vocabulary items by either playing games or doing different exercises (Yip 2003: 25-34). The participants of the study were 100 engineering students aged 18-20 who spoke Chinese as

their mother tongue, and English as their first foreign language. The students were divided into two groups – the experimental group containing 54 students and the control group containing 46 students – with both groups studying the same vocabulary items. The only difference was that the control group did it in face-to-face lessons and the experimental group online by playing vocabulary games. All 100 participants were tested on the same vocabulary items twice: before and after starting the experiment. The control group scored an average of 7.89 out of 15 in the pre-test, while the experimental group's score was 8.00 (Yip 2003: 59). According to Yip, the difference in their score is quite small and therefore not important, and stresses the results of the post-test instead. In the post-test, the control group and experimental group scored an average of 8.59 and 11.76, respectively (Yip 2003: 59). This suggests that the students who learned the English words via online vocabulary games did significantly better on the post-test than those who learned the words in face-to-face lessons.

Yip conducted a survey among the 100 engineering students to assess their opinions on playing online vocabulary games instead of participating in face-to-face lessons, and the students seemed to prefer the former: “/.../ they generally think positively of the online vocabulary games as a learning tool”, with 68% of the participants saying they would rather choose online games than being in a regular classroom environment (Yip 2003: 65-66). However, Yip also mentions that although most students preferred online games to face-to-face lessons, those who chose to participate in conventional English lessons said they were not motivated by the games on the website due to the lack of interaction (Yip 2003: 68-69). Therefore, it could be concluded that multiplayer games might be more suitable for acquiring new vocabulary items because the players need to communicate with others and receive as well as produce the language.

Several researchers agree that students need extra guidance and attention when working with online games in the classroom – otherwise they will completely lose interest in both the game itself and its educational value, as pointed out by Yip (2003), Squire (2005), and Ranalli (2008). The reason for the lack of motivation could also be the fact that the games are far too simplistic or too difficult (Arnseth 2006; Yip 2003; Squire 2005). Yi-Ju Chen and Shu C. Yang's study on Advanced Joint English Teaching (an Internet English teaching program focusing on Taiwanese students) revealed that the participants were not sure how such a program could help them learn the English language and, therefore, gave mixed feedback. Some students thought that it was an enjoyable and innovative way of learning, but required a lot more effort than participating in face-to-face English lessons and doing conventional vocabulary and grammar exercises on their part. According to the authors, those students who were not very interested in learning English on the Internet needed more help from the instructor (Chen & Yang 2007). The idea of the game having to be interesting and relevant to the student supports Squire's claim (2005) that if the students are not interested and motivated to play the game due to the content, it is highly likely that they will go back to studying from the textbook. For that reason, it is important for educators to spend time on finding a game that would be relevant to the students in terms of their age and interests.

It seems that in the studies, teachers needed to use different techniques to motivate their students, such as explaining how online learning differs from traditional classroom lessons, and why they are learning on the Internet in the first place. Students are not used to using online games in the classroom because teachers do not let students play them often enough (Chen & Yang 2007). Teachers have their reservations. For example, the teachers in Yip's study (2003) said that although vocabulary games are fun and useful, they need to be improved for the teachers to use them more frequently. For that reason, teachers only

tend to use games to attract students' attention and catch their interest, because games are not considered to be appropriate for the learners' level of English: they are either too simple or too difficult for students, and there is not enough variety to suit different levels of proficiency. In fact, the teachers in Yip's study called the vocabulary games that they had used "short-term appetizers" because although students seemed to be interested in the games in class, they were unsure if they would keep playing them after school when asked about it (Yip 2003: 73-74). For that reason, using games created specifically for language learning might not be the best idea: perhaps it would be more effective to use a commercial game that the students already enjoy. This would mean that the students would be more interested in the storyline and tasks of the game, and would therefore spend more time playing and being exposed to the target language outside of the classroom context as well.

However, choosing a game that is suitable for youngsters is very difficult because not everyone will be interested in the same thing. As could be seen from the results of Kurt Squire's study (2005), some students gave up playing the game and returned to more traditional ways of learning because they were not interested in the game, as it was too complicated. The other issue is the nature of the games themselves. Julie Sykes and Jonathon Reinhardt (2012) claim that while not all games possess high-quality narratives, the ones that do have the potential to create productive language learning environments if students understand that learning the target language is necessary for playing the desirable game. The keyword here is "desirable", but finding a game suitable for everyone can be difficult. For the present case study, Sykes and Reinhardt's advice will be taken and a game that has a high-quality narrative will be chosen – a multiplayer adventure game where students need to complete tasks in a virtual world and communicate with other players in the process.

Although the studies carried out so far in the field of using online games for English language acquisition had overall positive results and some studies had overall positive results, they were conducted abroad, meaning that the results documented in those research papers might not be the same in the context of Estonia. Using online games in the classroom for English language acquisition is a topic that is yet to be researched in Estonia; the closest country where this has been done is Finland (Satu Eskelinen 2012, Olli Uusikoski 2011). Overall, it seems that most Estonian English teachers the author of this thesis has encountered have the same opinion on games in the classroom as pointed out by Arnseth (2006). He claims that those who are skeptical of using video and online games suggest that computer games will shift people's focus away from more rewarding activities, for example reading and writing, or simply spending time outdoors.

As seen from the examples provided in this thesis, the idea of using video and online games for foreign language acquisition is becoming more widely accepted. This means that, indeed, educators must keep up with the trends and the advancements of technology in order to make lessons fun and interesting for their students. Using games is a good way to do that, but as some teachers have pointed out (Yip 2003), several improvements need to be made before they can be used more frequently. Moreover, in order to achieve the best results, it is very important to pick a game that is both beneficial for students' language skills and also sparks their interest so that they would be motivated to play it regularly.

