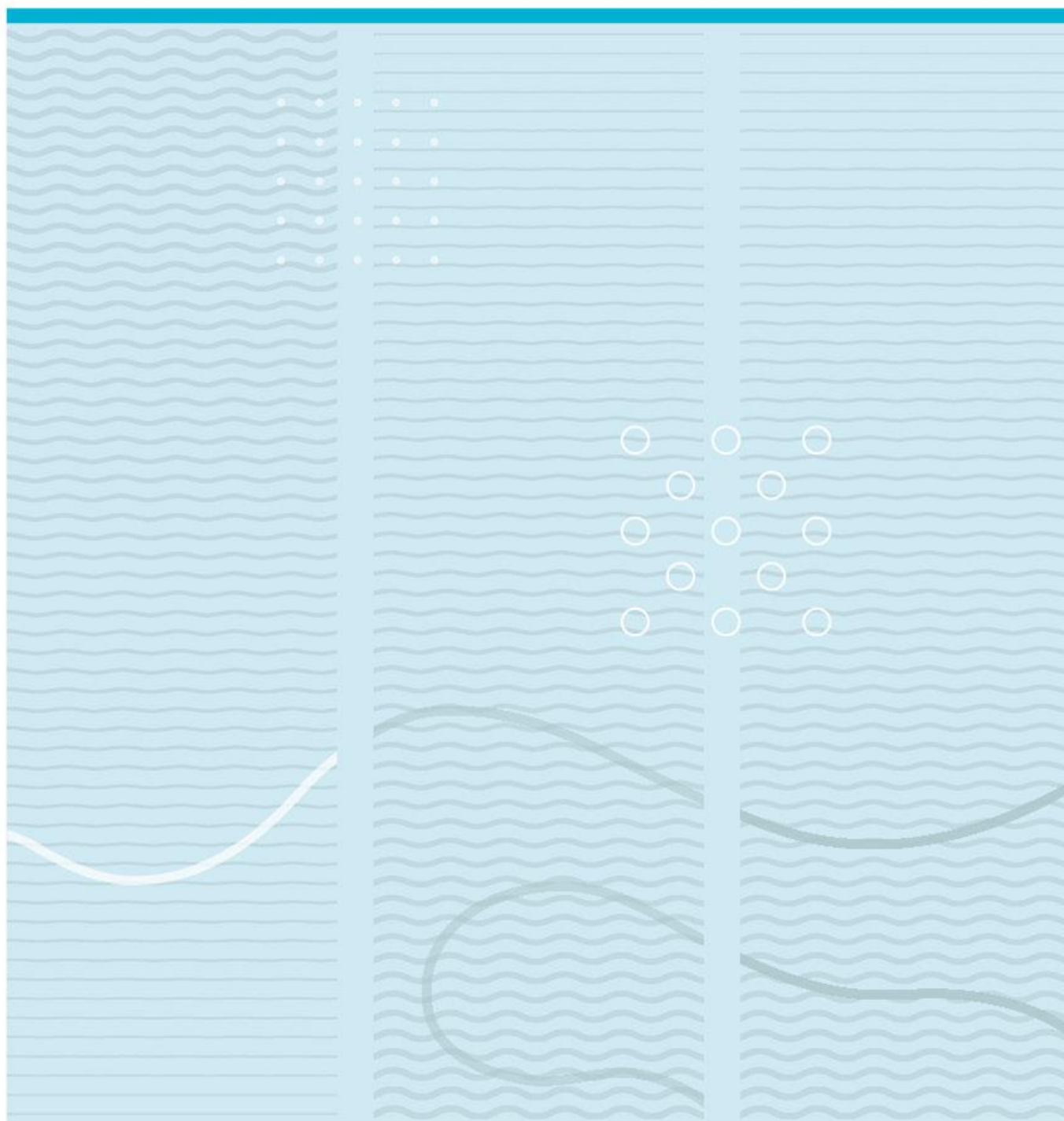Åse Marie Sletthaug

Communicate or Die!

