

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**EXPERIMENTING WITH A *REACTING TO THE PAST*
SIMULATION GAME IN AN ESTONIAN UPPER
SECONDARY EFL CLASSROOM**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to determine whether the historical simulation game series, *Reacting to the Past*, can be effectively implemented in an upper secondary English language learning classroom, specifically for developing learners' speaking skills. The study follows an Action Research approach, wherein Bossetta and Giebfried's in-development game, *The Oversight Board* was integrated into a four-lesson unit that was carried out with three 11th Grade English language classes in an Estonian state gymnasium. The first chapter of the study provides an overview of the benefits of a simulation-game-based approach both in foreign language learning and education in general. The second chapter describes the design of the unit around the simulation game; its implementation, data collection, and a discussion of the findings. Lastly, the thesis proposes future modifications for improving the implementation of simulation games such as *The Oversight Board* in upper secondary English language lessons.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, simulation, game-based learning, Action Research, speaking skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Reacting to the Past (Reacting) is a series of historical simulation games designed for history, political science, and social studies classes in U.S. higher education (Carnes 2014). In Reacting games, learners assume the roles of key figures in historically significant events. Learners prepare for their roles by engaging with primary sources, compose and deliver speeches, and debate and vote on various issues. The active and collaborative nature of the Reacting framework has garnered enthusiasm from students and instructors alike; the consensus appears to be that Reacting games lead to motivated and engaged students, passionate and thoughtful classroom discussions, and effective acquisition of course material, alongside the development of collaborative, public speaking, and critical thinking skills.

The positive impact of Reacting games has also drawn the attention of language instructors. After all, motivating students to contribute to spoken discussions in language classrooms can be especially challenging due to students' foreign language speaking anxiety, while also being more vital, given that it is through use that new language is acquired by the learner. Furthermore, the structure of a Reacting game closely aligns with the action-oriented approach to foreign language education. Recent studies on Global Simulation pedagogy also highlight the potential benefit of learner role-taking during language learning activities. But can simulation games that are developed for college-level history classes truly be usable and useful in upper secondary language classes? If so, the growing catalogue of close to a hundred games could serve as a valuable resource for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instructors, many of whom report being intrigued by simulation games and the action-oriented approach but are deterred by the lack of available resources or the time to develop their own simulation modules for classroom use.

Out of the four skills in language learning (listening, reading, writing, and speaking), Reacting appears most promising in developing students' speaking skills. The games primarily

involve students speaking with each other in collaborative discussions or by participating in debates. If these activities are carried out in the target language, the simulated environment of a Reacting game creates both the conditions and context for learners to actively practice speaking. This is supported by the gamified nature of a Reacting game, which motivates learners not just to participate, but participate well. As such, the aim of this study is to explore the pedagogical potential of using a *Reacting to the Past* microgame in an Estonian upper secondary EFL class context, with the goal of developing learners' speaking skills and identifying additional areas in which these games could be beneficial when used in language learning. The research questions posed for this study are as follows:

- 1) Can a *Reacting to the Past* game be used in language instruction with specific CEFR B2-level speaking outcomes in mind?
 - How does the use of Reacting games in upper secondary EFL classes contribute to the development of learners' speaking skills?
 - What opportunities and challenges emerge when a Reacting game is used in an upper secondary language-learning context?
 - How can Reacting games be modified or supplemented to better support language teaching and learning?

The first chapter of this study will provide a theoretical overview of the benefits and possible challenges of Reacting, and simulation games in education in general, followed by their potential specifically in language classes. Possible challenges of using the games with upper secondary level learners, as well as within language instruction are also discussed. Additionally, the alignment of pedagogical outcomes of reacting games with the Estonian National Curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) will be evaluated.

The final section of the theoretical chapter will delineate the theoretical basis of the Action Research approach used in this study.

The second chapter will focus on this author's investigation of utilizing a Reacting microgame with three groups of 11th Grade EFL learners in an Estonian upper secondary school, following an Action Research (AR) approach. Four lessons, featuring Bossetta and Giebfried's (2026) in-development game, *The Oversight Board*, were carried out. Data was collected through instructor observation, and students' answers to review and reflection questions during the lessons and a feedback questionnaire administered at the conclusion of the unit. The chapter discusses the choice of game and the participants, delineates the methodology for investigation, and describes additional materials which were used as part of the 4-lesson unit. Thereafter, the chapter presents the findings of the study and proposes adjustments to the unit and additional considerations for language instructors interested in implementing Reacting games in their own upper secondary level EFL courses.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Defining Simulation Games in Education

There is no one widely accepted definition for a simulation game in foreign language education (Tompkins 1998: 143), and neither is the goal of this section to synthesize one. Rather, this overview aims to present a suitable definition for simulation games for the context of *Reacting to the Past* and identify the characteristics of these activities that tend to overlap with existing game- and simulation-based materials and methodologies which have been used in foreign language education. Based on the discussion to follow, this study proposes the following as a definition of a simulation game: it is an active and competitive educational experience in which learners are assigned roles with specific predefined win/loss conditions and the time, information, tools and instructor support required to achieve them.

Jones (2013: 9) views simulations as classroom activities with two key characteristics: the assignment of roles to participants, and “sufficient information” on a problem which allows the participants to “function as professionals.” While the roles and scenarios of a simulation can be real (such as in the case of *Reacting*), representing reality is not one of its essential features, and in some cases, deviating from reality can even be more practical or useful for educational purposes (Jones 2013: 11). Simulations are distinct from role-plays by virtue of how much information is provided to the participants: role plays are imaginative, inviting its participants to invent much of the background details during the activity, while simulations are more robust; students never invent the “key facts” of a simulation (Jones 2013: 10). To Ladousse (1987: 5–6), the difference between a role-play and simulation is more blurred and is based primarily on the length and the complexity of the activity. Simulations should be seen as containing elements of role-play, supplemented by other activity types, such as discussions or data analysis.

Reacting games are not simply simulations; they are *simulation games*. Deterding et al (2011: 9) define gamification as the use of game design principles and elements in otherwise non-game contexts. The field of gamification, after emerging in the 2010s in marketing, garnered rapid interest in educational contexts, where it has been seen to provide similar benefits to simulation-based learning: improvements in motivation, engagement and positive behavioral changes (Bozkurt and Durak 2018: 15). An additional benefit of gamification is its positive impact on the endurance of the activity. While role-plays are short, a challenge with simulations is that their complexity requires more time for preparation and implementation (a full-length Reacting game may even span the length of an entire course). Using game mechanics, such as win conditions, leaderboards, points, etc., can thus help enhance the already positive impact on learner motivation and engagement while also extending this over the course of a long-term activity (Bozkurt and Durak 2018: 15–18). The key difference between simulations and games, according to García-Carbonell et al (2001: 481) is the competitive aspect; like simulations, they provide conditions for autonomous exploration, but also conditions for winning and losing. An important implication of this is that teachers must serve both the role of facilitator, as well as referee. Fortunately, these roles do not conflict with each other; as Jones (2013: 10) argues, simulation facilitators should resist the desire to guide or assist students toward a desired outcome, given that the educational value of a simulation often draws on learning from mistakes. Similarly, referees in games are expected to be impartial and refrain from influencing the game's outcome.

Much of the recent enthusiasm for simulation games in language learning has emerged from the opportunities provided by digital tools (and games, in particular), which has also led to some usage of the term *simulation gaming* to refer specifically to activities carried out with the aid of technology (e.g. Connolly et al 2011). While digital technologies certainly provide additional

ways in which simulation games can be carried out in the classroom, the definition for simulation games employed in this study does not recognize the use of any digital environment as a key component or requirement of simulation games. In fact, it is worth acknowledging Whitton (2013: 427–430), who cautions that the additional complexity of digital games compared to “traditional games” can lead them to be more difficult to implement, and can in some cases exclude certain groups of learners. This is especially important considering that students’ hesitancy toward embracing digital learning opportunities has grown following the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Guppy et al 2022). While it is possible to combine Reacting games with digital tools as well, they are not essential components of these games. As such, the medium through which students engage in simulations in the classroom will not be considered a defining characteristic of simulation games. Yet, it is important to consider that the extent to which students “immerse” themselves in a game can be aided using either digital or physical alterations to the traditional classroom setting. Amir and Ralph’s proposed Theory of Gamification Effectiveness (2014: 627), considers “immersive dynamics”, alongside mechanics and motivational dimensions as one of the four factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a gamified experience. As suggested by Lombard and Ditton (1997), the more an individual’s senses are engaged, the higher their level of immersion.

1.2 Simulation Games as Active and Collaborative Learning

Simulations have been used for learning purposes from as early as the 1600s and have their origins in war games used to train military personnel (Gredler 2013: 571). More broadly, simulations garnered the interest of educators around the 1950s, when their use cases broadened to medical, business, science, and language education. The principal advantage of simulations is that they connect learning experiences with real-world situations; in doing so, they outline the relevance of the topic, its complexity in the real world, and the possible misconceptions learners

may have about it (Gredler 2013: 573). This is consistent with Dewey's vision of "learning by doing", according to which education should strive to replicate real-world situations and create social opportunities for learners to engage with them (Williams, 2017: 92). In essence, placing learning in real-world contexts helps learners be more prepared for, and develop the skills required of them in the future.

Simulations and games are both considered types of active learning (Lean et al 2006: 227). Active learning is any activity within which students are "doing things and thinking about what they are doing," which allows students to exercise higher-order thinking skills (Bonwell and Eison 1991: 2). Simulations allow learners both to gain active experience through doing something, as well as reflect on what has been done, and it is through reflecting on these experiences that learners are able develop expertise in a field (Sullivan et al 2017: 455). Compared to traditional types of learning, simulations are also seen as more collaborative (Ruben 1999: 500). Not only is the development of collaborative skills an important consideration; collaboration itself is able to enhance the quality of learning. As Nokes-Malach et al (2015: 647–51) point out, collaborative activities allow students to utilize a shared pool of prior knowledge when completing tasks, as well as learn through observation and peer-to-peer explanation and error correction. Furthermore, as collaborative activities, such as simulations, involve students asking questions and explaining concepts to each other, students are more likely to remember their contribution to the activity, which leads to improved memory (Andrews and Rapp 2015). Conversely, a risk associated with collaborative activities is that individual contribution becomes more difficult to identify (and assess), which can lead to certain individuals participating in the activities minimally or not at all, as other group members do their work for them. This issue is sometimes referred to as the "free

rider” problem (el Massah 2017: 1224). Students may also limit their participation out of fear of being judged by their peers (Nokes-Malach et al 2015: 649).

Collaborative activities, such as simulations, have especially been praised for their ability to increase learner engagement, which is tied to simulations being both authentic, as well as agentic. According to Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (SDT), intrinsic motivation describes the motivators for students to engage with educational experiences for their own sake, in contrast to extrinsic motivation, which has to do with aims of achieving a particular grade or benefitting from other reward systems. To Deci and Ryan (2020), cultivating learners’ intrinsic motivation is the more important of the two, and leads to superior academic outcomes. Activities that are intrinsically motivating allow students to recognize the real-world relevance of the topic or issue, as well as make meaningful choices, to play, and to explore. As Zhang and Yu (2022: 14) point out, game-based pedagogies have long-lasting positive impacts on both the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation levels of learners. This is a result of game-based activities supporting learners’ autonomy, relatedness and competence while also presenting them with extrinsic rewards, which could become – if the activity is adequately immersive – internalized extrinsic motivation (Zhang and Yu 2022: 14).

In simulation games, students make meaningful and consequential choices and must also confront the repercussions of these choices. It is therefore unsurprising that above all else, simulation games like Reacting have been praised for their impact on students’ engagement. After implementing a Reacting game in a history course, Higbee (2009) observed a substantial improvement in class attendance and participation, as indicated by the number of students who would arrive to class early and/or participate actively in class discussions. These observations were consistent with survey data which measured engagement through markers such as the percentage

of students who reported having completed the reading assignments for a class or having discussed materials with peers outside of class time (Higbee 2009: 58–59). Having implemented Reacting in their political science courses, Weidenfeld and Fernandez (2017: 47) describe students as “so deeply engaged in their work that they are, quite frequently, shouting, laughing, and debating ideas in a way [the authors] had not witnessed before.”

Arguably, the impact of increased engagement and emotional investment is reflected in learners’ academic performance as well. Higbee (2009) discusses noticing an improvement in the quality of students’ discussions, both spoken and in writing. This is confirmed by several studies detailing the positive effects on academic performance (Gorton and Havercroft 2012, Olwell and Stevens 2015, Bledsoe and Richardson 2018). Schult et al (2018) have reported an increase in students’ self-efficacy; that is, their level of confidence when facing the academic and social challenges of higher education. Students’ critical thinking (Ludolph 2023) and public speaking (Burke 2014: 11–13) skills have also seen improvements when Reacting games have been implemented.