This literature review has led to the conclusion that the most suitable games for providing fun and captive ways for language acquisition might be commercial games instead of games designed specifically for the purpose of learning a foreign language. The language of the game must be appropriate for students' level of proficiency in the target language while also offering ways for students to receive and produce the language. For

that reason, multiplayer games might work best: the players must understand the language in order to advance in the game but also be able to produce the language to communicate with other players from around the world; furthermore, multiplayer games often have a storyline that will capture the attention and interest of the players, making them spending more time playing the game and, in turn, being exposed to the language. In order for the game to aid the students in the learning process, it should be played more than once; instead, there should be variety in the lessons and playing the game could be alternated with traditional classroom learning (Eskelinen 2012: 20; Theodorsen 2015: 13; Uusikoski 2011: 58).

## CHAPTER II

### 2.1 RuneScape

RuneScape is a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), meaning that thousands of people from all over the world can play in the game's virtual world simultaneously. Released in January 2001, the game is recognized by Guinness World Records as "the world's most popular free-to-play MMORPG", with fans of the game having played it for 443 billion minutes as of July 2013 (Guinness World Records 2013). On the RuneScape website, the number of accounts created as of April 2017 is 253,414,126 but it is uncertain how many of these accounts are actually active (RuneScape 2017). It is speculated that generally, there are about 100,000 people playing the game at once at any given time.

RuneScape was created by Jagex, a games studio based in the United Kingdom. Over the years, the company has improved and updated the game a number of times, always keeping the players' opinions in mind. Every decision that affects how the game evolves is made in collaboration with the community (Jagex 2017). Because of this policy, there are currently two versions of the game available online: RuneScape 3 and RuneScape Classic. The latter is the very first version of RuneScape, which was originally released in 2001. RuneScape Classic is not as advanced graphically as RuneScape 3 in terms of the overall look of the game and the number of activities the players can do are limited. For example, there are 50 quests and 18 skills that the players can work on, while RuneScape 3, which was released in 2013, offers over 250 quests and 27 skills (Jagex 2017). Some of the skills that can be trained in both games are mining, fishing, woodcutting, cooking, and crafting. For this thesis, RuneScape 3 was chosen due to the fact that it is more advanced.

The game is set in a medieval fantasy land called Gielinor, which is divided into kingdoms, regions, and cities. The players of the game are able to travel to the different

places using a number of methods: for example, they can walk to their desired destination, cast spells, teleport, or go on a ship. New monsters, resources, and tasks wait for the players in each new location. Completing different tasks or quests, as they are called in the game, is essentially the main idea of the game and helps the player advance and improve his or her character by building different skills. When creating an account, players are instructed to create a character that represents them in the game. It is possible to create either a man or a woman and almost everything about their appearance is customizable from the character's hairstyle and color to the type of shoes that they wear.

While the game does follow a clear storyline, the players are given the option to customize their RuneScape experience. The game starts with a tutorial that teaches the basics of the game – how to move around, attack enemies and protect oneself, and complete quests from start to finish. This was the main reason why RuneScape was chosen for this study as most of the vocabulary items used in the pre- and post-tests were taken from the tutorial that every student had to play through to ensure they were all exposed to the same vocabulary items. However, as the game progresses, the player can choose their own path – he/she can become either a quester, a warrior, or an artisan – and complete quests that are directly related to their choice in the order that the player wants. In addition to completing different quests, the players must also catch and cook their own food to ensure their character has enough energy to move around and complete the assignments given to them in the game.

Because RuneScape is set in a medieval land and revolves around completing quests, engaging in combat and taking care of oneself by catching and cooking food, the vocabulary found in the game reflects that as well. Most of the vocabulary items present in the game are related to weapons and the materials used to make them, names of animals and fish, crops, skills, and clothing items that players receive throughout the game. In



order to advance in the game, players must know these words or at least have a general idea of what they mean.

## **2.2 Methodology**

The aim of the case study was to find out whether an online game designed for entertainment purposes – RuneScape – could be used to teach and learn the English language. The idea for this type of study is a combination of Satu Eskelinen’s (2012) and Jim Ranalli’s (2008) work. Both researchers explored the idea of using a game instead of teaching students in a conventional classroom environment: Satu Eskelinen chose an online game called Kingdom of Loathing and Jim Ranalli the popular simulation game The Sims. While Eskelinen focused mostly on the students’ experience and opinions when playing a game to improve their English, Ranalli looked at the language learning aspect of playing in greater detail and tested the students before and after the playing sessions to evaluate their progress. The present study tests the students similarly to Ranalli’s work, but interviews with the students were also conducted to find out what they thought about playing commercial games during the lesson and whether they thought they had learned any of the vocabulary items they were tested on. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does playing a game during a language lesson help improve the students’ English language skills?
2. In what ways can the teacher evaluate the students’ progress in game-based language learning?
3. What do the students think about playing an online game instead of being in a conventional classroom environment?

To answer these questions, a case study was conducted among 14 11<sup>th</sup> grade students of Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium. The number of students in the language group is 15, but one student's results were excluded from the study because he was absent during the pre-test and missed two playing sessions, which means that the results of the student's pre-test could not be compared to anything and since the student missed half of the playing sessions the results could not be compared to those of the students who were exposed to the vocabulary items in the game for a longer period of time.

That particular group of students was chosen because the author of this study is their teacher, meaning a trusting relationship with the students had been established and the learners felt comfortable with the experiment. Furthermore, because the game includes making weapons, fighting other characters in the game and killing animals for food, the participants had to be old enough for the content of the game and understand that playing RuneScape does not mean that the behavior displayed in the game should be translated into real life. The number of boys and girls in the group was also as even as it could be in a group of 15 people: there were 7 boys and 8 girls. Although the results of the study are not divided by gender, opinions about the game were collected during the interviews because RuneScape is not thought of as a game suitable for girls.