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, EFL Learning and Willingness to Communicate

This thesis is worth 30 study points

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Summary

The willingness to communicate (WTC) of young learners is influenced by several factors, such as situational factors, motivation, lack of confidence and anxiety. Numerous researchers have examined possible theories and educational approaches to encourage learners to become more confident and talkative in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The theories have suggested language teaching techniques that motivates, encourages, and could reduce the anxiety of the learners, which in turn could make them actively participate in the task at hand. The thesis accounts for several EFL learning theories but mainly focuses on the communicative language approach and game-based learning. The main objective of this thesis is to investigate the video game Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes's (KTaNE) effect on Norwegian EFL learners' willingness to communicate. In short, KTaNE is a hectic puzzle game where players must cooperate in order to defuse a ticking time bomb. The game relies upon constant verbal communication between the designated 'defuser', the only one who can see and interact with the bomb, and the bomb expert(s), the only one(s) with access to the manual. The game requires players to keep talking, thus, it could potentially encourage communication and participation, by lowering affective filters. Three qualitative group interviews were conducted with three EFL learners (N=9 age 15- 16) in each group, nine participants in total. The participants first played KTaNE and then answered questions about their experience and whether video games can influence their use of English, primarily speaking skills, but also reading and listening. The findings indicates that the students spoke more when playing the game compared to a regular EFL class, and the research established that they were more comfortable speaking English in the less threatening and fun environment created by the game.

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Drammen, Norway / 01.06.2022
Åse Marie Sletthaug

1 Introduction

Video games for educational purposes have been an increasingly popular topic last few decades, and teachers have already started to incorporate gaming into their classrooms. Globally, but also locally, research has been conducted on the effects of video games and how teachers and learners perceive gaming for educational purposes, which will be further elaborated in this thesis. Not only do studies report how most students actually prefer this type of learning, but also the many possible learning opportunities it presents (Boas, 2013). Gaming for educational purposes, or game-based learning (GBL), is said to increase engagement towards learning and instil students with confidence, motivation, and many different forms of knowledge. Or as renowned linguist and self-proclaimed gamer James Paul Gee claims, good games equal good learning (Gee, 2003). His argument is that the real potential of video games for learning is the ability to not only engage learners, but also enhance outcomes such as critical thinking, teamwork and creativity, important skills that are not easily evaluated with a simple test (Gee, 2003).

There is now a common consensus among educators that video games can offer many different learning opportunities throughout educational institutions (e.g., Clark, Tanner-Smith & Killingsworth, 2016; Boile & Connolly, Hainey & Boile, 2012; de Freitas, 2018)). The question may no longer be if we can learn anything from using video games in education or not. Rather, what can be learned from gaming? If the true purpose of learning English is to be able to confidently interact and communicate as multilingual individuals in this globalized world, then teachers must provide opportunities in which they can practice doing so. These are the beliefs of communicative language teaching (CLT) which considers interaction as both a means and the goal of language learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Throughout my studies, I have gained a particular interest in CLT and intend to implement aspects of it into my own teaching career. I want to create a safe learning environment for my students, where they are motivated to practice authentic oral English for their future selves. According to CLT, the teachers act as facilitators, which means they must facilitate for opportunities where the students can practice their oral skills within the English language classroom (Richards, 2006). However, that requires students that are willing to exploit these opportunities.

The fact is that some students seem unwilling to participate in oral activities when learning English as a foreign language (EFL), ultimately limiting their own linguistic development (Dörnyei, 2003).

The answer as to why some pupils decide to participate more than others can be as 'simple' as motivational issues, but it can also be as complicated as inherent foreign language anxiety (FLA). Some learners perhaps never had the right opportunity to practice, or maybe they felt as if they were failing if they did. Research on this matter has convincingly suggested that a learner's willingness to communicate (WTC) influences the frequency in which learners partake in communication, which in turn is crucial for their development of English proficiency (MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al, 2003). Simultaneously, other research suggests that video games can be used to increase learners' WTC, and decrease their foreign language anxiety (FLA), through their informal and non-threatening properties (Reinders & Wattana, 2012). Video games can be considered inherently engaging and make "learners actively participate in the activity at hand" (Reinders & Wattana, 2012, p. 159). In addition to encouraging learners to interact with the target language, video games can also potentially challenge them in various ways.