Simulation-based teaching does not come without challenges. The most notable of these is the high amount of time required to prepare or design simulations, which is also a significant reason why instructors either never use simulations in their courses (Lean et al 2006: 231) or stop using them after a time (Faria and Wellington 2004: 198). The issue of standardization is another challenge. Simulations may involve students being assigned different roles, and thereby, be required to engage with different materials and utilize different skills and strategies throughout the activity. While the potential for diverse learning outcomes or scaffolding may be seen as a possible advantage of simulations (Ruben 1999: 502), it may also make simulations more difficult to implement because of the difficulty in aligning them with specific courses or curricular learning

outcomes. Survey data from business instructors reveals that about a third of instructors who have never used a simulation game in their courses have not done so because of “poor fit” with their courses (Faria and Wellington 2004: 200).

If the role assignments in a simulation game do vary, it is possible that students may also be negatively impacted by which role is assigned to them. For instance, Weidenfeld and Fernandez (2018: 58) found that students who were assigned “crowd” member roles felt disincentivized to prepare for the activity. Students who are unhappy with their role assignment may also interpret the activity as unfair or contribute less to the activity as a result. Amusingly, another possible disadvantage of simulations, as has specifically been examined in the case of Reacting, is that the experience can be *too good*. Bernstein et al (2017: 154) caution that a single simulation experience, while beneficial, may have negative consequences in the long run because it turns learners away from traditional modes of instruction. It is therefore wise to employ a certain degree of caution when considering implementing a single simulation-based activity in an otherwise standard format of lessons.

1.3 Simulation Games and Language Learning

Simulation as a possible pedagogical methodology in language teaching has several benefits. Firstly, it is worth considering the active nature and the authenticity that simulation activities bring to the classroom. According to the communicative approach to language teaching, language learning should occur through, and in service of authentic language use (Piccardo and North 2019). In a language learning setting, simulations can provide learners with a real-world context as well as a communicative goal, in addition to giving them ample time and opportunity to actively use the target language. Swain (1993) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible output in the process of language acquisition; it is by formulating their own language in speech

and writing that students can test hypotheses they have formed about the target language, and notice problems within them, thereby acquiring new knowledge in the target language. Simulations involve both large amounts of authentic input (the materials for the game, other students' speech and writing) as well as output in the target language.

A popular example of the use of simulations in language courses is the Global Simulation (GS) approach that emerged in German language education at the University of California, Irvine (Levine 2004). In a GS course, students are assigned roles, typically in a scenario that takes place in the target language context. The long-term nature of these simulations, as described by Levine (2004: 29), can lead to a degree of immersion in the roles, to the extent that learners quite literally forget that what they are doing is language learning. By being able to engage students and their imagination, GS is also argued to be a more effective way to teach target language culture to the learners, compared to more traditional forms of instruction (Levine 2004: 26). Learners' interest in the target culture, in turn, can boost their desire to improve their proficiency in the language (Hernandez 2008: 605). As Liddicoat (2004: 1–2) emphasizes, the teaching of intercultural competence should be an integral component of language teaching.

It is not simply the assignment of a role, but the role of a speaker of the target language that truly accentuates the benefits of this type of simulation in language pedagogy, as it allows students not simply to see themselves in some kind of real-world context, but also as speakers of the target language. One of the issues faced with getting students to speak in the target language during a class is due to anxiety towards speaking. As argued by Young (1991: 434), the causes of foreign language speaking anxiety are numerous and they are often interrelated, but the core implication is that instructors have a responsibility to create a learning environment in which students feel confident and motivated to speak. One of the ways in which simulations can be

helpful in mitigating this is by disrupting the power dynamics between the teacher and the student in the classroom (Scarcella and Crookall (1990: 228) in García-Carbonell et al 2001: 485).

There are, however, specific complications associated with using simulations in language learning as well. According to the comprehensible input hypothesis, language activities should optimize acquisition by presenting learners with language that is at, or slightly above, their language level (Krashen 1992: 409). This means that for finding a suitable simulation for a language class, teachers are required not just to consider the thematic alignment and interests of the students, but also the suitability of the language level. This either substantially limits the number of games available to be utilized in any given language course or requires adjustment of the materials and activities to be suitable for the learner group, which would exacerbate the already high time investment that preparing a simulation activity demands. A second potential issue that arises concerns error correction. While more recent perspectives in language education deemphasize the need for correcting all errors language learners make, especially when the errors made do not impede understanding, it is generally advisable to promptly correct errors that do interfere with meaning (Hendrickson 1978: 390). If the teacher strictly adopts the facilitator role, as simulation activities dictate, they may either be unable to correct such errors, which may, consequently, be reinforced or passed on to other learners.

Additionally, instructors are required to dedicate large portions of class time to simulation activities, which can potentially reduce the time and opportunities available for explicit language teaching. Learners may have ample time for active use of target language in a simulation activity, but this may not lead to effective language acquisition. Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis emphasizes the need for explicit language instruction to make learners aware of specific language elements so that learners encounter them with awareness and therefore an ability to acquire them (Leow 2023:

1). When simulations are used in the language setting, they should therefore be complemented with explicit language instruction. As Miller and Hegelheimer (2006) have found, the use of supplementary vocabulary learning materials for simulation games can lead to more effective language acquisition, as well as higher task completion success.

Despite these challenges, simulation activities have demonstrated positive effects on language learners' oral communicative skills (Binti and Maarof 2008), as well as on vocabulary acquisition and retention (Franciosi et al 2016). This is also true for Reacting simulations. To date, a small but growing number of games have been translated into French for use in French language courses. Eick and Guikema (2019: 160) point out that during Reacting games, learners interpret complex texts, prepare and give speeches, and participate in debates and discussions with peers, all of which are skills expected from intermediate and advanced speakers of a foreign language. According to the descriptor scales of the Companion Volume of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), a B2-level language user is expected to be able to understand complex information from specialized texts (with the aid of a dictionary if the subject is outside of their field), develop and present clear and well-reasoned arguments, as well as communicate effectively and facilitate group discussions (Council of Europe 2020).

While limited in number, existing studies on the use of Reacting games in language teaching nonetheless demonstrate promising positive results. After incorporating a Reacting game into an advanced French seminar, Schaller (2012: 50–51) reports that following an initial period of hesitancy, classroom debates ramped up in engagement. Delivering pre-written speeches and writing news articles served to develop various language production skills, and only some technical details had to be explained in English by the instructor. In the class, it was possible to carry out most of the game and its preparatory sessions entirely in French. The game-based

approach was a success in terms of conveying historical information and providing learners the motivation to engage with the background reading materials on 18th Century French culture. Schaller does highlight that in the language learning classroom, the question of which roles to assign which students becomes even more crucial and argues that more vocal/central roles may need to be assigned to more advanced students while keeping in mind the importance of balancing voices in the classroom (Schaller 2012: 46).

Albright's (2013) experience using a Reacting game in an intermediate Latin course shows that using Reacting effectively in language classes is not contingent on the learners already being at an advanced language level. Usually, the intermediate-level Latin course had been taught with an emphasis on reading, but survey data showed that many students found the game to be an engaging part of the course that motivated them to engage with the reading materials (Albright 2013: 12). Given the students' language level, Albright opted to carry out the debates in English, but supplement these with composed speeches which the students prepared and delivered in Latin. Albright's observations highlight that while students' written compositions following the game had worsened slightly due to the lack of practice, the game was an effective means to improve students' spoken production skills, as well as providing them with a way to learn important historical information about the language (2013: 5).

It is worth noting that Albright's (2013) and Schaller's (2012) studies both focus on using Reacting games in college-level language courses, which raises the question of whether the same conclusions are applicable in upper secondary school foreign language instruction. Currently, the most significant scholarly contribution in this area is a set of master's theses published at the University of Agder. This unique surge of interest is likely a result of the fact that students in Agder's teacher training program are required to complete an American Studies course that

includes a Reacting game (Mustad and Johnson 2024). Investigating the effect of implementing RTTP pedagogy in 10th grade EFL classes, the three studies find Reacting games to have a positive impact on students' engagement (Odland and Stensvand 2022), motivation (Karlsen 2022), and willingness to communicate (Andersen 2022). It is important to consider that to some degree, these improvements can be credited to the novelty of having trainee teachers visit a classroom and offer students “something new” (Andersen 2022: 46), as well as to the fact that the activities were not graded, which may have led to more confident participation. Furthermore, the game was not run as published, but with the aid of simplified and shortened background reading materials, vocabulary lists, and other adjusted materials created for the projects. Even so, the findings of these studies reassure that despite the apparent complexity of the activities, adaptation of Reacting games for use at the upper secondary level is possible.

1.4 The Action Research Framework

The empirical section of this study will follow the principles of Action Research (AR). As such, the final section of this theoretical review provides a brief overview of the structure, opportunities, advantages, and challenges of this research approach. Additional comments regarding the specific ethical considerations associated with utilizing an AR approach are also provided. Not unlike simulations, AR is a type of “learning by doing.” According to Burns (2009: 289–290), it involves the combination of classroom instruction (the action) with scholarly inquiry (the research). In the most common model, AR is divided into four stages: *planning*, *action*, *observation*, and *reflection* (Kemmis and Wilkinson 2002: 21). AR is characterized as cyclical (Burns 2009: 290), and the cycle can be repeated, with subsequent cycles beginning with a *revised plan*. Later revisions to the AR model have emphasized some additional flexibility in the order of the stages (Elliot 1991), as well as proposed additional ways in which the process can be divided.

Efron and Ravid (2013: 8), for example, propose a six-stage framework of *problem identification, gathering of background information, study design, data collection, analysis, and implementation and sharing of findings*. Given the exploratory, rather than problem-driven nature of the present study, the four-stage model of Kemmis and Wilkinson (2002) is adopted instead of Efron and Ravid's (2013) more recent, six-stage framework.

AR has several poignant benefits for scholars who are also practicing instructors. Since it allows research to be carried out within the instructor/researcher's own teaching practice, the focus areas as well as the insights gained are directly relevant and actionable to this instructor/researcher's classroom practice (Efron and Ravid 2013: 7). While this does mean that the findings are primarily relevant for a specific teaching context, it also means that this type of research is valuable as a tool for the professional development of the researchers as educators, allowing them to independently improve and enrich their instructional practices (Herrera 2008: 129). Some scholars have also emphasized the collaborative component of action research, suggesting that it works even more effectively when research collaborators, learners, parents, or colleagues are included in the research process (Burns 1999, Burns 2009). Collaboration in the research process can diversify perspectives (Burns 1999: 150), as well as engage stakeholders in the process of improving the educational experience (e.g. Gilhooly and Lee 2017). While the approach taken in this study does not explicitly involve collaboration, an element of collaboration is incorporated through the use of student feedback and suggestions to more effectively implement and modify this type of teaching activity in an upper secondary language learning context.

While the original four-step cycle of AR includes "observation" as one of the stages (Kemmis and Wilkinson 2002: 21), it should not be assumed that data collection is carried out only through observation in an AR study. In fact, AR is well suited to employ a combination of different

data collection methods. Ali's (2020: 341) review of AR literature in 2010–2019 reveals that about half of the studies using AR utilized mixed methods approaches with combinations of interviews, observations, tests, questionnaires, artifacts and more. The use of multiple different data collection methods can be considered an additional advantage of AR, as using multi- or mixed methods approaches can lead to higher validity of the data (Campbell and Fiske 1959).

Compared to other research approaches, AR does pose unique challenges in terms of research ethics. Given that AR involves carrying out research in classrooms, there are complications when it comes to both obtaining the consent of the participants, and ensuring their confidentiality in the collection, analysis and presentation of the data (Gelling and Munn-Giddings 2011: 105). This is particularly important with AR studies in educational settings, where the study participants generally include adolescents. This study was carried out in class groups where all participants involved were over the age of 15, which – according to the Estonian Organisation of Research and Development and Innovation Act, §28 – is the age at which youths can consent to participation in research without the need of parental agreement or permission (Riigi Teataja 2025). Given the existing student-teacher relationship between study participants, it is also worth recognizing that some students may have felt uncomfortable about withdrawing consent from participating in the study. This is somewhat mitigated by the fact that attendance is neither a required nor a graded component of this instructor's courses. Even so, the study is guided by the principle of *process consent*; that is, the recognition of consent as an ongoing negotiation and the right to withdraw consent at any stage of the process (Heath et al 2007: 409). In terms of confidentiality, it must be acknowledged that this study cannot reasonably or effectively anonymize the school and grade level at which the activity was carried out, but anonymization, wherever possible, was carried out to protect the personal identities of any participant involved

through the data collection process and in the way the data are discussed and presented in this thesis.

2 PILOTING AND EVALUATING A *REACTING TO THE PAST* GAME USING ACTION RESEARCH

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this project is to implement a *Reacting* simulation game in Estonian upper secondary school EFL classes, to evaluate its potential as a tool for developing learners' speaking skills, and to identify which additional uses and benefits it may have for an EFL teaching context. The study also seeks to identify challenges which arise when *Reacting* games are used with upper secondary level language learners and to propose and evaluate modifications to the game, and additional activities that can be incorporated into the lessons to better suit this class context.