The participants of the study played the MMORPG RuneScape once a week for four weeks during the month of April. The playing sessions took place during one of the three language lessons each week and the students generally played for about 50 minutes at a time (the length of the lessons at Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium is 75 minutes). The first playing session was the longest because most of the students in the group had never played the game before, but had only heard of it. The last playing session was cut short due to problems with the Internet connection in the building and because of that, the students could play for about 20 minutes instead of 50. There were five students in the group – two

girls and three boys – who had played the game prior to the experiment, but had not done so in the past year. For that reason, the author of the study and the students who had played the game before explained the essence of the game and what was required of the students to play it during the first session. Then, the participants were instructed on how to create an account and their character to start playing. Those students who had played before and already had existing RuneScape accounts were also asked to create new accounts and start over because the game includes a tutorial that the researcher wanted everyone to play through. The tutorial includes several of the vocabulary items that were in the pre- and post-tests.

The pre-test was conducted before the first playing session and included 40 vocabulary items, 6 of which were verbs and 34 nouns (Appendix 1). The vocabulary items on the list were those that occur in the game more than once, meaning that the students would be more likely to remember a word they saw several times and had to interact with as well. For example, the word ‘log’ was on the list because the players needed to collect logs to make a fire to cook food over. The players’ characters get tired and/or hungry often and in order to complete more quests and advance in the game, they needed to be re-energized. Therefore, the word appeared in the game more than once and the players had to figure out its meaning to interact with it. The post-test consisted of the same vocabulary items as the pre-test and was used to measure the students’ progress after having played the game for some time. In the tests, the students had to translate the English vocabulary items into Estonian. They were instructed not to consult the people sitting next to them or look up any of the words online. If they did not know the meaning of a word, they were told not to write anything. There was no time limit when taking the test; the students could take as much time as they needed. The tests were later compared.

One week after taking the post-test, the students were interviewed in groups. 10 students participated in the interviews as the rest of the group were absent. Out of the 10 participants, 3 were boys and 7 were girls. The students were interviewed in two groups of four and one pair. The interview consisted of 20 questions that were split into three categories: the students' background in playing online and video games, their experience of using games in the context of learning and teaching, and their opinion of RuneScape in general and whether they thought they acquired any of the vocabulary items in the pre- and post-tests. The interviews were later transcribed and analyzed.

### **2.3 Results of the Vocabulary Tests**

In order to determine the number of words the students had acquired during the playing sessions, the students' pre- and post-tests were examined. The words they had translated were counted and checked separately to make certain that the translations were correct. Several students had attempted to translate most of the words but were unsuccessful as some Estonian equivalents of the English words they had written down were incorrect. For the purpose of this thesis, only the words that the students had translated correctly were counted. There were a few students who did not know the literal translations of some English words either in the pre- or post-test and instead tried to explain them in their own words.

If their explanation was understandable, the student's translation was considered correct as it indicated they had understood the meaning of the English vocabulary item. For example, Student 10 (marked as S10) did not know the literal Estonian translation for the word 'gangplank' and instead wrote "a bridge that people can use to board a ship". This explanation was marked correct even though the student could not recall the Estonian word *laevasild* because the Estonian term for 'gangplank' could be derived from the students'

explanation. In contrast, S1 translated the word ‘inventory’ as “there is a backpack in the game that you can put food, weapons or other possessions into and keep on you at all times”. Indeed, the player’s inventory is displayed as a backpack in the game, but the word ‘inventory’ does not translate to ‘backpack’ in Estonian. The student showed that they had recognized and remembered the vocabulary item from the game but not actually acquired it because they were unable to provide the Estonian equivalent of the word. S1 was not given a point for that translation. In the interviews that were conducted a week after the last playing session, S1 mentioned that a lot of the words on the test were familiar from the game, but they did not know the Estonian equivalents. Furthermore, it had been a while since they had last played RuneScape.

Following the same approach, every students’ pre- and post-tests were checked. The percentage of the words translated correctly was calculated and marked on the tests along with the number of words. To calculate the percentage of the words the students knew in the pre- and post-tests, the number of words that they had translated correctly were counted and divided by the total number of vocabulary items on the list, which was 40. Then, the resulting number was multiplied by 100 to convert it into percentages. The percentages in each students’ pre- and post-tests were later compared.

The table below (Table 1) illustrates the results of the pre-test that the students took before the first playing session at the beginning of April 2017. Both the number and percentage of the words the students knew before playing RuneScape are shown:

	Total Number of Words Translated Correctly in the Pre-Test (number of words)	Total Percentage of Words Translated Correctly in the Pre-Test (%)
S1	14/40	35
S2	29/40	73
S3	20/40	50
S4	22/40	55
S5	24/40	60
S6	8/40	20
S7	31/40	78

S8	11/40	28
S9	10/40	25
S10	7/40	18
S11	4/40	10
S12	10/40	25
S13	3/40	8
S14	8/40	20

Table 1. Results of the pre-test

It can be seen from the table that three of the students (S2, S5, and S7) who had played RuneScape prior to participating in the experiment performed significantly better on the pre-test than those who were completely new to the game and had never encountered the vocabulary items before. S7, who had played the game for several years before participating in this study, achieved a score of 78%, which was the best result of the pre-test. The researcher has seen from conducting English language lessons with the group that these three students have a better command of the English language and a much wider vocabulary than the rest of the class, seeming to confirm the results of Olli Uusikoski's (2011: 56) study in which he claimed that students who play video or online games regularly have significantly better English skills. However, S1 and S3, the girls who had played the game before for a long period of time, did not do so well on the test as the other students who were familiar with RuneScape. The reason for these differences in the results could come from the fact that S1 and S3 had not played the game in a long time and had not been as invested in the game as the other students when they originally played it.