Growing up, I was one of those students who did not actively participate and practice English oral skills in the classroom. To my defence, neither did my teachers. I will give some credit to the schools, they taught me a great deal, but my English proficiency comes from video games and other extramural activities. Through gaming, I have acquired invaluable knowledge of not only the English language, but also communicative competence, intercultural competence, technological competence, and other important 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, problem-solving, and flexibility. However, proving these claims will be far too extensive for a thesis of this size. Rather, I would like to investigate how video games can be used for educational purposes and what is to be learned from them. The potential benefits video games have for language learning are too great for this English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher to ignore.

1.1 The Present Study

With this thesis, I aim to explore a potential learning tool for teaching EFL and if the learners themselves believe it can be utilized for such a purpose. The game of choice, *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* (KTaNE) is a hectic cooperative game where communication is key in solving the main objective of the game: to disarm the bomb. As the game name suggests, if communication stops, the bomb will explode. I am intrigued by the potential of this video game, and I wonder if

KTaNE can be an appropriate and effective learning tool for educational purposes? I wonder what influence KTaNE has on the learners, or even more specifically, if KTaNE can increase students' willingness to communicate (WTC)? This thesis is not concerned with assessing learning that may have taken place, but rather factors of the game that can contribute to EFL learning. The question is whether the game has an influence on their WTC and what they believe KTaNE can teach them. The research question is as follows:

How do EFL learners experience the effects of Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes on their willingness to communicate in English?

The argument for utilizing KTaNE in such a way will be built upon research and theory of second language acquisition, willingness to communicate and video games for language learning. By conducting qualitative interviews, I will get an insight to the learner's own perspectives of English communication and what they believe KTaNE has to offer. The master thesis is inspired by the global debate of using video games for educational purposes, in which it seeks to be part of. Naturally, it will also be influenced by my own experiences, interests and teacher beliefs.

2 Background

In this chapter, contextual background information relevant to the master thesis is presented. More specifically, chapter 2.1 addresses the international role of the English language and its role Norway the proficiency level amongst Norwegians. By doing so, I hope to make the thesis international and part of the global debate, as well as helping readers from all cultures better understand the context in which this research takes place. The chapter includes a subchapter 2.1.1, to elucidate relevant information about the Norwegian curriculum (LK20) and the English subject curriculum, which are important considerations for implementing any educational approach to the Norwegian EFL classrooms. Chapter 2.2 presents a brief overview of extramural English and gaming amongst Norwegian tweens, arguably one of the reasons for high English proficiency amongst them. As a matter of course, the phenomenon of video games is clarified in chapter 2.3. Subsequently, in subchapter 2.3.1, the game of the study, *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* is presented, followed by ways in which to diagnostically evaluate a game's suitability for learning. Finally, yet importantly, a brief literature review of relevant research on video games for learning will be presented.

2.1 The English Language in Norway

The English language arguably functions as a *lingua franca* due to the increasing international role of the language. It is now used extensively by non-native speakers around the world and is in many ways a necessity for becoming a globalized world citizen (Rindal, 2014). This includes Norway, a country that rated top five in the EF English proficiency index, a country that takes language very seriously. The two official languages in Norway are Norwegian and Sami, the former spoken by the majority of the population. Additionally, there are two official forms of written Norwegian, Nynorsk (new Norwegian) and Bokmål (literally 'book tongue'), the latter being most common. Norwegians can also speak English at high levels, as they are taught English as a foreign language from first grade, continuing throughout most of their schooling (Brevik & Rindal, 2019). From school year 8, Norwegians choose a second foreign language to learn, usually German, French or Spanish. To all intents and purposes, The Norwegian Government seeks to make multilinguals out of all of its people.

The English language has traditionally been treated as a foreign language in Norway, explicitly taught in schools. However, due to the increasing amount of English influencing our culture and

now essentially a part of it, some have argued English is becoming a second language to Norwegians, rather than a foreign one (Simensen, 2010). Even though these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they can be differentiated. The distinction between a second language (L2) and a foreign language (FL) can be somewhat problematic in Norway, as some would regard English as their second language, myself included. According to Saville-Troike (2012), L2 is typically an official or socially dominant language that can be needed for the individual's education, employment, or other basic purposes. Acquiring a L2 can be seen as learning a second language, subsequently to learning the first language. On the other side of the coin, a foreign language is usually acquired in order to study a curricular requirement, with no immediate or necessary practical applications in immediate social context (Saville-Troike, 2012).