2.2 Research Design

This investigation employs the methodology of Action Research, as introduced in subsection 1.4 of this study. The investigation is structured according to the four-step AR model, consisting of the following stages: *planning*, *action*, *observation*, and *reflection* (Kemmis and Wilkinson 2002: 21). As part of the investigation, a learning unit of four 70-minute lessons was carried out with three separate groups of Grade 11 learners. Within the AR framework, this four-lesson sequence functions as a single cycle of AR. The *planning* stage involved the selection of the *Reacting* game, as well as the development of supplementary activities and materials to better situate the game in an upper secondary EFL context. The *action* stage refers to the implementation of the lessons in the classroom by this instructor, with all lessons being conducted during the month of February 2026.

Observation was carried out concurrently with the *action* stage and involved instructor observation during the lessons guided by the research questions of this study (provided in the introduction). Primary focus areas included learner engagement, speaking skill development, use

of English during communicative activities (as opposed to Estonian), collaborative dynamics and the identification of potential additional benefits and challenges associated with the use of simulation games in the language classroom. Additionally, the observation component included the collection of data from students both orally throughout the unit, as well as in writing through a feedback questionnaire administered at the end of the fourth lesson.

The reflection stage was predominantly carried out at the end of the unit. This stage involved an analysis of the collected data to evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons, and the proposal of revised supporting materials and additional suggestions to effectively implement this simulation game in upper secondary EFL classrooms. Some aspects of reflection were also carried out concurrently with the implementation of the lessons, as the initial observations from the first simulation were used to inform both the design of the third lesson, and several modifications that were carried out in the second round of simulation in the fourth lesson.

2.3 Participants

The study was carried out with three groups of Grade 11 students in Rae Gymnasium. Each group included between 14 and 18 students, all between 16 and 18 years of age. Each of the groups had an equal ratio of male and female students. In Rae Gymnasium, language groups are separated alphabetically (following an equal male to female ratio), not by language proficiency. This author has been the English instructor for two of the three groups for 1.5 years, and the instructor of the third group from the start of the current academic year (at the time of the project, having taught the students for 6 months). While there is some variation between the average language level of the students, it is the instructor's position, based on prior teaching of these learners and evaluation of their work, that all participants were at, slightly below, or slightly above a B2 level of English proficiency at the time of the study.

While students in all three groups generally speak confidently and express their ideas without difficulty during language lessons, this instructor has identified that the students often switch to Estonian when speaking in small groups, and occasionally when communicating with the instructor as well. When asked to repeat what they said in English, students do so without error or issue. This indicates that there may be some reluctance on part of the students to speak English, perhaps amplified by the fact that all groups share Estonian as a native language with each other and with the instructor, so they may find it strange or uncomfortable to switch to a shared language they have less experience with. As such, one of the focus areas for this study is to assess whether and to what extent the use of Reacting games can influence this language dynamic in the classroom. An additional potential issue could arise from the fact that some students are quite frequently absent from the lessons, especially during the colder months of the year. As such, the exact student makeup of a given class may be unpredictable, and the instructor should also consider ways in which students who have missed lessons could catch up on the activities of the previous, so that they can meaningfully participate in the simulation.

The students in the participant groups have had minimal prior experience with learning English via simulation games, however, this instructor has previously carried out the simulation game *Monumental Consequences* (Looney 2022) with these groups, in addition to several role-play and game-based activities. These activities have generally been received well, although they have sometimes been less successful in getting quieter students to speak up in class than small-group tasks or direct questioning. Debate activities have also been relatively successful, but students sometimes struggle to come up with arguments without additional resources, and it is often the case that students share similar ideas on the issues presented, which has led to somewhat one-sided debates. In class discussions, students have expressed a general interest in improving

speaking skills, as well as a general enjoyment of collaborative and discussion-based learning activities. This instructor has not identified any potential issues in classroom dynamics that have hindered or caused issues when small group tasks are carried out in language lessons so far, however, students often express strong preference for working with their close friends, rather than assigned or randomly formed groups.

The coursebook utilized in English courses in the school is *New Close Up B2* (Day 2022). Instructors in this school have the autonomy to decide the extent to which to use the coursebook in lesson planning. While activities from the book were not utilized within this project, the students had been engaging with Unit 7 (“Law and Order”); therefore, this study might provide some valuable insights about how a simulation game can be used to substitute or complement the themes or activities found in the coursebook.

2.4 Planning

2.4.1 Selecting a Reacting Game

There are close to a hundred titles available for Reacting practitioners to choose from, which range in their length, difficulty, and subject matter. A common thread among researchers who have used Reacting with language learners has been the use of games that are culturally relevant to the target language. This echoes Liddicoat’s (2004: 17) recommendation that culture teaching should be an inherent component of language instruction. This aspect makes game choice straightforward for instructors of French and Latin, for instance, who should simply select available games that focus on target language cultures, considering the learners and themes of the course in question. Games set in the US or UK, however, still dominate the catalogue of Reacting games, and it is also worth considering the role of English as a *lingua franca*, quite commonly serving as the mode of communication between speakers who do not represent native speaker

communities of English – and which is even used, in some cases, as the linguistic medium of choice by speakers who share a different native tongue (e.g. Yang and Fleming 2013). As such, initial considerations for games for this project included *Constitutional Convention* (Coby 2022), which covers the Philadelphia convention of 1787, and *Chicago 1968* (Proctor 2022). The possibility of developing a new game following the Reacting game format was also considered.

Although all the options mentioned above have their distinct merits and relevant focus areas for EFL instruction, initial conversations with students about which game to adopt received lukewarm responses, likely due to a perceived lack of contemporary significance. While it is arguably possible to draw contemporary cultural inferences relevant to English-speaking cultures from these games, the initial reluctance on the part of the students could potentially diminish students' engagement, as they might not readily see the games' relevance to their current and future use of English. An additional concern for these games was their length: both Coby's (2022) and Proctor's (2022) titles are full-length Reacting games, requiring about half of an entire language course to be carried out. These games may be well served within elective courses, but the use of this relatively experimental method for such a large portion of English lessons would involve unnecessary risk in terms of value. In previous studies that utilized full-length Reacting games in upper secondary level EFL courses, the game materials had to be substantially shortened to allow for carrying out an otherwise full-length title over the course of a few class sessions (Andersen 2022, Karlsen 2022, Odland and Stensvand 2022).

In the fall of 2025, this author had an opportunity to participate in an official workshop for an in-development Reacting microgame, *The Oversight Board*, by Bossetta and Giebfried. It was immediately apparent that this game was more suitable in terms of both its relevance and its length. The game is based on the Meta Oversight Board (OB); a real organization that oversees content

moderation on Meta platforms. Decisions made by the OB are often difficult because of the contrasting values of safety and newsworthiness on social media; posts may be removed because they incite violence, contain hate speech, or are otherwise harmful to certain individuals (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 9). Conversely, such posts, if political in nature, may be important for people to know about, and therefore allowed on the platform, which reflects the central role of social media in today's information networks (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 7). This is why social media is occasionally described with the metaphor of a "town square" (le Roux and Parry 2020: 189–191). During the game, students tackle precisely these kinds of issues by deliberating and deciding on four real cases that have been arbitrated by the Oversight Board. In the game, students embody either members of the board, or members of various "factions" that represent stakeholder groups with different perspectives on the issue. For example, the "Freedom of Speech Absolutists" faction would principally argue for allowance of newsworthy but potentially harmful posts, while the "Family Values Heroes" may argue that the potential harm to more sensitive groups of social media users may outweigh the posts' value as news (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 19–20).

The main responsibility of students assigned to the "factions" is to present, justify and defend their assigned positions, and propose suitable policy recommendations. Meanwhile, students assigned to Oversight Board roles should impartially moderate the discussion and reach a final decision on whether the post in question should be allowed or removed. Board members must also select two policy recommendations to present to Meta and give reasons for their choices (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 24). The win condition for the faction members is for their position and policy recommendations to be adopted by the OB. Board members win by receiving a positive fairness rating from members of all the factions once the debate concludes. During each of the two simulation modules, students receive a summary of two cases and a role card with information

about their responsibilities and goals in the game. No additional research or materials are required to play. As a microgame, the two separate modules of this game can each be run over the course of a single class session, although providing learners with case materials a few days in advance is recommended (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 19).

Political speech on social media as a focus for the unit appears to be suitable, considering both the interests and English language needs of the students. Many young people today use social media daily, and some do so for a concerningly large amount of time. By engaging with this activity, students will be able to find out more about the forces that determine which type of information is made available on social media platforms, reflect on the potential issues with social media as the primary means of information consumption and distribution, and consider specific issues of what type of speech is acceptable and unacceptable in social media discourse. As Wright et al (2023: 12) argue, the teaching of media literacy is of paramount importance in what they term the “age of disinformation” – a sentiment which is reflected by the recently published Estonia’s Media Literacy Report (Klesment 2025). The four case studies in the game are based on real-life issues and represent a geographically and culturally diverse set of conflicts, which also aligns well with the need for developing EFL learners’ intercultural competences with the global usage of English in mind (Chen 2012).

When considering what the specific value of this game is for language learning, it is worth recognizing that the game is predominantly a speaking activity. After being introduced to the case studies and assigned roles, learners are expected to collaborate in groups to prepare, and thereafter, present their position in a debate. Participants give supporting reasons, ask and respond to questions and examine and evaluate others’ perspectives. Given that the win condition for each group is contingent on their ability to effectively present their recommendations or decisions, the

game rewards effective argumentative speaking and provides students with the context within which this can be practiced. These activities align with a combination of several B2-level learning outcomes for English in the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, listed below:¹

- 7) Presents, justifies, and defends one's opinion, giving relevant clarifications and comments,
 - 9) Delivers clear, detailed descriptions and presentations/speeches on various topics,
 - 10) When necessary, spontaneously moves away from a prepared text to address questions that interest the audience,
 - 11) Answers post-presentation/speech questions fluently, without force or effort.
- (Riigi Teataja 2023)

Furthermore, the descriptor scale for “Sustained monologue: putting a case (e.g. in a debate) in the Companion Volume of the CEFR lists the following set of skills expected of a speaker at the B2 level:

- Can develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
- Can develop a clear argument, expanding and supporting their points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples.
- Can construct a chain of reasoned argument.
- Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (Council of Europe 2020: 64)

While the game's activities fit these descriptors, the activity itself does not provide explicit guidance for students in terms of how these can be done. A case could be made for the value of experimentation to arrive at skill development, or through learning from peers. Even so, it is worth considering that explicit instruction may be required for learners to be able to recognize the linguistic features that support argumentative and collaborative speaking and then put them to use in their own speech (Leow 2023). The benefit of explicit over implicit instruction has also been recognized by Norris and Ortega (2000: 500). As such, this project recognizes the potential need to supplement the game materials with activities designed for explicitly introducing learners to key

¹ Translated by the author of the present paper

vocabulary and practicing strategies for effectively presenting and justifying one's position in a spoken discussion or debate.

2.4.2 Unit Design and Materials

The unit designed for this study consisted of four 70-minute lessons. Its central component was *The Oversight Board* simulation game (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a), which was supported by additional materials and activities created by this author. The first lesson aimed to generate learner interest in the topic and provide support for the development of relevant vocabulary and background knowledge. The second lesson involved the implementation of the first simulation module. Observation and student feedback from this lesson informed the design of the third lesson and led to adjustments to the format of the simulation, which was repeated in lesson four. Although the aim of designing the unit was not to directly replicate a task-based language teaching framework, the content and sequencing of the activities was informed by the Task-Based Learning (TBL) cycle (Willis 1996). An overview of the lessons' main aims and activities is provided in Table 1. Complete lesson plans with relevant materials are provided in Appendix 1.

The first lesson functioned as the pre-task phase. The aim of the lesson was to introduce the topic and generate student interest, and to develop students' vocabulary and contextual understanding needed for participating in the simulation game. Activities in the first lesson included pair- and whole class discussions, guided exploration of the *Oversight Board* website using a vocabulary and information-seeking worksheet, and a short role-play in which students shared information they had gathered. Most activities in the lesson incorporated spoken pair interactions to enable simple and low-pressure opportunities for speaking practice, and to potentially reduce speaking hesitancy during the simulation games in the subsequent lessons.

The second lesson served as the main communicative task of the unit and involved the implementation of the “Politicians” module of Bossetta and Giebfried’s simulation game (2026b). The lesson began with students answering two review questions, followed by reading case materials, preparing their opening statements within their assigned “factions,” and participating in the simulation. Remaining class time was used to collect students’ initial impressions on the simulation, and their feedback on possible modifications and adjustments to the game. Students were also asked to share what other language support they believed they needed to more effectively participate in similar activities in the future.