S4, who can be considered the strongest student in the group, had not played RuneScape before, but despite that performed better on the test than S3 who had some experience with RuneScape, translating two more words correctly. S11 and S13, the weakest students of the language group, did not know most of the words in the test. S11 had translated 10 words from the list but only four of those were correct, resulting in only 8% of the words being translated correctly. Both S11 and S13 have problems learning new vocabulary items and often struggle to find the right words they want to use to express

themselves during speaking activities in the classroom. Both participants found the pre-test very difficult and expressed their frustration when trying to translate the vocabulary items.

Table 2 shows the results of pre-test compared to the post-test, which was conducted immediately after the last playing session at the end of April 2017. As was mentioned above, the vocabulary items presented in the test were the same as in the pre-test to measure the participants' progress. Again, the students were told not to consult their classmates or use online dictionaries if they did not know the Estonian equivalent to the vocabulary items. The participants could take as much time as they needed to translate as many words as they could. The tests were later checked using the same method as with the pre-tests, meaning the student had to indicate they knew what the English vocabulary item meant in Estonian by either providing the literal translation or explaining the word clearly enough for the researcher to understand it if the participant could not recall the Estonian word (as was the case with the word 'gangplank' for S10 in the pre-test). The percentages of the words the students had acquired after playing RuneScape as well as the number of words are shown in the table below:

	Total Number of Words Translated Correctly in the Pre-Test (number of words)	Total Number of Words Translated Correctly in the Post-Test (number of words)
S1	14/40 (35%)	18/40 (45%)
S2	29/40 (73%)	34/40 (85%)
S3	20/40 (50%)	20/40 (50%)
S4	22/40 (55%)	30/40 (75%)
S5	24/40 (60%)	35/40 (88%)
S6	8/40 (20%)	16/40 (40%)
S7	31/40 (78%)	30/40 (75%)
S8	11/40 (28%)	18/40 (45%)
S9	10/40 (25%)	16/40 (40%)
S10	7/40 (18%)	9/40 (23%)
S11	4/40 (10%)	7/40 (18%)
S12	10/40 (25%)	20/40 (50%)
S13	3/40 (8%)	11/40 (28%)
S14	8/40 (20%)	18/40 (45%)

Table 2. Results of the pre-test compared to the post-test

Almost all participants performed better in the post-test. The results of the test showed that even those students who had experience in playing the game (S1, S2, S3, S5, and S7) acquired several new vocabulary items. For example, S2 knew the meanings of 29 words in the pre-test and acquired 5 new words during the playing sessions, as their score was 34 out of 40. S5 translated 11 more words correctly in the post-test than in the pre-test, making the score of the participant's post-test 35 out of 40. However, two of the students who had played RuneScape before did not do so well in the test as the other three students who were also familiar with the game. S7, who had the highest score in both tests with 31 words translated correctly in the pre-test translated one less word in the post-test, resulting in a score of 75% compared to the 78% score of the pre-test. The reason for this is unclear; however, it can be speculated that the student simply could not recall the Estonian equivalent at the time of taking the post-test as the pre-test indicated they did indeed know the word and were able to translate it correctly. S3, who had also played RuneScape before, was able to provide the Estonian equivalent for 20 words in both the pre- and post-test, leading to the conclusion that they did not acquire any new vocabulary items during the playing sessions as they translated the exact same words in both tests.

S10 and S11, who knew 7 and 4 words in the pre-test, respectively, successfully translated a few more words – 2 for S10 and 3 for S11. In addition to being the least advanced students in the group and having pre-existing problems with vocabulary acquisition, the participants seemed to have trouble understanding the game and frequently asked for help. Because of this, the students might not have advanced in the game as quickly as the other youngsters in the group, which in turn meant that they simply were not exposed to most of the vocabulary items that were in the tests. Furthermore, the fact that the game was difficult for S10 and S11 could have decreased their motivation to keep playing, and they were not as interested in completing the quests and advancing in the



game. It was also indicated in previous studies (Arnseth 2006; Yip 2003; Squire 2005) that if the game is unsuitable for the students, they are highly likely to become unmotivated and lose interest, meaning that no learning can take place. This could have been the case here, as well.

The strongest student in the group – S4 – translated 8 more words in the post-test than at the beginning of the experiment, making the total number of words translated 30 compared to 22 in the pre-test. The comparison of the pre- and post-tests shows that while all participants acquired new vocabulary items, those students who were interested in playing the game (for example, S4, S5, and S18) were able to translate a significantly higher number of English words compared to those who found the game to be difficult and needed constant attention and help from the researcher as well as the other participants (S11, S13).

Often, the students who had become interested in RuneScape wanted to keep playing after the indicated time for completing the necessary assignments and advancing in the game. For the purpose of this case study, this was not allowed as all participants had to play the game for the same amount of time for the results to be comparable. Arnseth (2006) claims that people are often willing to invest a lot of time into something that might seem very difficult if they are interested and motivated enough, and this seems to have been the case with RuneScape for the aforementioned students (S4, S5, S18). The results of the post-test showed that the students who wanted to keep playing the game even after the sessions were able to translate more English vocabulary items than those who closed the game when the time for playing was over. The difference in the participants' motivation to play is similar to the findings of Squire's (2005) study in which he states that choosing the right game is incredibly important as it greatly affects the students' motivation and willingness to spend their time playing it. The more interested the learners

are in the chosen game, the more likely they are to keep playing and being exposed to the target language.

## **2.4 Results of the Interviews**

The students were interviewed in groups to encourage discussion among the youngsters some of whom can be quite short-spoken. Additionally, the researcher wanted to make sure everyone could express their opinion and answer the questions honestly. The interview consisted of 20 questions that were divided into three categories (Appendix 2).

Firstly, the interviewer asked each student to talk about their background in playing games: whether they played any games in their spare time or not and the reasons for playing (or not playing). They were also asked to elaborate on the types of games they liked to play, whether they usually played games alone or with other people, and how often they did it. Secondly, the participants of the study were encouraged to talk about their experience with using both commercial video and online games in the classroom: whether they thought it would benefit the learning process in any way and what they thought of their teachers' attitudes towards games. Furthermore, the students were also asked to express their opinions on using commercial games for teaching and learning not just foreign languages but other subjects as well. Finally, the researcher wanted to know what the students had thought of RuneScape as a game and as a language learning tool, and whether the students felt that they had acquired new English vocabulary items during the experiment.