English is not an official or socially dominant language in Norway, but it is indeed very much used in social contexts, such as video games and popular culture in general. Since Norwegians rate top five on the English proficiency index measuring countries with English as a second or foreign language, that would indicate that most Norwegians master the language well. I could argue that English should be referred to as a second language in this thesis, but in fear of excluding students with English as a third language (or even forth), I have decided to refer to English as a foreign language (EFL). Although these students may also find English as 'an official or socially dominant language' in their lives, it is still not their second language (L2). I hope with this gesture to be inclusive to all multilinguals.

2.2 The Norwegian Curriculum (LK20)

The argument of games being inherently fun and motivating is not good enough reason to implement them into the ESL classrooms. The pedagogical choices we make as teachers must be justified by the current Curriculum (LK20) and the competency aims in the subject curriculum, which lay the foundation for all teaching practices at lower and secondary schools in Norway (Skaug et al., 2020). In Norway, education is considered a life-long learning process which encompass social learning that instil confidence and encourage personal opinions. Student's priori knowledge and past experiences, as well as attitude and aptitude should always be taken into consideration, as every student have the right to differentiated learning, called 'tilpasset opplæring' locally (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). Additionally, the core curriculum deems trial and error as a source of learning, and through varying learning activities and a supportive learning

environment, failure is welcomed and accepted (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). This is how teachers can motivate independency and provide a sense of mastery for all their students.

The main objective of the English subject, according to the English subject curriculum (ENG01-04), is to lay the foundation for "communicating with others, both locally and globally, regardless of cultural and linguistic background" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). The English subject shall promote curiosity and prevent prejudice and offer "new perspectives on the world and ourselves" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). Additionally, students should experience that speaking several languages can be an asset to not only to themselves, but also school and society in general (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020).

Communication is emphasized as beneficial and considered an important aspect to language learning. Defined as "[…] creating meaning through language and the ability to use the language in both formal and informal settings" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020), students are encouraged to use different types of media and sources to employ suitable strategies for communicating. Additionally, the English subject curriculum states that "the teaching shall give the pupils the opportunity to express themselves and interact in authentic and practical situations." (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). With this in mind, *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* can be defended for educational purposes if considered a tool to encourage communication in authentic situations.

It is required that the core curriculum and competency aim to be actively used to guide the planning and implementation of teaching methods, so all students develop common knowledge and proper attitudes. However, teachers in Norway are free to choose their own preferred teaching methods under the principle of freedom of method (Brevik & Rindal, 2020). The freedom of method gives teachers opportunities to choose the methods, content, and materials they believe facilitates English language learning best. Although in accordance with the LK20, learning outcomes can vary nationally depending on the teacher's professional judgement (Brevik & Rindal, 2020).

The curriculum offers plenty of leeway to implement video games into the EFL classroom, if regarded as cultural expressions. The LK20 encourage encounters with different cultural

expressions and consider these encounters as a support to the development of students' individual identity, "making them confident in who they are" and willing to "participate in this diverse society and to open doors to the world and future" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). The competency aims after Year 10 within the English subject curricula most relevant to this thesis might be: "explore and present the content of cultural forms of expression from various media in the English-speaking world that are related to one's own interests" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020) and: "use a variety of strategies for language learning, text creation and communication". These competency aims are supportive of video games for educational purposes, if viewed as a cultural expression. Nonetheless, video games are a media, and arguably most likely to their interest. With the latter, video games could conceivably be used to facilitate communication, which is in turn is a strategy for language learning.

As I am to elaborate in 2.3 Gaming and extramural activities in Norway, one could argue that most students would in fact consider video games as "one's own interests". Additionally, as I will elaborate in 2.4.1 Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, this game might be used as a strategy for the communicative approach that the LK20 endorse.

2.2.1 Information and Communication Technologies in education

Digital skills, or Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education is an important element in all the disciplines in the school. In the Official Norwegian Reports, NOU 2015:8, digitalization and digital competencies are described, in what is called The School of the Future. The Committee finds that the technological advancement plays an important role in our private lives, work life, school life and society at large. Thus, digital competencies are a necessity for modern life, and the schools should be an institution to facilitate such skills (NOU 2015:8, p. 27). Schools have officially incorporated ICT in formal education, and they now encourage use of different types of digital tools to cover different competency aims. Consequently, this may be seen as a reason for the increasing amount of incorporation of video games for language learning in Norwegian classrooms.