Based on observations and feedback collected thus far, the third lesson was developed to support speaking skills relevant to argumentative speaking during discussions and debates. This lesson involved students examining useful phrases for presenting or responding to spoken arguments, and collaborative reflection and argument mapping activities inspired by Darmawansah et al (2022). Within the TBL framework, this lesson corresponds to the focus on form stage (Willis 1996: 6), as the lesson enabled students to reflect on the challenges they encountered during the simulation and to develop specific linguistic competences for more effective argumentative speaking.

The last lesson involved the implementation of the second simulation module, “Protesters” (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026c). Based on prior observations and student feedback, small modifications were made to the structure of the simulation activity. In the TBL framework, this lesson can be seen as the repetition of the task (Willis 1996). Task repetition is a recommended approach as it allows students to put to practice the specific language structures they learned in the focus on form stage (van de Guchte et al 2016). In terms of data collection through observation, the repetition also allowed the opportunity to examine whether the focus on form activities

implemented in the third lesson had an impact on learners' engagement levels and success in the simulations, and to examine the impact of possible modifications made to how the simulation was carried out.

Lesson no.	TBL stage	Lesson Aims	Activities	Materials
1	Pre-task	- Activate prior learning - Generate interest - Introduce topic and simulation game - Introduce key vocabulary	- Pair and class discussions - Vocabulary and exploration worksheet - Role-play dialogue	- Lesson slides - Vocabulary and information-seeking handout (Appendix 2) - Oversight Board website (Oversight Board n.d.)
2	Task	- Read and analyze case materials and collaboratively prepare for simulation debate - Practice speaking in simulation debate - Analyze strengths and challenges within debate, collect feedback for improvement	- Review questions - Reading case materials - Collaborative preparation - Simulation game - Feedback discussion	- Lesson slides - Case materials and role sheets from "Politicians" module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b)
3	Post-task/ focus on form	- Introduce useful vocabulary for argumentation - Collectively reflect on the simulation - Introduce and practice argument mapping -	- Vocabulary exploration - Collaborative reflection - Argument mapping	- Lesson slides - Vocabulary slips (Appendix 4) - Padlet reflection board (Appendix 5) - Kialo Edu discussion board
4	Task Repetition	- Read and analyze case materials and collaboratively prepare for debate - Practice speaking in simulation debate - Collect feedback on the unit as a whole	- Reading case materials - Collaborative preparation - Simulation game - Unit wrap-up and feedback questionnaire	- Lesson slides - Case materials and role sheets from "Protesters" module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026c) - Feedback questionnaire (Appendix 6)

Table 1: Unit Overview

2.5 Implementation of the Unit (*Action*)

All the lessons described in section 2.4.2 were carried out over the span of two weeks, in February 2026. The lessons took place following the completion of Unit 7 (“Law and Order”) in the *New Close Up B2* textbook (Day 2022). Circumstances, such as the adjustment of lesson time and the broadcasting of the school’s weekly radio show in the beginning of one of the lessons, required slight modifications in the timing of some of the activities, but overall, it was possible to closely follow the timing and sequence of activities as delineated in the lesson plans (Appendix 1). During the lessons, instructor observations were recorded in an observation journal. Given the exploratory nature of the investigation, no formal observation matrix was used; instead, a set of focus areas was outlined based on the established research questions and the literature review. The focus areas are as follows: *student engagement, use of English during activities, development of speaking skills, and development of collaborative skills.*

Due to the unplanned absence of a colleague, in two of the 12 lessons, additional students from the same class groups (but from separate English groups) also attended the lesson. The lessons in question were the third and fourth lessons with different participant groups. The “visiting” students were informed of the nature of the study prior to these lessons but were not asked to submit any feedback or other material for analysis for the purposes of this investigation. However, classroom observation naturally included observation of these students. While this modification can be seen to introduce an additional outside factor into the study, it is this author’s position that it also provides additional insight about the scalability of the activities and the flexibility of the module, while contributing positively to the education of learners for whom the class would have otherwise been cancelled.

Lastly, the third group did not complete the fourth lesson that was planned for the unit. This resulted from the fact that many students in that group were absent from the lesson when the fourth

lesson was scheduled, leading to a potential need to carry out the game in groups as small as a single student. In the beginning of the lesson, students were asked whether they would like to go ahead with the activity as planned, but they expressed a wish not to continue, which was honored, in line with the principle of process consent (Heath et al 2007: 409). Rescheduling the lesson to a future time was also unfeasible because the day of the lesson preceded the school's February break. The students in attendance were asked to complete the feedback questionnaire based on the three lessons they had completed, but the remainder of class time was filled with alternative activities on the topic of social media.

2.6 Data Collection (*Observation*)

2.6.1 *Observation: Lesson 1*

There were no simulation-based activities used in this lesson, as the focus of this lesson was to provide sufficient vocabulary and contextual introduction for students to be able to comfortably navigate the simulation modules in the subsequent lessons. However, the class included a short role-play activity during the final section of the lesson. In a comprehension worksheet (Appendix 2), students explored the board's website (Oversight Board n.d.) and selected one Board member to investigate further. Their task was to embody these individuals and give a short introduction about them, giving details about why they were on the board and which position they represent in terms of content moderation questions – whether they would prioritize safety or newsworthiness.

While preparing for the role-play, students' engagement levels did seem to increase slightly: they appeared more vocal and active compared to previous activities. With all three groups, most students were seen working intently on gathering information about the individuals and taking notes on their handout. Students did not ask for any clarifications or assistance with

understanding the texts, but some students were seen looking up words in online dictionaries during the preparation phase. There were, however, two possible challenges identified in this stage. Firstly, it became apparent that some students had found certain names on the list of Oversight Board members strange to pronounce, and this became slightly disruptive. Secondly, the activity required students to use their personal devices to go on the internet, which made it quite difficult to gain a comprehensive overview of the degree to which students were actually focused on the assigned tasks, as opposed to being distracted by other avenues available on the web.

The role-play was carried out in a “speed date” format: the class was separated into two lines, and students took turns introducing their chosen individuals. Due to there being an uneven number of students in all three groups (as a result of absences), the instructor participated in the activity so all students would have someone to converse with. Instead of role-playing a board member, the instructor asked additional questions from participants about their chosen individual and the students’ impressions of the unit and its activities so far. Both while observing the other groups talking, as well as from the students with whom the instructor was paired, it was evident that the activity was engaging for the students. Students spoke with enthusiasm, and their expressions seemed to indicate that the component where students were talking about their preferences on safety versus newsworthiness was most compelling. This is likely because it required them not to report on information but rather to formulate an answer synthesizing what they know about the individual and content moderation policies so far. In this activity, some students opted to bring their phones so they could rely on the information they found while giving their summaries. This was not a planned portion of the activity as it was assumed that students would use their notes, rather than their devices, in this stage. Giving a more strict and clear advance notice that students’ notes should be used instead could have helped mitigate this issue.

Students were not heard switching to Estonian during the role-play and utilized some of the phrases presented to them in the first lesson, such as “newsworthiness” in their answers correctly and confidently. It was also apparent that students naturally asked each other follow-up questions. For instance, when students expressed their chosen individual’s choice between safety and newsworthiness, several students asked their partners why they took the position they did and responded with relevant comments as well. When asked how students felt about the topic and the unit so far, students’ responses were generally positive. In addition, students seemed excited about participating in a debate in the upcoming lesson.

2.6.2 Observation: Lesson 2

The second lesson of the unit was the first of two to feature a module from the simulation game. The lesson opened with a brief review of key concepts and then transitioned to students familiarizing themselves with the two cases that were in focus for the debate. Students’ answers to the review questions (Appendix 3) demonstrated that generally, the responsibilities and makeup of the Oversight Board were understood, but there was still confusion or uncertainty in terms of how cases actually reach the Oversight Board. Few students correctly identified that users could submit posts to the Oversight Board for review, but no students identified that Meta can also refer cases to the board. Additionally, some responses showed a misunderstanding that the Oversight Board itself seeks out harmful posts on social media and removes them. The second question, which asked students to define “newsworthiness”, led to overall fewer answers. Some students successfully pointed out that newsworthy posts are those that contain information that would be important for other people to know, however, quite a few respondents left the question unanswered, which may have been due to the short amount of time given for the activity.

After reviewing the answers with the group and highlighting some of the more common misconceptions, students were asked to form pairs and each summarize one of the cases, based on reading materials from the module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b). While reading, students appeared quiet and focused, although the instructor did need to remind students that they are welcome to highlight, underline and annotate the handouts to better identify key points. One of the possible EFL-specific challenges in this stage was that some students perceived the volume of text to be excessive, which may have in turn resulted in low motivation to engage with the texts. This was apparent from spoken comments from students during the activity and in the beginning of the lesson, when students noticed the stack of papers prepared for the lesson and anticipated a heavy reading load.

During summarizing of the cases, it was evident that many students communicated predominantly in Estonian; some groups did switch to English if the instructor positioned themselves to overhear the conversation, but in general, the nature of the activity did not effectively facilitate target language use. Then again, post-activity questioning demonstrated that most students had grasped the key points of the cases – and with additional probing, were able to notice the contrasting elements between the two cases: the naming of specific individuals, and the possible use of metaphorical speech. Key ideas from the summaries were organized onto word clouds on the board, which remained there for the rest of the class. These word clouds were noticed to be glanced at by several students for a reminder during the rest of the activities in the lesson. In the simulation preparation stage, the instructor met with each of the groups to help them understand their faction's position and reminded students to focus on policy recommendations in addition to the stance on the plan. A few groups in each class were noticed taking detailed notes on their role sheets and annotating important sections. When asked why some students chose not to take notes,

they suggested it was out of a desire to not waste paper (so the case materials may be reused). Although the suggestion to use their English notebooks for this purpose was given, it was not taken up by any of the students.

The simulation activity itself opened quite hesitantly with all three groups. The Oversight Board delivered an opening statement, after which each faction took turns presenting their positions. Factions rarely responded to other groups' statements and much of the debate stemmed from direct questioning by the Oversight Board. Multiple students' arguments appeared heavily reliant on the role sheets, as students ended up quoting large chunks of text. While this helped keep the discussion relevant, it did indicate that students struggled to express these ideas independently or paraphrase them. This also meant that students rarely reacted to others' arguments, giving the activity an overall more mechanical feel. In one group, an Oversight Board member was visibly frustrated by the reserved nature of the debate and expressed this frustration to their groupmates, making comments like "this is not a debate." The activity also lasted much shorter than the intended 25 minutes, concluding in around 15 minutes with each of the three class groups. When assigning fairness ratings, students generally based their rating on whether their position was explicitly adopted or not, suggesting a higher focus on the outcome of the debate, rather than the fair or unfair arbitration by the Oversight Board.

In terms of language use, students were heard using relevant specific vocabulary, even if some terms had previously been new for the students. Some group members spoke with each other in Estonian, but the debate setting effectively created a space for English language use. Not all students were noticed speaking, but some students who are usually quiet during class discussions opted to speak, which positively surprised the instructor and indicated that the nature of the activity had somewhat alleviated their reservation about speaking in English during group discussions. To

some extent, this may have been an outcome from the teacher's encouragement for groups to distribute responsibilities so that each member has an argument they can present and defend to the Oversight Board. An especially positive impact was noticed in the case of one student, who usually does not contribute much to classroom speaking activities. This student took the lead speaker role within their group, presenting a well-structured and persuasive case giving suitable supporting reasons and examples. In fact, this engagement hike did not stop at the end of the simulation activity, and the student has been participating more actively even through future lessons.

The use of instructor-assigned groups for the activity was done to encourage students to collaborate with those who they do not usually work with. When assigning groups, the instructor followed Bossetta and Giebried's recommendation to ensure that each group features some students with "strong personalities" to promote a balanced discussion (2026a: 30–31). This seemed to work somewhat well in creating a balanced debate overall but may also have resulted in enabling the "free rider" problem (el Massah 2017: 1224); the more vocal student in the group was ultimately the only one that spoke up for the group. An additional surprising discovery was made in one class, where some students secretly switched their assigned groups to remain with their friends. While this was noticed and mentioned by the instructor, the instructor decided not to restore initial groups. Fortunately, the students that did switch groups demonstrated high levels of engagement and spoke up repeatedly during the simulation. This may indicate that with the complexity of the activity, having students work with classmates they are closer with may help alleviate some of the speaking hesitancy, even if the groups are not as balanced. However, the latter may be difficult to determine in the first place, due to a lack of experience using this kind of activity in the lessons previously.

In one group, the debate did ultimately liven up, after a student mentioned a similar case of controversial political speech on a livestream by an Estonian political candidate. In this example, the individual had referenced a violent utterance from an Estonian comedy television show. The student mentioned the case as an example and asked another student, whether their position would be similar if this were the case under review. Further discussion based on this example followed, and other students in the class also appeared intrigued by the discussion. This highlights that students' ability to connect the activity to their prior experience and knowledge from real world situations can increase their engagement with the topic or activity. Recognizing these benefits, the case of the Estonian politician was also adopted for use in an argument mapping activity in Lesson 3.