All but three of the ten respondents did not play any video games in their spare time. The students who did, generally played once a week or once a month; only one respondent said that they played games for at least an hour every day (R5). The main reasons for playing games so infrequently or not at all were lack of free time due to the

heavy workload at school or simply lack of interest. Social gaming was generally preferred over playing alone, with many respondents mentioning games such as Just Dance that can be played with friends or family members (R2, R6). R5 and R3 generally played online multiplayer versions of popular games such as Grand Theft Auto IV with their friends; additionally, a few times a month they meet up with their friends to play different multiplayer games together in the same room (Minecraft, League of Legends).

Because Minecraft and League of Legends are both MMORPGs, R3 and R5 had pre-existing knowledge of these types of games; furthermore, both were familiar with RuneScape as they had played RuneScape Classic (the original version of the game which was released in 2001) some years ago. The reason they no longer play RuneScape was that it was difficult to keep up with the constant updates and changes made to the game. The rest of the interviewees had heard of the MMORPG genre, but had never played such games themselves. R5, R9, and R10 had all previously played RuneScape when they were “too young to understand what was going on” – for example, R5 claimed to have been introduced to the game at the age of six, which is too early considering the content of the game. The respondents agreed that RuneScape would be suitable for teenagers, but “definitely not for children” due to the content of the game – the players are instructed to fight monsters and other players, catch and cook their own food, and make weapons among other things. The average age the participants thought was suitable to start playing RuneScape was 14 or 15.

Those participants who had no previous experience playing RuneScape before were of the opinion that the game seemed exciting in the beginning although it was difficult to “understand how the whole thing works” (R7). The difficulty level of the game was said to be medium; those who had played before said there was “nothing difficult about it” (R3, R5, R10) while those who had no previous experience said it took some time to get used to

the game and start exploring the different regions. The aspect that made playing the game difficult was the language, with several respondents mentioning they did not understand many of the words at first which, in turn, made it difficult to grasp the point of the game; R1 and R8 both said they “just did not know where exactly to go when instructed to travel somewhere.” To contrast, those who had played before said the most difficult part of the game was deciding which skill to develop as the game offers a wide variety to choose from (R3, R5, R9, R10).

Everyone agreed that the fact that the game includes a tutorial helped teach the basics of the game. Furthermore, playing in groups was also very helpful for the participants because they could ask each other advice and discuss some vocabulary items they did not know, but were necessary to advance in the game – several respondents mentioned that if they had played alone, they “would not have got that far in the game” (R1, R3, R6, R7, R8). The participants of Ranalli’s (2008: 450) study also mentioned working with other students as one of the aspects they liked about playing a commercial game for vocabulary acquisition. Similarly to the suggestion made by Kirriemuir & McFarlane (2004), the students took on the role of teachers when playing together, offering each other advice and hints to complete the tasks given to them in the game.

Overall, it seemed that the boys in the language group were more interested in RuneScape: they were willing to invest more time in playing it and ultimately, got further in the game than those who had no experience with RuneScape. Those respondents who said they found the game a bit complicated and even playing through the tutorial took “too long” were girls. Although the aim of this study is not to compare the results by gender, it seems that RuneScape might not be the best game for mixed-gender classrooms. Similarly to Yip’s (2003) findings, the two weakest students of the language group who mentioned they were unsure if learning could actually take place through commercial games were also

the ones who had problems understanding the game, and needed constant help and support from the instructor as well as their classmates.

When it came to using games in subjects other than English, the respondents said they had not used games as a learning tool before. The general opinion seemed to be that “if the game fits into the context of what is discussed in the lessons, then it might be a good idea” (R1, R6, R8). All year 11 students of Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium must either write a research paper or create a piece of art, literature, or music depending on what the student wants to do, and present it in the second half of the academic year. R1 mentioned that they knew of a person who, a few years ago, “built a house in Minecraft and presented that as his project, and the teachers were thrilled”. Overall, the students thought that the teachers’ attitudes towards using commercial games as learning tools were difficult to evaluate because the topic had not come up in class. R2 and R6 speculated that it might be because the teachers simply had not thought of the idea of incorporating games into their lessons. R9 and R10 agreed that teachers would probably not be against the idea if they were introduced to a game that might be worth trying out in the classroom environment, which supports Chen & Yang’s 2007 study in which teachers said they do not use video games in the classroom because finding games that fit the topic of the lesson is very difficult.

The respondents thought that the advantages of games over traditional materials such as textbooks and workbooks were that games are more fun and motivating for the students in addition to helping develop other skills such as quick problem-solving, working with others, and critical thinking (R1, R2, R4, R6), something that was also mentioned in Kirriemuir & McFarlane’s (2004) literature review on the topic of using games for language learning. Similarly to Uusikoski’s suggestions (2011: 58), R1 mentioned that using different teaching tools should be encouraged in the classroom because “whenever

something new and unusual is used in the lesson, it automatically motivates the student and creates a wow-effect". R6 was of the opinion that games are better than workbooks and textbooks because the learner would not have to spend so much time reading the description of the task and "boring texts" because in games, "the instructions sort of come to the player with minimal effort on their part". R9 said they liked games because the player can try different things in a safe environment; for example, "when you die in a game, nothing happens and you can just keep trying until you successfully do whatever the game wants you to do." When it comes to multiplayer online games where the players can communicate with one another, R7 thought that the situation could teach the player how to deal with strangers on the Internet and that "not everyone can be trusted because you never know who is on the other side of the screen". For the respondents, the advantages of the game are therefore the safe environment that they create, the ability of playing both alone or in groups, freedom, and "not having to listen to dry theory" (R7, R8). Playing through the historical events instead of just reading about them was also mentioned by the participants of Squire's (2005) study when they were instructed to play Civilization III in their history lessons.