Only a few competency aims for the English subject (ENG01-04) after year 10, specify digital tools for achieving a specific learning outcome. Evidently, two were presented in the previous chapter, but in addition there is: "use different digital resources and other aids in language learning, text

creation and interaction", which essentially endorse the use of video games to encourage English communication amongst students (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). Additionally, important aspect in ICT, is competency aim, "students shall also learn to use sources in a critical and responsible way".

However, Hsu and colleagues (2017) in Taiwan express that some teachers with different beliefs or low confidence in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) find it too difficult to incorporate video games in the classroom, whilst younger teachers with less experience are more likely to implement video games into their lessons (Hsu, Tsai, Chang & Liang, 2017). This may also be the case with digital tools and ICT in Norway, making it even more important that the schools facilitate for teachers to develop their own ICT competence. This way they can more easily transfer this knowledge to their students.

2.2.2 Spillerom

Two years ago, the Norwegian Government launched a video games strategy called *Spillerom,* which is a strategy meant to uplift the role of video games as an independent cultural expression (Kulturdepartementet, 2019). Thus, video games are in process of being recognised as efficient learning tool, also valuable for teaching digital skills. With the initiative from the Ministry of Culture, is has been indeed as coined it a cultural expression, industry and leisure activity (Kulturdepartementet, 2019). The initiative runs from 2020 to 2022, with an aim to make gaming culture more accessible and accepted. Additionally, the overall objective of the initiative is to offer a varied range of high-quality Norwegian computer games, to enhance a professional and diverse computer and game industry (Norwegian Film Institute, 2019). Furthermore, this introduction indicates for both teachers and students, that video games are in fact as cultural expressions, which in turn can be utilized for learning. The strategy states that schools and teachers must partake in the process for acknowledging games as culture, just as we have been acknowledging films and music as culture (Kulturdepartementet, 2019).

2.3 Gaming and Extramural activities in Norway

Every adult and child in Norway are familiar with the concept of gaming. It is often considered a spare-time activity and acknowledged for providing new ways of learning. Technology has had a major influence on the culture and today's youth can be considered 'digital natives' where

computers are the natural habitat (Prensky, 2001). Norwegians growing up today have many opportunities to play video games, as Medietilsynet reported in their survey of 9–18-year-old's digital media habits, "Barn og Medier 2020". Their findings show that 97 percent of children possess a mobile phone and 70 percent have their own computer (Medietilsynet, 2020). Additionally, between 46 and 57 percent have a tablet and a gaming console connected to their own TV. Interestingly, Medietilsynet also reported that 86 percent play video games and that the tweens mostly agree that English is the preferred language for not only games, but movies, series and YouTube as well (Medietilsynet, 2020). Additionally, "there is great agreement among the 9–18-year-olds who play games, that gaming makes them better at English (70 percent agree). Many (45-57) also agree that gaming is social, educational, and a great way to experience stories" (Medietilsynet, 2020, own translation). This indicates that tweens growing up in Norway today has a daily exposure to authentic English and is very likely to enhance their English proficiency through these extramural activities.

Breivik (2016) studied Norwegian pupils who did remarkably well on national test scores in L2 reading, but poorly in L1 reading. These outliers as he called them, showed an extensive interest and time spent on extramural English activities which he claims could explain their English proficiency (Breivik, 2016). This coincides with the studies that Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012) conducted on Extramural English (EE) for EFL learners in Sweden (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012: Sundqvist, 2009). Sundqvist, who initially coined the term, extramural English (EE), defines it as "linguistic activities that learners engage in outside the classroom in their spare time" (Sundqvist, 2009, p. i). EE is mainly concerned with the setting in which contact with a foreign language occurs, outside of instructed contexts, for instance whilst plating a game (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012). Concludingly, in Sundqvist's dissertation, she insists that "the present study has shown that extramural English is one such variable and that it can be a powerful one" (Sundqvist 2009, p. 206). Which is later again supported by Sundqvist and Sylvén's (2012) findings, where they argue that language learning must occur extramurally, as the students that partake in EE activities such as video games, outperformed students who did not (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2012).