During the post-simulation feedback stage, all three groups voiced some frustration about the debate. Predominantly, students found the activity relevant and enjoyable but also felt that it was quite challenging. When asked, what made the activity challenging, two groups of students mentioned limited argumentative skills, and the third mentioned challenging vocabulary. This comment, made by one student after being asked what they thought of the activity, aptly describes the prevailing sentiment in the classroom: "we like [the activity], but we just don't know how to argue." One student also pointed out that they found the amount of reading required for preparation to be excessive.

2.6.3 Observation: Lesson 3

Based on students' feedback and instructor observations, the third lesson was dedicated to developing students' argumentative skills. A brief literature review was conducted, and a Collaborative Reflection and Argument Mapping (CR-AM) approach was adopted for this lesson's activities, inspired by Darmawansah et al (2022). Additionally, an article featuring the case of the

Estonian political candidate (Whyte and Väino 2025), which was raised by one of the students in the previous lesson, was selected as a discussion topic for lesson three, since the topic appeared to be familiar to many students and positively impacted their engagement.

The lesson opened with a brief vocabulary organization exercise. The activity took place in small groups, and despite there being no explicitly competitive element to it, most students appeared committed to completing the activity quickly. Most groups were able to categorize the phrases into groups based on their purpose within an argument, coming up with appropriate category names. Save for a few mistakes, most groups were able to complete the activity successfully, and the word lists were left on the table for students to review as needed during the rest of the lesson's activities.

During collaborative reflection on a Padlet discussion board, most students indicated that everyone was "able to" speak up during the activity (despite not everyone having done so) and identified both the reading materials and attentively listening to others' points during the debate as things that helped them participate more effectively. Many students commented on the relevance/importance of the topic. While Group 1 provided mostly thoughtful answers, the second group's answers were comparatively short and in multiple cases, irrelevant or disruptive in nature. A few "joke" answers even needed to be removed, but this removal process did serve as an opportunity to connect the class activity with the topic, pointing out the similarity to how hateful speech is moderated on online forums. Since the reflection took place through Padlet, the use of smartphones in this class did create additional distraction, and students needed to be repeatedly reminded to put their phones away between activities.

In this class, a written debate was held using a collaborative discussion platform called Kialo Edu. Students appeared to enjoy the setup of the platform and quickly grasped how to use

it. Students appeared engaged and although the activity did not focus on speaking, it allowed all students to contribute their opinion to the discussion, with some focal points highlighted by the instructor afterwards. Given that most students had previous knowledge of the specific case in focus of the activity, they were able to highlight relevant points about how this case was different to those discussed in class last time. The responses also appeared quite evenly divided, with approximately equal numbers of students taking the position of either removal or allowance.

When introducing argument structure, it was evident that most students grasped the other elements intuitively but found the concept of “questioning assumptions” new. Examples were given using the context of the Kialo board debate, and students then had the opportunity to practice questioning assumptions using the Kialo board. While it was difficult to monitor exactly, whether all students understood the concept and could use it in argumentative interaction, students’ posts made on the Kialo board indicated that the concept was grasped effectively. During the wrap-up, students indicated that they felt more confident going into a second round of simulated debate, both because of the experience with argument mapping, as well as due to having some experience with simulation activities already.

Since one of the class groups was combined with a second group in this lesson, there were many students attending the lesson who had not participated in the simulation game and could not therefore meaningfully reflect on the activity. As such, the reflection activity was replaced with an alternative task. At the end of class with this group, students were divided into groups of 3 or 4 students, and each group was asked to prepare and present a brief dialogue featuring an argument that incorporates all four elements of argument structure – *formulating claims*, *providing reasons*, *questioning assumptions*, and *offering counterarguments* (Darmawansah et al 2022: 5). Students had approximately 10 minutes to prepare and 10 minutes to perform the mini-plays. While several

groups were able to come up with unique real-life contexts in which arguments can take place, many plays still lacked the “questioning assumptions” element, highlighting once again the stage that most students had found difficult during the debate.

2.6.4 Observation: Lesson 4

The second simulation lesson followed the same structure as the first, although the concluding reflective discussion was replaced with students completing a feedback questionnaire for the purposes of this study. An additional modification that was made in the second simulation round was to allow students to form their own groups and request a specific faction. As much as possible, these requests were honored. This did not appear to significantly impact the balance of the debate or the distribution of responsibilities within groups; like in the previous sessions, some groups appeared to have one chosen spokesperson. On a more positive note, this session of simulation lasted for much longer, approximately 25 minutes with each of the groups, and there were more frequent instances of students responding to each other’s claims and asking questions from their opponents. During the debate, students appeared positively surprised and motivated by this shift. As it was up to the Oversight Board faction to determine whether they had heard enough to decide, the longer span of time can also indicate a balanced, more in-depth discussion. Once again, the same individual students who have usually not participated in class discussion were observed contributing actively to the debate.

In a brief discussion, students reported that they, too, felt that the debate was more effective and noted “questioning assumptions” as one of the key reasons why this was the case. More familiarity with key vocabulary may have been another factor, as students were more frequently heard using the vocabulary introduced in Lesson 1 during this simulation session, alongside other new terms that had come up, such as “incite violence.” In general, the mood in the classroom

following the simulation (compared to the previous one) was less one of frustration and more one of satisfaction, as students were able to see improvement in their capacity to participate in a debate. Thereafter, students completed a reflection questionnaire, which was optionally submitted to the instructor for analysis as part of this study.

About halfway through the debate in one of the groups, a member of the “Defamation Defenders” faction began asking several direct questions to the “Freedom of Speech Absolutists” group about their position. This student’s questions appeared to stem more from their personal stance on the issue at hand than from their assigned role in the debate; however, this deviation did lead to a fruitful and critical debate that enhanced the activity for the class. The student in question was also one that did not initially receive the group they had requested. This demonstrates that to some degree, students’ engagement is tied to the specific roles assigned to them. If a student receives a position that they are not excited about defending, this may negatively affect their level of participation in the activity.

2.7 Analysis (*Reflection*)

2.7.1 Analysis of Classroom Observation

The oft-reported benefit of Reacting games increasing student engagement in class was observed to a limited extent. Comparing students’ levels of engagement with that of “regular” class instruction, there were multiple students who were seen much more actively participating in the activities, but no significant change was observed with other, more passive students. Students’ answers from the collaborative reflection activity (Appendix 5) showed that students found the material both relevant and important, so the selection of social media as a focus topic was successful. One of the possible challenges, however, is that most Reacting titles deal with historical rather than contemporary topics, so this benefit may not extend to other Reacting games. One of

the possible ways to increase the game's impact on students' engagement levels would be to more clearly highlight why the topic, as well as how the skills students develop during the simulation activity would be important to them, and especially so in the context of language acquisition. The collaborative reflection carried out in the third lesson worked well for having students themselves think about why the topic is important and meaningful to them, and to share these ideas with the rest of the class.

Although students who did contribute actively to the debate were heard using English throughout the simulation activity, the debate only made up a small portion of the class. Additional challenges were presented by the fact that students were not using English as much during preparation. Since the activity took place in groups, multiple students who were unwilling to speak also quite easily relayed the responsibility to speak to other group members. In other Reacting games, students are assigned separate individual roles, rather than group roles, which could possibly distribute speaking more effectively across students in the class. A consideration for modifying this game for EFL purposes could be to divide information on the factions' role sheets across group members, so that each group member possesses a unique set of knowledge to rely on and use during the game. This would also help to reduce the volume and amount of time required for reading when students are preparing for the debate. Furthermore, instructors should recognize the complexity of the topic and the reading materials for EFL learners, so students' use of English throughout the preparation stage may be an unrealistic expectation. Instead, a possible modification could be to divide up preparation time into slots when students are required to use English and slots when students may use their native language.

Following the initial unit plan, students did not receive any instruction on argumentative speaking prior to the first simulation activity. While this worked well as a pretest for determining

which focus areas could be developed, it did result in a somewhat unsuccessful first debate, which left several students frustrated by the activity. This may have also been a reason for the decision of Group 3 to abstain from the second simulation module. However, the phrases introduced and analyzed in Lesson 3, as well as the Collaborative Reflection and Argument Mapping activities in the same lesson, worked well and led to more effective argumentative speaking for both groups who did complete a second round of debate, both as observed by the instructor as well as based on students' reflection. It would therefore be a worthwhile adjustment to retain the activities in Lesson 3, but carry them out prior to both simulation sessions. A smaller debate activity that requires less preparation could be carried out in the introductory lesson to allow students and the instructor to assess the specific needs of the class in terms of developing argumentative speaking skills.

In accordance with the initial plan, the unit concluded with students completing a self-assessment and feedback questionnaire, primarily tailored to collect data for this study. As a self-assessment tool, however, the questionnaire relies on students' perceptions rather than any observable way to assess whether students achieved the learning outcomes that had been set for the unit. A possible modification in this stage could be to develop participants' assignment of fairness ratings into an assessable task; for instance, each student could be asked to prepare a one-minute speech in which they give a fairness rating to the Oversight Board, justify their choice, and answer 1–2 follow-up questions given by the instructor or a fellow student. Whether the integration of a graded component would improve students' engagement and/or the quality of their argumentative speaking could be a potential future avenue for study.

2.7.2 Analysis of Student Feedback

The data for this section of analysis was collected through a feedback questionnaire (Appendix 7), which was administered at the end of the fourth lesson. Due to absences and the

submission of the questionnaire being optional, the total number of responses was varied across groups; responses were received from 8 out of 18 students in Group 1, 12 out of 15 students in Group 2, and 9 out of 18 students in Group 3. The present subsection describes the general trends apparent in the Likert-scale questions, accompanied by a thematic analysis of students' impressions and modification suggestions from the open-ended questions. It is important to acknowledge that these responses may have been received from more motivated or more positively affected students, so the data may be somewhat positively skewed. Furthermore, certain answers to Question 12 indicate that a small number of students mistakenly understood the questionnaire as a feedback form for the entire second semester, which also slightly confounds the data.

Across all three groups, students' responses to the unit were broadly positive. In terms of language learning, most students selected "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with statements about vocabulary development (Q1), argumentation skills (Q2), and general speaking ability (Q3). Similar trends emerged in the development of critical thinking and topic knowledge; most students found that the unit helped them both understand different viewpoints (Q6), as well as understand the topic more effectively (Q10). More significant variation appeared in students' responses to how the activity affected their speaking confidence (Q4), which included several negative responses. This could be a result of the relatively high overall difficulty of the activity, which is confirmed by a few students mentioning the difficulty of the activity in their answers to Question 12. For example, a student suggested that the class should "start with more easier debates and then move to the harder ones" (Q12).

Predominantly, students listed "debating" or "speaking" as the skill they improved the most (Q11). Some also listed "argumentation." Subskills related to argumentative speaking, such as structuring an argument, considering others' viewpoints, and offering counterclaims were also

mentioned. Group 3, where many students orally reported having difficulties with vocabulary after the second lesson had also listed “vocabulary” as their main area for improvement. This could indicate that the areas in which students saw the greatest improvements were the aspects that they found most challenging in the beginning. Overall, *The Oversight Board* game appears to have the most potential – when used in a language class – to develop learners’ speaking skills. Even so, receptive skills received a few mentions; a few students found that the skill they improved in the most was “listening,” and several students found that the preparation texts handed to students before the simulation were an effective way of helping them prepare and gain a deeper understanding of the topic (Q11, Q12).

Most students found that they had participated actively during the group and pair discussions (Q7), which partially contradicted the instructor’s observations. When assessing the effectiveness of their group (Q8), students’ responses were more varied, indicating differences in group effectiveness that are also echoed by several suggested modifications to the activity allowing students to form their own groups (Q12). These suggestions were offered by students in Group 3, which was the group that did not participate in the second round of debate (and hence did not redo the activity with autonomy in forming groups), but the absence of this suggestion from other groups’ responses to Q12, as well as the observed higher effectiveness of the second round, points to this having been a positive modification to the activity. Even so, a few responses in these groups still pointed to some students either not contributing – or contributing to a limited extent in speaking. As one suggestion for improving the activity (Q13) declared: “Everyone must speak.”

Students in all three groups responded that the topic of the unit felt relevant (Q9), which echoed the sentiment in students’ answers to the collaborative reflection discussion questions (Appendix 5), where students mentioned both the prevalence and significance of the topic as

reasons. Even so, multiple suggestions for possible improvements mentioned topic choice (Q12). No specific alternative topics were offered in the responses. This does illuminate a possible challenge with even longer simulations activities (such as full-length Reacting games). The differences in students' interests mean that identifying a topic that all participants would find enjoyable or relevant could be very difficult (if not impossible), which could lead to frustration and reduced participation for prolonged periods of class time from certain students. Shorter activities that alternate topics more frequently could help alleviate this. While the questionnaire did not explicitly inquire about whether participants had found the length of the unit/simulation activity appropriate, this was not an aspect mentioned as a possible improvement. Instead, several students requested additional examples or background information.