Similarly to the students who Eskelinen (2012) interviewed for her study, the respondents thought the biggest danger of using commercial games in conventional lessons was doing it too often. R2 thought that if the teacher asked the students to play a game in every single lesson, they would lose their novelty, and the learners' interest would quickly decrease; Eskelinen's students were of the same opinion and added that variety in the lessons is more important in order to keep the students motivated and interested. This opinion was also evident among the students interviewed for this study: everyone agreed that a combination of using games and traditional materials would be ideal because that way the two could be used to support the learning process better. Another disadvantage of

using games in the classroom environment that was mentioned in the students' responses was the fact that "the teacher cannot make sure whether the students are actually playing the game that they are supposed to, or just reading the news" (R2, R6). Furthermore, some respondents mentioned that spending too much time in front of a screen is not good for the eyes (R6, R7), and therefore should not be encouraged in schools.

In addition to learning foreign languages with the assistance of games, the respondents also thought that video games could educate the player on a number of topics. R3 mentioned *Bully* as an example, which is a video game where the player is a student at a boarding school and in addition to doing different activities outside of the school must also participate in the lessons by completing the exercises given to them by their 'teachers'. For example, the game tests the player's knowledge of American states, world capitals, and mathematics among many other things depending on the subject. In order to advance in the game, the player must pass these small tests and to do so, learn the material in the process. However, when it comes to language teaching, the general opinion was that games could mainly be used to teach new vocabulary items. Many mentioned the popular simulation game *The Sims* as a good "starting point" because it helped several of them to improve their English, especially when they were just starting to learn the language. Jim Ranalli (2008) had the same idea when he conducted a study in which he taught 9 undergraduate students basic English vocabulary using *The Sims*. Indeed, the game presents the learner with everyday vocabulary ("take a shower", "go to work", "do homework") that might be very useful for those who are not yet familiar with the language and are just starting out. R2 mentioned that playing *The Sims* at a young age is the main reason she is "a bit more advanced in English than others because it provided a good base".

In order to teach and learn grammar, the students said they would need to be presented with supplementary materials because "commercial games are not designed to

teach the player anything other than how to advance in the game” (R4, R10). When asked whether they would choose playing a game or doing workbook exercises for vocabulary acquisition, the students were unsure which one they would choose. R7 explained that most students are so used to only using traditional materials in their lessons such as textbooks, workbooks, and notebooks, making it difficult to “make the switch and actually be ready to learn something from a game”. Furthermore, one respondent said they “would probably not want to play a game in the classroom if they were forced to do so because then it would feel like something that must be done” (R4), meaning that it would not feel as fun and different for them anymore if they had to do it too often and on command – an idea that was also evident in Eskelinen’s study (2011: 20). Some students (R2, R4, R8) specified that it would be the case only when they were presented with a game that they did not enjoy playing.

Overall, the students seemed to like the idea of using games in the classroom but only when it fit the context of the lesson. The case study did indeed cause an unusual situation and disrupted the course of the program as the topics discussed in the language lessons were completely different from the content of the game – while the students were asked to play a game set in a medieval fantasy land in one lesson, they had to talk about friendship and long-term goals in the next. In this case, the game did not go with what was done in the lessons and that could have been one of the reasons why some students (especially the weakest students R7 and R8) struggled to see the point of playing such a game. What is more, the importance of having variety in the lessons was also stressed several times because doing the same thing for too long would get boring and demotivating for the students. These claims were also seen in the work of Eskelinen (2012: 20), Uusikoski (2011: 58), and Squire (2005). It is also crucial that teachers take their students’ interests and age into consideration when deciding on a game to use in the classroom: the



more interested the students are in the game, the more time they are willing to invest in playing it which, in turn, creates more opportunities for learning to occur. However, perhaps the most important aspect of all is the teacher's support: in order to use games in lessons successfully, the instructor needs to guide the students in the process and help them when they need it (Ranalli 2008: 441, 453; Purushotma 2005: 86; Squire 2005).

## Conclusion

The rapid development of technology has created a gap between young people and older generations – while the former are fluent in the language of technology, the latter are not and often struggle to understand gadgets such as smartphones or tablets. Some researchers (Dede 2005; Oblinger 2005) believe that skilled technology users are completely different from those who do not use technology regularly. However, according to Siibak (2009: 10-12), the main difference between the generations' Internet habits is the fact that people aged 65 and older are more reluctant to use social media than teenagers.

Because the number of these advanced technology users is higher among teenagers, educators are struggling to cater to these students and must familiarize themselves with the types of media the students consume and how they use the Internet in general. Education is said to be a key arena for radical change (Bennet & Maton 2010: 3) and for that reason, teachers are encouraged to use different Internet materials regularly in their lessons as most people in Estonia own and actively use either a desktop computer or a laptop (Sikkut 2012). Furthermore, the Internet gives teachers and students access to materials that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to find. When doing exercises online, students can work at their own pace and in return have complete control over the learning process. In general, using technology in the classroom makes learning and teaching more convenient (Hubbard 2009: 2) and brings variety into lessons where only conventional materials such as textbooks and workbooks are used.

However, in order to incorporate technology into lessons in a way that would spark the students' interest, it is crucial to find out what youngsters like to do on the Internet. The Kaiser Family Foundation (2010) conducted a study which revealed that 8- to 18-year-olds spend about an hour and a half on the computer every day and the most popular activity

was using social media sites. Playing games was a close second as the results showed that most participants of the study played games for an hour and 17 minutes.