In Nguyen's (2017) master thesis, a 'replication' of Sylven's dissertation as he calls it, he investigated whether there was a positive correlation between English proficiency and gaming amongst Norwegian 10th graders. His study is comprised of both qualitative and quantitative data

sets, which includes data from a questionnaire, a language diary, two vocabulary tests and one grammaticality judgement test. His results were somewhat surprising, as non-gamers outperformed moderate and frequent gamers in terms of vocabulary and grammar (Nguyen, 2017). However, when considering beyond-gaming activities, which is gaming culture outside of games, there was a corelation between English proficiency and time spent on gaming and related activities. The dedicated gamers did consider gaming and culture as an integrated activity and sought it as very effective for language acquisition. However, Nguyen (2017) pointed out how the learners expressed how gaming does not necessarily motivate them to improve their English.

2.4 Video Games

The exact definition of video games and gaming would be a challenging endeavour for this study, as numerous scholars, philosophers and theorists such as Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2006) and Smith & Tosca (2008) have spent considerable time discussing it. Therefore, the exact definitions are not among the main concerns of this thesis, but rather the value of games in a language learning context. However, a brief description of the structural elements in which a game is comprised of, and a brief description of some of the many different genres a game can belong to will be provided.

First and foremost, Nicola Whitton (2014) describes the structural element of games as rules, goals, progression, and rewards. Games can have many different forms and complexities, and she argues that some may provide a safe alternate space where normal rules do not apply (Whitton, 2014). Whitton (2014) shares similar thoughts to Gee (2003) and Skaug et al. (2017), which is that games do not necessarily offer subject-specific knowledge but can act as a context to make use of this knowledge" (Whitton, 2014). The game itself does not have a primary concern for the student's subject related knowledge but can be seen as an arena where for the students gets to use and practice that knowledge. Additionally, Whitton points out how games are often played together, which makes many of them inherently cooperative, which in turn can lay the foundation for students communicating with each other (Whitton, 2014). This way, in theory at least, games can offer room for experimentation and mistake-making in a stress-free environment where consequences do not matter. Maybe a game's inherent playfulness can facilitate a safe learning environment and simultaneously increase learner's willingness to communicate.

It is important to differentiate what is learnt when playing games for educational purposes versus what is learnt when playing games for leisure purposes. Danish educator and entrepreneur Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2006) differentiate what can be 'accidentally' learnt by simply playing a game, and the potential learning outcomes with targeted effort. He suggests that a good place to start when using games for educational purposes is to know the differences between different games, and to understand that different games are made for different occasions (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2006). However, understanding game genres can be a complicated affair, as many games often fit into multiple genres and the many genres have subgenres. To make it even more complicated, games are categorized by their underlying objectives, the purpose of the game, not by the type of gameplay they contain.

A good outcome of games being organised by learning objectives is that teachers can select the game that best suits their students' learning objectives, as well as was a method they might thing would be interesting for their students to participate in (Klimova, 2018). Most game are initially produced for pure enjoyment, and can be referred to as an entertainment game, but also often referred to as a commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) game. This is probably the most extensive game genre, considering entertainment was the initial purpose of video games. But there are also games made for pure educational purposes, referred to as educational games. These types of games are designed to teach specific skills or subjects, often for kids and students in school. Additionally, there is a game genre which is a mix in-between, referred to as edutainment games. This genre originated from Walt Disney in 1954, who wanted his entertainment to also be educational at the same time (wiki). Edutainment games works in a similar way, in which it intends to be teach specific content whilst also being fun and entertaining.

The game of this study, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes (KTaNE), is a game initially produced for pure enjoyment and is categorized as a COTS game. However, it also fits into the subcategory of puzzle games, which again make up a broad subgenre within video games. These types of games owe their origin to puzzles found throughout human history, 'brain teasers' as we commonly know them. The underlying objective of this genre is to instil problem-solving skills, such as logic and pattern recognition, to mention a few. But the game arguably also fit into the genre of party games, educational games and 21st century games as well.