One theme which emerged from students' responses, and which has been somewhat overlooked so far in this study, is students' enjoyment of the activity. Several responses to Q13 and Q14 contained positive affective comments about the activity and this instructor's teaching approach in general. Multiple responses discussed the unit's activities as "fun" and "interesting" and expressed appreciation. As one student said: "What a proper bloody unit this was, thank you." Another response mentioned that the positive classroom atmosphere was something that contributes to the quality of their learning: "you learn more when you're having fun" (Q14). Even so, some students voiced preference for more traditional learning approaches by requesting less group work or an increased focus on explicit grammar teaching.

2.8 Discussion and Revised Plan

The guiding aim of this initial cycle of action research was to determine whether the Reacting game, *The Oversight Board* can be effectively implemented into B2-level upper secondary school English language classes, and whether it is effective in developing learners'

speaking skills. Findings from the questionnaire and observation data suggest that the game can serve as an engaging, active and communicative classroom activity, but that certain modifications are required for the game to better suit the upper secondary school language learning context. This section provides a brief overview of the core benefits of the game as a language teaching tool, as well as its benefits and challenges. Lastly, for a potential second cycle of action research, new modifications to the lessons' materials and unit structure are proposed.

Speaking skill development was chosen as the main language learning focus of the activity, given that the structure of the simulation would create opportunities for students to meaningfully practice both collaborative and argumentative speaking in a realistic communicative context – these features closely align with the various approaches that adhere to the communicative approach to language teaching, such as Global Simulation and Action-Oriented Scenarios (Levine 2004, Piccardo and North 2019). Although most students did report that the area they improved in most was speaking, the observed spoken participation of students was uneven. In all of the simulation sessions, there were groups in which one of the more active or vocal students spoke for the entire group, while the remaining members remained silent. This issue was partially remedied by reminding students to distribute responsibilities in the preparation phase. The imbalance of speaking was likely brought about both by the high complexity of the activity, as well as the challenge of unequal participation that can emerge in dynamics of group-work (el Massah 2018). As such, the simulation game can be seen to create optimal conditions for speaking development through communicative language use, but the activity did not in itself ensure balanced participation or speaking practice across all participants.

Student suggestions for future modification included either to allow students to form their own groups or to find other ways to ensure that all students speak up in the debate. While students

quite evenly rated their own participation highly, there were several responses where students were disgruntled by their peers not speaking. An additional possible modification to more evenly distribute speaking would be the replacement of group role sheets with individualized role cards; these cards would each contain some of the information for the group, but would create additional knowledge gaps within groups that could promote communication between group members during the preparation phase and streamline the distribution of responsibilities for the debate phase. A proposed set of role cards based on the “Freedom of Speech Absolutists” role sheet (Bossetta and Giebried 2026b) is provided in Appendix 9.

Previous research on Reacting has highlighted the positive impact of the game series on increasing learner motivation and engagement (e.g. Higbee 2009). These benefits were mostly confirmed by this study, as many students had found the activity both enjoyable and relevant, and reported having participated actively throughout the unit, with their favorite sections being the ones involving group simulation. This reflects Deci and Ryan’s (2020) perspective that students’ intrinsic motivation is promoted by authenticity, real-world relevance, and relatedness (students’ ability to connect with others). Future improvements in this regard involve increasing the “immersion” of the activity. Immersion can lead to higher internalization of externally motivating factors (Lombard and Ditton 1997) but in the case of this game could provide additional language learning support as well. Throughout the debates, students referred to each other by their names or addressed opposing factions using the name of one of the participants, rather than the arguably more evocative but quite complex names of the factions given by the game’s authors (e.g. “Defamation Defenders”). The original set of materials comes with a set of Zoom backgrounds with faction names (and different colors) to use when the game is carried out in a remote setting. Developing these into signs or placards for a physical game setting could provide an additional

degree of immersion and encourage students to use the names of the factions when communicating with each other.

The literature review helped anticipate some of the possible challenges of carrying out a Reacting simulation with upper secondary school language learners. These included the potential need to reduce or simplify background reading materials (e.g. Eick and Guikema 2019) or supplement the activity with shorter tasks more directly aimed at language learning (Albright 2013). To these ends, a supplementary lesson focusing on argument structure inspired by Darmawansah et al (2022) was carried out between the two simulations. Between the two simulation modules, the contrast in the length of the debates, and students' reduced reliance on reading from the case materials demonstrates that the modification was effective. This is consistent with the notion that task repetition and focus on form activities can enhance the language learning impact of simulation-type activities (van de Guchte et al 2016). While carrying out the supplementary lesson between the two simulations allowed the experience of the first to be used as a basis for reflection and identification of areas for improvement, future iterations of this unit should move the focus on form lesson earlier in the unit, to give students language-specific support ahead time for a more enjoyable and successful simulation experience in both modules of *The Oversight Board*.

It is important to acknowledge that the findings discussed above relate to a small-scale action research project within one instructor's specific teaching context. The data, based on one teacher's observations and voluntary student feedback, are specific to this context and hence not generalizable to simulation-based EFL instruction more broadly. While the main value of the project has been the refinement of the unit for this instructor's future use, the experience, processes and materials discussed here hopefully serve as encouragement for other language teachers to

consider implementing simulation-based activities (or perhaps, *Reacting to the Past* simulations in particular) in their language courses.

CONCLUSION

According to the theory of communicative language teaching, language acquisition occurs when students are using language, rather than through memorization of terms or rote practice. Novice language instructors looking to adopt this approach will quickly discover that textbooks are of limited use in creating such authentic communicative encounters in the classroom. The challenge can potentially be amplified by students with low engagement or foreign language speaking anxiety. One possible way to tackle these challenges is to integrate simulation-game-based learning in the classroom. By creating both an authentic and playfully competitive environment, simulation games can help boost learners' intrinsic motivation and create opportunities for relevant and realistic communicative situations. Yet, the time required for creating a simulation game *ab initio* for the language classroom can be daunting.

The aim of this study was to experiment with implementing a *Reacting to the Past* simulation game in an upper secondary English as a Foreign Language class. While originally used in a college teaching context, the games have proliferated to other subject areas and class levels; foreign language learning notwithstanding. Based on student interest and the alignment of the topic with the overall language course, Bossetta and Giebfried's in-development *Reacting* microgame, *The Oversight Board*, was chosen for analysis in this study. The study followed an Action Research approach, with data collected through instructor observation and students' feedback. Findings suggest that the answer to the central research question – whether this game can be effectively implemented in upper secondary English language classes – is an affirmative one. While the game's impact on engagement was generally positive, caution must be taken as both the high complexity of the game materials and certain group dynamics can lead to unequal levels of participation and engagement within class groups.

Effective use of *Reacting to the Past* games in upper secondary level language instruction requires modification of some of the game's materials. In this project, the game was supplemented with a lesson that focused on strengthening students' argumentative speaking skills. This lesson followed a collaborative reflection and argument mapping strategy (Darmawansah et al 2022). The lesson helped introduce a focus on form stage to the activity to more clearly support students in presenting and defending arguments in debate-style interactions. An additional proposed follow-up modification is the use of individualized role cards in lieu of the group information sheets used in the original game. Such cards would distribute the information available to any faction among its members, which could lead to more collaboration and target language use during preparation, and assist in more evenly distributing responsibilities for the debate. The impact of immersion-increasing elements, both in the form of physical props and game mechanics, is an additional intriguing area for future exploration.

It is important to emphasize that as an Action Research project, the nature of this study is small in scale and specific to this instructor's teaching context. Rather than to provide more broadly generalizable findings, the focus of the project has been the professional development of this author as a language instructor, as well as the evaluation of the suitability of the materials for this author's future use. The broader contribution offered by the study is the demonstration of how *Reacting to the Past* games can be implemented in upper secondary school language learning curricula. Additionally, the study offers considerations for both instructors looking to incorporate these games in language instruction and *Reacting to the Past* game authors looking to modify or develop games for use in foreign language instruction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

Learning objectives:

- Students can explain the role of the Meta Oversight board in the content moderation process on Meta platforms
- Students can define the concepts of safety and newsworthiness and analyze how the two principles inform content moderation decisions
- Students can use relevant terminology when discussing content moderation on Meta platforms
- In a simulation activity, students can present the perspective of an Oversight Board member, and evaluate that member's position regarding safety and newsworthiness in the moderation of political speech on Meta platforms

Time (min)	Activity	Materials	Purpose
10	Students work in pairs to compare and contrast images representing digital and print media and identify potential challenges associated with each media type Teacher holds a summarizing discussion, asks follow-up questions	Lesson Slides	Activate prior knowledge, stimulate engagement with the topic
5	Teacher introduces the structure and aims of the unit	Lesson Slides	Clarify expectations and situate the lesson within the learning outcomes of the unit
5	Teacher asks students to describe what typically occurs when a post is removed from a social media platform (based on their prior knowledge). Teacher records the responses stepwise in a timeline on the board Teacher then introduces the role of the Oversight Board within this process		Generate attention, connect topic to personal experience. Present new concepts
30	Teacher distributes a vocabulary and information-seeking worksheet Individually, students match vocabulary elements with definitions, then find information from Oversight Board website to answer short-answer questions	Worksheet: Key Vocabulary + Oversight Board Information (Appendix 2)	Introduce new vocabulary and provide structured practice Develop content knowledge about the Oversight Board
5	Teacher selects students to report on their answers to the vocabulary exercise and findings from the website. Teacher corrects information or elaborates, as needed		Check comprehension of vocabulary and key concepts

10	In a rotating role-play, students introduce a chosen Oversight Board member to each other and explain that member's stance on safety and newsworthiness	Students' notes, in worksheet	Practice vocabulary and spoken production in a structured context Highlight diversity of viewpoints on the Oversight board due to different cultural, social, and career backgrounds of the board members
5	Students briefly provide feedback on the lesson (thumb temperature gauge) and indicate their readiness for the simulation in the upcoming class		Encourage reflection and collect feedback on lesson

Lesson 2

Learning objectives:

- Students can identify the main issue and relevant additional details in Oversight Board case summaries
- Students can give a clear and logical oral summary of a case, drawing on information from case summaries
- Students can collaboratively prepare for debate by distributing responsibilities, mapping out key points, developing supporting arguments, and anticipating questions
- Students can present an argument, give supporting reasons and ask questions in a debate

Time (min)	Activity	Materials	Purpose
5	A) Students who were present in the previous class respond to short review questions B) Students who were absent watch a short explanatory video about the Oversight Board	Lesson Slides	Check for understanding, reiterate key takeaways from previous class, identify possible misconceptions Generate baseline understanding for students who were absent
15	Students form pairs. Teacher distributes a set of two case studies to each pair. Students read one of the case studies, identify the central issue and key details, and summarize the information to their partners Students report on their partner's summary in whole class discussion, teacher asks probing questions as needed, records key points on mind maps on the whiteboard	<i>The Oversight Board</i> "Politicians Module" case summaries (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b) Guiding questions to help students summarize, on the class slides	Familiarize students with the cases and their differences for debate Identify and define unfamiliar vocabulary, utilize newly learned terms Identify and present key information from texts in speaking Give opportunities to ask clarifying questions
5	Teacher assigns students to simulation factions and distributes role descriptions to each faction group	<i>The Oversight Board</i> "Politicians Module"	Establish roles for the simulation

		role sheets (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b)	
5	Teacher explains the objectives, procedures and outcomes of the simulation Teacher gives additional encouragement to distribute responsibilities within groups and encourages students to consult the teacher during the preparation phase	Instructions on class slides <i>The Oversight Board</i> “Politicians Module” role sheets (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b)	Present expectations and general structure Provide guidance for effective collaborative preparation Frame the simulation as the communicative scenario of the lesson and other activities as pre-task preparation
25	Simulation game. The Oversight Board faction opens the debate and moderates. Other factions present their positions on removal or allowance of the post and policy recommendations. Students ask and respond to follow-up questions The Oversight Board deliberates separately and delivers a final decision, giving reasons to justify their choice Other factions assign a “fairness rating” to Oversight Board’s decision and justify their choice	<i>The Oversight Board</i> “Politicians Module” role sheets (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026b) Simulation timeline (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 22–23) on slides	Practice argumentative speaking; presenting and justifying opinions, asking and responding to clarifying questions, offering relevant counterpoints
10	Teacher holds a reflective discussion about the debate, asks for possible changes to the game’s structure and what additional support (incl. language) is needed for a future simulation activity		Students identify challenges, successes, and opportunities for improvement Collecting oral feedback on the activity
5	Teacher presents the actual resolutions to both cases, asks volunteer(s) to read them out loud		Provide additional real-world context to activity Concluding the lesson