Most games, both online and those meant for consoles, are in English and due to the small gaming market in Estonia, they are hardly ever translated into Estonian. For that reason, almost all games played by young people today are in English and they could be used as a new and engaging way for learning the English language outside of the classroom (Eskelinen 2012: 5). It would not feel like learning for the students because when the game is suitable for the students in terms of the content, language level, and their interests, they are more likely to invest more time into accomplishing tasks set up in the game that might be difficult or time consuming (Arnseth 2006). When they are interested in the game, they are willing to spend more time playing and being exposed to the target language.

The results of Yip's (2003: 73-74) study revealed that most teachers do not use games in the classroom because they do not find them to be suitable enough in terms of the content as well as the language level; most games designed for language learning were thought to be either too easy or too difficult, which is why they were only used as "short-term appetizers" as the games were unable to maintain the students' interest. Ranalli (2008: 449-450), who asked 9 undergraduate students to play *The Sims* to improve their English vocabulary, found that most participants liked using the game and found it to be a fun and engaging way to learn the language. However, those participants who said the game was quite challenging and boring did not perform so well on the vocabulary tests created by the researcher, meaning they did not acquire as many new vocabulary items as those who were interested in *The Sims* (Ranalli 2008: 451-452).

The purpose of this thesis was to find out whether a multiplayer online game could be used for English language acquisition, as Eskelinen's (2012) and Theodorsen's (2015)

work has suggested, and what the students thought of the idea of incorporating games into conventional lessons. To do this, a case study was conducted among 14 students aged 17-18 at Tartu Jaan Poska Gymnasium. The game chosen for the case study was RuneScape – the most popular MMORPG in the world. The game was chosen because it includes a tutorial and follows a clear storyline. Skyes and Jonathon (2012) and Uusikoski (2011: 56) claim that games that possess high-quality narratives work best for language acquisition if the students realize that learning the target language is necessary to advance in the game. In RuneScape, the students needed to complete quests in a medieval fantasy land and work on their character's skills. The vocabulary of the game is related to skill-building, cooking, and making weapons. The students played the game once a week for four weeks and were tested twice on the same vocabulary items – before the experiment and immediately after. In the tests, the students were given a list of 40 English vocabulary items and asked to translate them into Estonian. After the experiment, the students were interviewed in groups to find out what they thought of the game and whether they thought commercial games could be used for vocabulary acquisition.

The results of the vocabulary tests showed that almost all students were able to translate more vocabulary items in the post-test and therefore it could be said that they acquired new vocabulary items. However, two of the students who were familiar with RuneScape prior to participating in the experiment did not perform so well in the post-test as one of them translated one fewer word in the post-test, and the other translated exactly the same words in both tests meaning that no learning occurred. The two weakest students in the group could also translate more vocabulary items in the post-test, but needed extra guidance and attention from the instructor as well as their classmates in order to advance in the game. Because the vocabulary turned out to be too difficult for those particular students, they did not get that far in the game and were therefore not exposed to as many

words as some of the other participants of the study. It is highly likely the game was not suitable for them and did not match their interests. Squire (2005) mentioned that those students who do not find the game interesting are more likely to lose interest and stop playing altogether; in his own study, almost half of Squire's participants went back to learning from their textbook because they were simply not interested in the game.

Interviews conducted with the students showed that overall, the students liked the idea of using commercial games in lessons because, in their opinion, anything new and different would excite the learners and increase their motivation to participate actively. However, the youngsters said they could not comment on their teachers' attitudes towards using games in the classroom because none had been used with them before. Similarly to Yip's (2003) findings, the students were unsure whether there were commercial games on the market that would support learning chemistry or geography, for example. Everyone agreed that games could mostly be used to teach foreign languages, but only new vocabulary items and not grammar as games do not teach complex structures and the theoretical part would be missing. If given the choice to learn grammar from textbooks or games, the students preferred traditional materials, similarly to the participants of Squire's (2005) and Yip's (2003) studies – the students were simply not used to the idea of learning from games and some had trouble understanding the concept. Several participants mentioned that the game used in lessons should go with the topic and enhance the learning process; everyone agreed that it was not a good idea to only rely on either games or conventional learning materials, but there should instead be a combination of both. The interviewees in Eskelinen's (2012: 20) study had the same thoughts, adding that if games are used too often, they will likely lose their value in the students' eyes, and will not be as exciting and new anymore. This opinion was also evident in Uusikoski's study (2011: 58) in which the researcher encourages educators to be creative when compiling lessons and

credit learners for engaging in English activities outside of the classroom such as playing games or using the language to communicate with people online. When evaluating their own progress, the participants said they felt they had learned something new and that RuneScape could be used to teach vocabulary items but to students who already have basic knowledge of the language because the vocabulary of the game was considered to be rather complicated.

The results of the study suggest that the game RuneScape could be used for English vocabulary acquisition with the students who participated in the group. The results cannot be generalized as every game is different and so is the vocabulary in the games. Each student is unique, as well; the sample size for this case study was quite small – 14 students – and most of them seemed to have similar interests and an open mind to try new things which could be one of the reasons they performed well in the post-test. However, as mentioned by previous researchers (Ranalli 2008; Squire 2005; Yip 2003), it is very difficult to find a game that would be suitable for all students and fit their interests in a way that would keep them playing and being exposed to the language. It was evident in the study that those students who were not interested in the content of RuneScape did not acquire as many words as those who were invested in it and focused on advancing in the game. Further studies can be conducted using different games and their effects on language learning with a higher number of participants to compare the results. Furthermore, the students themselves could recommend games that they play regularly as they would be more familiar with the content and the vocabulary. The results also might have been different if the students had played the game more often than once a week – twice a week or perhaps every other day – to ensure each participant ‘noticed’ the tested vocabulary items in the game.

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## Appendix 1 – Vocabulary Test

Translate the following words and phrases into Estonian. If you do not know the meaning of a word or phrase, do not write anything.