Lesson 3

Learning objectives:

- Students use relevant vocabulary when orally presenting arguments, offer supporting evidence, question assumptions and present counterclaims (on the topic of political speech on social media)
- Students use argument mapping to structure arguments, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and offer relevant and effective responses in discussions and debates

Time (min)	Activity	Materials	Purpose
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10	Teacher distributes sets of phrases to students, asks them to ‘categorize’ the phrases based on their function For faster finishers, teacher asks students to give a name to each category Teacher asks each group to list one category of terms and explain how the terms connect, writes categories on board	Phrase slips with useful phrases for structuring arguments (Appendix 4)	Introduce/review relevant vocabulary for argumentative speaking Practice collaboration
5	Teacher introduces the learning objectives and timeline of the lesson	Lesson slides	Explain the purpose and usefulness of the activities in the lesson, set and clarify expectations
10	Collaborative reflection	Padlet board for collaborative reflection with guiding questions (Appendix 5) Smartphones for students	Identify strengths and weaknesses in students’ argumentative skills Evaluate students’ individual contributions to last lesson’s debate
5	Teacher presents a screenshot about a news article, then asks students to share what they know about the situation. Asks questions connecting the issue to the cases discussed in class last time	News article case study (Whyte and Väino 2025)	Generate interest, allow students to recall prior knowledge, connect class concepts to real world experiences
15	Teacher introduces Kialo board and opening question Using phrases from the introductory activity, students present arguments for/against the statements. Then, students select an argument from a classmate to respond to. The activity is repeated until 4 cycles of argumentation is carried out	Kialo Edu collaborative discussion board	Practice the language of presenting and responding to arguments, as introduced in opening activity Create a corpus of students’ output to analyze in argument mapping
10	Teacher introduces the structure of an argument (model from – find citation) and explains “argument mapping” activity	Relevant terms written on whiteboard	Introduce new knowledge about argument structure Provide guidance and set expectations
10	Students identify examples of each argument element from Kialo board and add additional points if they identify any elements they did not do previously		Students use new knowledge to analyze their own output
5	Class wrap up: teacher asks class to indicate with numbers (0–5) how useful they found the collaborative reflection and argument mapping strategies. Gives a preview for upcoming class (another simulation game)		Collect students’ feedback. Preview activities in the upcoming class

Lesson 4

Learning objectives:

- Students can identify the central issue and relevant supporting details in Oversight Board case summaries
- Students can produce a clear and logically structured oral summary of a case based on textual information
- Students can collaborate effectively in preparation for a debate by allocating roles, organizing arguments, taking notes and anticipating counterarguments
- Students can formulate and defend arguments in a debate, justifying their position with supporting claims and evidence, and responding to questions

Time (min)	Activity	Materials	Purpose
10	In groups of four, students create short skits representing the four-stage argument structure. Willing groups are asked to perform in front of the class	Lesson slides	Recall prior learning, practice collaboration, connect concepts to real-world situations, and utilize argumentative language effectively
10	Students self-select pairs to work in. Each pair is given two case summaries. Each student reads one case summary and orally summarizes it to their partner While preparing, the teacher reminds students to take margin notes, underline and highlight key points in case summaries After summaries, teacher asks volunteers to share summaries with the class and writes relevant key points on mind maps on the whiteboard	Case materials, “Protesters” Module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026c)	Introduce case studies Practice reading skills for finding specific information and identifying important points in a text Practice speaking skills (relaying information/giving a summary)
5	Students form their own groups for simulation. Teacher asks groups if they have a faction preference and distributes role cards, accommodating for student preference wherever possible	Role sheets, “Protesters” module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026c)	Organize groups for simulation activity
5	Teacher reminds students of the structure of the simulation, provides additional encouragement for collaboration and use of English for collaborative discussion. Asks if any clarification is needed		Provide guidance on simulation structure and set expectations for the activity Encourage use of target language during preparation time
25	Simulation activity (as described by Bossetta and Giebfried, 2025). OB faction opens the discussion and moderates throughout. Other faction members present their position on the issue and suggest policy recommendations	Case materials, “Protesters” Module (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026c)	Practice argumentative speaking; presenting and justifying opinions, asking and responding to clarifying questions, offering relevant counterpoints.

	Other faction members and OB may ask clarifying questions or respond to points made. OB deliberates and presents a final decision. Faction members decide on a “fairness rating” and justify their choice	Simulation timeline (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026a: 22–23) on slides	
15	Students individually complete a self-assessment and feedback questionnaire Teacher responds to clarifying questions as needed	Feedback and self-assessment questionnaire (Appendix 6)	Evaluate effectiveness of the unit in achieving learning outcomes Collect feedback on student perception of the activities and suggestions for improvement

Appendix 2: Vocabulary & Oversight Board Background Information Handout

Instructions: This handout is designed to guide you to explore the role and responsibility of the Oversight Board. You should complete this handout independently, using information available on the Oversight Board website (<https://www.oversightboard.com/>).

Part 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Below is a list of key vocabulary related to the Oversight Board.

1) Based on the definitions given in the middle column, write a suitable word or phrase from the word list in the left column. The first one has been done for you as an example. There is one extra term.

govern	appeal	freedom of expression	policy
	accountability	content moderation	oversight

Term	Definition (from Cambridge English Dictionary – dictionary.cambridge.org)
govern	<i>To control and direct the public business of a country, city, group of people, etc.</i>
	<i>The fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens.</i>
	<i>A set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people.</i>
	<i>A request to the public for money, information, or help.</i>
	<i>The right to say whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited.</i>
	<i>Making certain that the rules of an internet discussion are not broken, for example by removing any threatening or offensive messages.</i>

Part 2: What the Oversight Board Does

Instructions: Explore the “Who We Are” section on the Oversight Board website and find answers to the questions below!

1) What kind of cases does the Oversight Board make decisions about?

2) What are the two ways that cases reach the Oversight board?

3) Other than recommending to allow or ban posts, what other kind of recommendations does the Oversight Board give to Meta?

Part 3: Who They Are

*Instructions: The Oversight Board is made up of people from many different fields and parts of the world. Navigate to the “Meet the Board” section on the website, **find one Oversight Board member that interests you**, and answer the following questions from their perspective!*

1) Where are you from and what expertise (education, work, activism) do you bring to the board?

2) What topics related to freedom of speech or online safety are important to you?

3) Which is more important to you: safety or newsworthiness, when it comes to sharing information on social media?

Appendix 3: Review Questions and Students' Answers

Responses to Review Questions – Group 1

Question 1: What is the Meta Oversight Board?	Question 2: What does “newsworthiness” mean?
An organization that works as a kind of security on meta social media platforms	When the information is more important than the safety of its risks
The Oversight Board is an independent company that checks posts on Facebook and Instagram, after which they decide whether to delete the post or not	Newsworthiness is the importance of a piece of information which could override its safety risks
The Meta Oversight Board is a separate organization that focuses on the safety and freedom of speech on reported Instagram posts	Newsworthiness means whether a post is worthy enough to be posted or not
Controls what posts should stay and what not	Their opinion should be heard
International company, it can bring back your post (Meta platform) if you disagree with the reason why it was taken down	The main point is news should be very informative
Diplomats who were in Meta Oversight Board	
A committee that decides what posts are worth keeping up and what are inappropriate	Newsworthiness is a published article that isn't hurtful or [?]

Responses to Review Questions – Group 2

Question 1: What is the Meta Oversight Board?	Question 2: What does “newsworthiness” mean?
Meta Oversight Board is an organization who checks if a post politically bad or not	If a news article is worth being shown to the class
Company of civilians who review and report/ban meta posts	-
It's a group that checks Facebook and Instagram content decisions	-
It's a place or a company that works in Meta and fb and it like checks different posts that are put out and reported and they remove it if needed	-
The Oversight Board keeps Meta's feeds clear of hate speech, sensitive content, radical speech and etc.	Is something or someone worth covering in the news or media. Does it have any actual value or can it hurt someone or be too radical about something
It's in the name. It's a board that oversees all activities on META platforms. It's a group of people coming from all around the world: activists, judges, lawyers	A topic or an article that needs to be shared worldwide for safety causes
Platform/service that helps you appeal unsafe content on the WWW	Information that doesn't have false information
Meta OB is an organization that focuses on making sure social media has appropriate content	Newsworthiness is the factual value of news
A board that [?] the medias videos. They can take down post/videos that are not appropriate for the website	When something is not appropriate for the website but it's important news it will not be taken down
A company that has a final say in Meta's content	Are the news worth sharing
The Oversight Board keeps the posts in Meta “family friendly” and deletes all of the sensitive content	It's when something is worthy of being in the news

Responses to Review Questions – Group 3

Question 1: What is the Meta Oversight Board?	Question 2: What does “newsworthiness” mean?
An organization that oversees META apps post removals & decides if posts can stay up or have to be removed. They also suggest policy changes to meta	Engaging & relevant/pertinent
How Meta treats people and	-
Meta Oversight Board is a company that independently moderates Meta platforms and makes new policy suggestions to Meta	Newsworthiness is something that gives news the point of being released
It’s a group that reviews appeals submitted by people who feel like their post was unfairly taken down. They also review policies	Newsworthiness means whether something is worth publishing for the wider public, and if
It controls reported posts on social media	If news are worthy
The Meta Oversight Board is an independent company that is working for Meta’s apps. The point is to manage all messages in the apps	Newsworthiness is a case that affects many people at a time
They manage Meta’s posts and ban or remove stuff that is like racist, explicit, and so on	-
It is an org that controls what goes on media (FB, IG, Threads) and what doesn’t if Meta couldn’t handle it	It is an article worthy of being on the news
They oversee Meta’s reporting and make suggestions on policy	Don’t know
-	-
Useless thing that is used by people who can’t read and understand policies	Something that is worth publishing and making the news
OB is an organization that helps to get banned videos back on the platform when theres injustice	A info that is worth publishing
It’s a website that delas with internet posts equally	-
-	appropriate

Appendix 4: Word Slips for Vocabulary Exploration

To begin with...	As far as I'm concerned, ...
Firstly, ...	I disagree with the point that ...
First of all, ...	However, ...
More importantly, ...	The problem with this point of view is that...
Furthermore, ...	I agree with you to a point ...
In addition, ...	I see where you are coming from ...
In my opinion, ...	I see what you are saying but ...
The way I see it, ...	

(Day 2022: 203–204; ESL Debates 2024)

Preparation Instructions:

Print, cut out and shuffle the phrases provided above. Divide students into groups with 2-3 students each. Distribute a set of word slips to each of the group. These can be collected after the activity and reused.

Instructions given to students:

You will receive a set of phrases you can use in a debate-style argument. As a group, categorize the phrases based on their function into 5 groups with 3 terms in each group.

Suggestion for scaffolding:

Groups requiring additional help can either be given one group already completed (as an example), or a set of word slips where one term in each group is highlighted.

Suggestion for extension:

Groups who are done early can be asked to come up with a name for each of the categories. Following that, students could be asked to write one additional vocabulary item for each of the groups.

Additional comments:

While checking the answers, the teacher should point out, which of the phrases are appropriate to use in written arguments and which are more suitable for a spoken register.

Appendix 5: Collaborative Reflection Questions and Students' Answers

The following tables contain students' answers to a collaborative reflection task following the critical reflection and argument mapping strategy by Darmawansah et al (2022). The activity was carried out with 2 out of the 3 groups. Responses which clearly indicated the student had been absent from the previous lesson (e.g. "I was not here") as well as disruptive responses (e.g. "Sigma 67") have been removed.

During last week's debate, was the discussion relevant and thoughtful? Why do you think so?	Were all students able to participate? Was there anyone who stood out positively? What did they do that made them stand out?	What helped you prepare and participate in the debate? What made it more challenging?
It was an good experience showing, that managing what to keep and what to delete is infact a really difficult mission to do, since you can't let your own opinions change the final decision. Social media post takedowns and safety is an important matter worldwide, since it in a way controls the world	All got equal chances	It is challenging to make your point make sense to others
It was thoughtful, every point of view got to state their piece and later add to it. It was challenging to debate with such a little information about the "factions"	Everyone was able to participate. [Student's Name] stood out because he was in the oversight board group and he was one of the main characters	-
It was definitely relevant because it was about real world problems	Everyone was able to participat and everyone stood out.	The preparing paper helped a lot. It was hard to make your point clear to others
Yes was very thoughtful and relevant, because everyday lots of posts get taken down and we got chance to have a say!	Yes everyone was able to participate and communicate with classmates. No one stood out very much	The reading task helped us prepare very well. The challenging part was coming to a unanimous conclusion
mark zuckerberg	-	The preparing paper helped me prepare and participate in the debate. Other parties madr it more challenging
Yes it was relevant because there are people who post inappropriate media and it should be removed.	Everyone was able to participate	The reading task helped me prepare for the speaking task.

Collaborative Reflection Responses from Group 1

During last week's debate, was the discussion relevant and thoughtful? Why do you think so?	Were all students able to participate? Was there anyone who stood out positively? What did they do that made them stand out?	What helped you prepare and participate in the debate? What made it more challenging?
I believe it was relevant enough, some of the topics covered were about human rights, what's safe to see online and so on	I believe everyone was able to voice out their opinions when they wished to do so	It helped that I kind of listened in on what the groups were talking about. It helped prepare questions a little- since I was on the oversight board we didn't have any real preparing to do
Yes, I don't want to give examples, because I don't remember	Everyone was able to speak	Background info
Yes	Yes, no	I don't know
-	Everyone spoke	I'm not sure
-	Everyone had a chance to say something	I have no idea, maybe talking with my group

Collaborative Reflection Responses from Group 2

Appendix 6: Reflection and Feedback Questionnaire: Form

Instructions: This questionnaire is designed to help you reflect on the activities we completed in this unit and provide feedback for me to improve how these kinds of activities can be carried out in the future.

Your responses will be used for my MA research project investigating the potential of Reacting to the Past games in language classes. The responses are anonymous. If you do not wish to submit this questionnaire for analysis, take it with you at the end of class. Thank you!

1. The activities in this unit helped me learn and use new vocabulary.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
2. This unit helped me structure a clear and logical argument (for a speech or debate).
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
3. My speaking skills improved during this unit.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
4. After this unit, I feel more confident speaking in English.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
5. This unit developed my ability to ask and respond to questions in a discussion or debate.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
6. This unit taught me how to evaluate different viewpoints.
 - ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Somewhat agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree

7. I actively took part in pair and group work during the unit.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

8. My group worked effectively and shared responsibilities.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

9. I found the topic of this unit relevant.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

10. The materials and activities helped me understand the topic better.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

11. Which one skill did you improve the most in during this unit?

12. Which activities or materials did you find most useful for you? Why?

13. If we had another simulation-based activity like this in the future, what would you change?

14. If there is anything else you would like to share, please share it here!

Appendix 7: Reflection and Feedback Questionnaire: Students' Answers

Answers to each Likert-type statement are given in the following format:
no. of responses in Group 1/ no. of responses in G2/ no. of responses in G3/ total responses

Total number of forms submitted per group:

- Group 1: 8/18 students.
- Group 2: 12/15 students
- Group 3: 9/18 students.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Q1: The activities in this unit helped me learn and use new vocabulary.	0/0/0//0	0/0/0//0	2/2/1//5	3/4/5//12	3/6/3//12
Q2: This unit helped me structure a clear and logical argument (for a speech or debate).	0/0/0//0	0/0/1//1	2/3/1//6	2/2/3//7	4/7/4//15
Q3: My speaking skills improved during this unit.	0/0/0//0	0/0/0//0	2/4/1//7	4/2/5//11	2/6/3//11
Q4: After this unit, I feel more confident speaking in English.	1/1/0//2	1/0/0//1	2/6/2//10	1/3/1//5	3/1/6//10
Q5: This unit developed my ability to ask and respond to questions in a discussion or debate.	0/0/0//0	2/0/0//0	0/3/5//8	6/6/1//13	0/3/3//6
Q6: This unit taught me how to evaluate different viewpoints.	0/0/0//0	1/1/0//0	1/1/0//2	2/3/2//7	4/7/7//18
Q7: I actively took part in pair and group work during the unit.	0/0/0//0	0/1/0//0	2/3/0//5	3/2/3//8	3/6/6//15
Q8: My group worked	0/0/0//0	1/0/0//0	0/2/2//4	5/5/2//12	2/5/5//12

effectively and shared responsibilities.					
Q9: I found the topic of this unit relevant.	0/0/0//0	0/1/0//0	3/2/1//6	1/2/1//4	4/7/7//18
Q10: The materials and activities helped me understand the topic better.	0/0/0//0	0/0/0//0	1/1/0//2	2/3/4//9	5/8/5//18

Q11: Which one skill did you improve the most in during this unit?	Q12: Which activities or materials did you find most useful for you? Why?	Q13: If we had another simulation-based activity like this in the future, what would you change?	Q14: If there is anything else you would like to share, please share it here!
Group 1			
Talking and debating	Active learning and group tasks because it's fun and you learn more when your having fun	Nothing really, maybe more group tasks	-
Countering	Speeches, because I didn't know all the topics	More interesting topics	U the goat
Debating	The worksheets, sometimes straight cramming works best	I would force people to argue more in debates	I don't have anything
Debating	Debates about real life stories/politics	More background info	Your teaching methods are fun and great
Debating – I am more confident than ever	Debating sessions helped a lot	More background info	Your classes bring me joy
Speaking	Talking because it helped a little with vocabulary	Idk	There isn't anything
Talking and critical thinking	Preparing sheets because it helped me to understand my position	I would make it optional, because I didn't feel first time very confident about debating	No
Debating	The debating website [Kialo Edu], I like debating	Everyone must speak	What a proper bloody unit this was, thank you
Group 2			
Debating and taking others' opinion into account	Group projects, because I enjoyed talking	Take out the 10 min of staring at a painting	You are a good teacher, Mr. T (Teacher) Joosep Võrno!
Debating skill	The preparing sheet because they helped us to keep structure	Nothing	-
Speaking	Grammar, I need it	Nothing	-
Finding points to add to different viewpoints	The different texts about OB claims were interesting and useful to gain new points of views	Add more POVs- or factions that change	Nothing

Debate	News, to know what's going on	Nothing	-
My vocabulary	When we did the activity only using the World Population History place and the passive exercises	Nothing	I love your class, but I would love it even more if we didn't have a lot of group works
Speaking abilities	Talking	Nothing really	-
Debating and framing an argument. New vocabulary	I really enjoyed the space poem, evaluating it. It was cute and interesting to read.	I don't really know, I'm not into true crime all that much, but I don't know what else could be instead of it	English classes are the ones I wait for the most. I like going to Joosep's class and participating. They are fun, interesting and engaging
	The debates were useful because it was good for language, but the topics were bad	Better topics	I didn't like the space lesson
Listening	Doing groupwork	I don't know, nothing	Have a nice day!
Listening skill	The background info was important for the debate	I'd maybe talk a little bit more	Class was good!
I was absent most of the time, but I read more harder texts and understood better	The debates were useful, but the topics were hard	Topics	Nothing
Group 3			
Speaking skills (during the discussion and debate)	Any activities when we write, because I use words from my vocabulary. Also questioning or answering questions in pairs is interesting	I would have done the real political debate	-
-	-	-	-
New vocabulary	To debate, to understand different viewpoints	Better groups, so I can be with people who take this as seriously as me	You're cool!
Speaking in English	Structure of a debate, because I didn't know it before	I would start with more easier debates and then would move to the harder ones	-
Speaking (learning new words)	Group activities, I learned better with other people then with myself	Nothing	-
Speaking louder and clearer	When the teacher was explaining and then we tried to do a little role-play	More explaining and examples	-
The one skill that improved was debating	Ones that teacher showed us	No, I really like this class	You remind me of Jim Halpert from "The Office." Currently on the episode "Good-bye Michael"
Speaking clearly in English	Probably the group work including two cases of threatening social media	Maybe we could choose our teammates	

	posts. It was the first time I tried debating in real life		
Speaking	Participating in debate, it increased my vocabulary	More examples	😊

Appendix 9: Example Role Cards for *The Oversight Board*

This set of role cards is a supplementary resource created for The Oversight Board (Bossetta and Giebfried 2026).

Freedom of Speech Absolutists You are a <u>political science scholar</u> who regularly uses social media for research. You think that keeping potentially harmful posts online helps maintain accountability. You think that even when posts are removed from platforms, they should remain visible in a <i>transparency archive</i> that explains why the posts were removed.	Freedom of Speech Absolutists You are a <u>tech-conscious activist</u> who is concerned about how much control is given to social media platforms through content moderation. You also believe that limiting harmful posts on large platforms case-by-case is unfeasible due to the volume of social media content.
Freedom of Speech Absolutists You are an <u>independent journalist</u> who publishes a personal blog online. You believe that information should be free and that people should be able to hear multiple sides from any story. Limiting certain kinds of speech from social media could lead to biased perspectives.	Freedom of Speech Absolutists You are a <u>civil rights lawyer</u> who wants to protect people's right to protest. Removing harmful political speech from platforms could lead to future situations where calls for violence are necessary for protecting democracy or overthrowing dictators.
Freedom of Speech Absolutists You are a <u>satirical cartoonist</u> who uses social media to share your art with the world. You believe that people should have a right to express themselves without having to worry about censorship. Context and intent are important considerations when harmful language is used.	Your Objectives in the Game: - Present and defend your position about whether the two posts should be allowed or removed from Meta platforms. - Discuss one possible policy recommendation that Meta should adopt. -After the debate, evaluate the Oversight Board's ruling (1–5) based on how fairly they address your (and others') perspectives and concerns. (back of card)

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Joosep Roald Võrno

ENG: Experimenting with a *Reacting to the Past* Simulation Game in an Estonian Upper Secondary EFL Classroom

EST: Simulatsioonipõhise õppemängu *Reacting to the Past* katsetamine Eesti gümnaasiumi inglise keele võõrkeeletundides

Magistritöö

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Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on välja selgitada, kas ja millisel viisil on võimalik Eesti gümnaasiumiastme võõrkeeletundides kasutada *Reacting to the Past* ajaloolisi simulatsioonimänge, eelkõige õpilaste rääkimisoskuse toetamiseks ja arendamiseks. Uurimus hõlmab Bossetta ja Giebfriedi (2026) simulatsioonimängu *The Oversight Board* integreerimist 11. klasside inglise keele tundidesse ühes Eesti gümnaasiumis, lähtudes tegevusuuringu (Action Research) põhimõtetest.

Magistritöö esimene peatükk annab ülevaate simulatsiooni- ja mängupõhise õppe pedagoogilistest eelistest ja võimalustest nii hariduses üldiselt, kui ka spetsiifiliselt võõrkeeleeõppe kontekstis. Peatükis tuuakse esile, et simulatsioonimängudel põhinev õpe on aktiivne, suhtluspõhine, eluline ning koostöine, mistõttu on see tõhus õppimisviis, mis on ühtlasi kooskõlas ka suhtluspõhise keeleõppe raamistikuga. Võimalike takistustena tuuakse välja suurt ajakulu mängu ettevalmistusel ning võimalikku ebaühtlast osalemist rühmatöös. Samuti rõhutatakse, et gümnaasiumitaseme võõrkeeleeõppes tuleb *Reacting to the Past* mängude rakendamiseks kohandada mängu materjale ja tegevusi õppijatele jõukohaseks ning toetada neid täiendavate keeleõppe materjalide ning -tegevustega.

Töö teine peatükk kirjeldab uurimuse käigus välja töötatud õpiühikut, selle rakendamist kolme grupi 11. klassi õpilastega ühes Eesti gümnaasiumis, samuti andmekogumise protseduure, andmeanalüüsi ning peamisi järeldusi. Õpetaja vaatluste ning küsimustiku kaudu kogutud tagasiside põhjal järeldatakse, et õpiühiku raames läbi viidud simulatsioonimäng toetas õpilaste rääkimisoskust, eelkõige just argumenteerimisoskusega seotud aspektides, nagu näiteks väidete ja vastuväidete esitamine arutelude või debattide käigus ning toetavate argumentide sõnastamine. Keeleõpet soodustasid tõhusalt ka mänguga paralleelselt läbi viidud toetavad tegevused, mille käigus tutvustati õpilastele argumenteerimisega seotud strateegiaid ning kasulikke väljendeid.

Peamiste negatiivsete teguritena tuuakse välja materjalide keeleline ja sisuline keerukus, mis võis negatiivselt mõjutada osalejate enesekindlust inglise keeles suhtlemisel. Samuti tehakse ettepanek muuta *The Oversight Board* mängu materjale, et tagada rühmaliikmete ühtlasem panus: iga rühma ühise infolehe asemel soovitatakse kasutada individualiseeritud rollikaarte, mis aitavad luua suhtlusrõõmu ning lihtsustavad ülesannete jaotamist.

Tegevusuuringuna on käesoleva magistritöö raames läbi viidu väikesemahuline uuring, mis on seotud töö autori konkreetse õpetamistöö kontekstiga. Seetõttu ei ole uurimistöö järeldused laiapõhjaliselt üldistatavad. Sellest hoolimata pakub töö võimalikke lähtekohti nii õpetajatele, kes

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Märksõnad: inglise keele õpetamine võõrkeelena, simulatsioon, mängupõhine õpe, tegevusuuring, rääkimisoskused.

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Joosep Roald Võrno

Tartus, 11.05.2026

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Katiliina Gielen

Tartus, 11.05.2026