1. To set off (*v*)
2. Mill (*n*)
3. Well (*n*)
4. Lever (*n*)
5. Log (*n*)
6. Minnow (*n*)
7. Crayfish (*n*)
8. Quarry (*n*)
9. Attic (*n*)
10. Ore (*n*)
11. Maggot (*n*)
12. Smithy (*n*)
13. Furnace (*n*)
14. To smelt (*v*)
15. Anvil (*n*)
16. Ghoul (*n*)
17. To stun (*v*)
18. Gangplank (*n*)
19. Cultist (*n*)
20. Backup (*n*)
21. Winch (*n*)
22. To confront (*v*)
23. To mine (*v*)
24. Scaffolding (*n*)
25. Lackey (*n*)
26. Warlock (*n*)
27. Quest (*n*)
28. Sewer (*n*)
29. Milestone (*n*)
30. Scout (*n*)
31. Cloak (*n*)
32. Finesse (*n*)
33. Scimitar (*n*)
34. Crop (*n*)
35. Loot (*n*)
36. Hatchet (*n*)
37. Merchant (*n*)
38. Inventory (*n*)
39. Gauntlet (*n*)
40. To keep hold of sth (*v*)

## Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

### Õpilase taust

1. Kas te mängite vabal ajal mängu? Milliseid (st mis tüüpi; konsooli- või arvutimängud, internetipõhised)? (Kui varem mängisite, aga enam mitte, siis miks?)
2. Kui tihti te mängu mängite?
3. Kas te mängite tavaliselt üksinda või teistega koos?
4. Kas te olite enne katses osalemist MMORPG tüüpi mängu mänginud?
5. Mis keeles need mängud on, mida te mängite?

### Mängud õppimise ja õpetamise kontekstis

1. Kas te olete varem mõne teise aine raames arvuti- või online-mängu mänginud (õppetöö raames)?
2. Milline on teiste aineõpetajate suhtumine tunnis mängude mängimisse?
3. Kas teie arvates on mängude kasutamine tunnis õigustatud? Miks/miks mitte?
4. Mis on mängude kasutamise head/halvad küljed?
5. Mis on mängude eelised nõ traditsiooniliste õppevahendite ees (õpikud, töövihikud)?
6. Mida on mängude kaudu võimalik õppida?
7. Kui te saaksite (keeletunnis) valida tunnitööna mängu mängimise või erinevate ülesannete lahendamise vahel, siis kumma kasuks te otsustaksite? Miks?

### RuneScape

1. Kas olite RuneScape'i varem mänginud? Kui ei, siis kas olite sellest kuulnud?
2. Milline oli teie esmamulje mängust?
3. Millisele vanuseastmele niisuguse sisuga mäng teie arvates sobib?
4. Kuidas mäng teile üldiselt tundus - oli see lihtne või keeruline? (Kas oleksite katse alguses mängu kohta rohkem selgitusi vajanud?)
5. Kas mäng oli teie jaoks keeleliselt raske?
6. Kui tihti pidite kaaslastelt abi küsima? (Kas teistega koos mängu mängimine oli kasulik, kui üksinda mängimine?)
7. Kas arvate, et õppisite mängu mängimisest midagi (sõnavara)? (Kui ei, siis mida oleks võinud teisiti teha, et te oleksite mängu abil uut sõnavara omandanud?)
8. Kas RuneScape on sobilik mäng keele omandamiseks? (Kui ei, siis milline mäng oleks sobilikum?)

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Elis Rodendau**

**Using RuneScape for Language Acquisition Purposes in an Upper Secondary EFL Classroom**

**Videomäng RuneScape'i kasutamine keele omandamiseks keskkooli inglise keele tunnis**

Magistritöö

2017

Lehekülgede arv: 61

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev magistritöö uurib kaubandusliku veebimängu kasutamise mõju keskkooliõpilaste inglise keele oskustele, kasutades selleks veebipõhist rollimängu RuneScape. Noored veedavad suure osa enda ajast veebimänge mängides ning pedagooge julgustatakse internetti tundides kasutama sobitutes õpilaste huvidega ning hõlbustades õppimisprotsessi.

Töö teoreetiline osa annab ülevaate varasematest uuringutest, kus erinevad teadlased on oma töödes keskendunud nii veebi- kui ka arvutimängudele, et osalejatele inglise keelt õpetada. Esitatud on ka osalejate arvamused mängude kasutamisest keele õppimiseks.

Töö empiiriline osa põhineb uuringul, mis viidi läbi 14 17-18-aastase Tartu Jaan Poska Gümnaasiumi õpilase seas. Õpilased mängisid RuneScape'i kord nädalas nelja nädala jooksul. Sessioonide eel ja järel testiti õpilaste sõnavaraoskust. Pärast mänguseansside lõppu intervjueriti osalisi, et teada saada, kuidas nad mängude kasutamisse tavalises klassiruumis suhtuvad ning kas nende arvates sobib niisugune veebipõhine mäng nagu RuneScape inglise keele õppimiseks. Uuringu tulemused näitasid, et peaaegu kõik eksperimendis osalenud õpilased omandasid uusi ingliskeelseid sõnu, kusjuures õpilased, kes mängust rohkem huvitatud olid, suutsid pärast nelja mänguseanssi tõlkida rohkem ingliskeelseid sõnu kui need, kellele RuneScape'i mängimine raskeks kujunes. Õpilastega tehtud intervjuude põhjal võib oletada, et õpilastele meeldis mängu kaudu inglise keelt õppida, kuid nad leidsid, et tundides võiks olla rohkem vaheldust, mistõttu ei oleks igas tunnis mängu mängimine hea idee; seda võiks teha vaheldumisi traditsiooniliste õppematerjalide kasutamisega.

Märksõnad: sõnavara õpetamine, veebipõhine mäng, keskkooliõpilased, inglise keel võõrkeelena, inglise keele õpetamine

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Elis Rodendau,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose  
*Using RuneScape for Language Acquisition Purposes in an Upper Secondary EFL Classroom,*

mille juhendaja on Raili Marling,

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Tartus, **16.05.2017**