One of Gee's (2003) arguments were that good games can foster 21st century skills. Another subgenre, 21st century games consist of authentic scenarios with real problems for the students to solve, according to Jan & Gaydos (2016, p. 7). Although KTaNE does not involve an authentic scenario (and I am thankful for that), it could potentially offer authentic communication between the players. It is similar in the way that it does not necessarily teach specific content, but rather abstract skills such as mediation, cooperation, problem-solving, pattern recognition and creativity. But the game can also offer core skills such as reading, speaking, listening and ICT. This MA thesis is not interested in measurable learning outcomes, as Whitton (2014) insists, the real potential of video games is their ability to engage learners with higher levels of learning, that cannot be assessed via traditional testing.

2.4.1 Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes

Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes (KTaNE) is in short terms: a hectic co-op bomb-defusing action game. But the game is far more than what first meets the eye. One player, the 'defuser', is trapped alone in a room with a ticking time bomb, which consists of different modules that has to be deactivated by solving complicated puzzles. It is a cooperative game, so the other players act as bomb experts, and without seeing the bomb, they have to read an extensive manual and instruct the 'defuser' in how to solve the puzzles and in turn defuse the bomb. And all this in 5 minutes! As the game name indicates, communication is key, and If communication stops, the bomb will explode.

The game has received numerous awards, and feedback of "overwhelmingly positive" from Steam. 97% positive in fact, which is rare. Even though the game is made for entertainment, it has also been recognized for its educational potential. The manual is extensive and may seem complicated at first sight. It is comprised of 23 pages and describe 11 different modules and 6 "needy modules" and offer different difficulty levels, easily adaptable for the proficiency level of the players. Although the game is commercially available and designed for entertainment purposes, the incidental learning possibilities are huge.

A couple of questions worth asking about this game is: what are the potential learning outcomes of KTaNE, and can this game 'force' communication? Belonging to the puzzle game genre, it is designed in such a way that players get to practice many different skills as previously discussed.

But in addition to these, I also want to mention the logical sense and memorization, task completion and even leadership. The game also can be utilized for enhancing more measurable learning outcomes such as speaking, reading and listening skills. Although the communication is oral, written may also be a possibility. Additionally, the games have a logfile analyser which can be used to look over past mistakes and learn from them. When assessing the logfile, the learners are given opportunities to reflect upon what communication strategies that worked or not. They could also potentially assess how communication evolved during play. Because the characteristic of the game is strategizing and teamwork, and as the conversation between the players happen in real-time, Zheng et. al. (2012) argues that KTaNE can indeed force players to respond promptly. However, I still question whether that is the case: can any game really 'force' communication?

Toh Weimin (2018) refer to games as 'highly multimodal artefacts', which should be no exception with KTaNE. Multimodality is defined by Chandler and Munday (n.d.) as "the use of more than one semiotic mode in meaning-making, communication, and representation generally, or in a specific situation" (Chandler & Munday, n.d.). It understands communication to be more than just about language. Multimodal approaches refer to the interplay between two or more meaning-making resources that we use, such as visual, spoken, gestural, written, three-dimensional, and others, to create 'meaning' to the interpreter (Chandler & Munday, n.d.). For instance, KTaNE is multimodal first and foremost by the game environment being both digital and physical: the bomb is on a digital device and the manual is printed out on paper. In game, the 'defuser' have to interpret the three-dimensional visual aspect of the bomb, in order to make meaning for themselves and in turn to convey that meaning with words and gestures to the 'bomb experts'. If the experts have correctly interpreted this meaning, they have to make meaning of these instructions and the written aspects of the manual to comprehend how the different modules of the bomb is to be defused. Consequently, the bomb experts have to convert their understanding of these modules into spoken words and gestures, which again has to be interpreted by the 'defuser'.

2.4.1.1 Diagnostic evaluation

Nicola Whitton (2014) recommends doing a diagnostic evaluation of a video game, like a diagnostic assessment, to help identify which aspects of the game support student learning. She presents her own sets of key properties of a game, but other gaming scholars have also suggested

frameworks. Some frameworks focus on what makes a good game (e.g., Shute & Ke, 2012), much like Gee (2009) who defined six properties found in good games for promoting deep learning. Others have focused on playability and motivation (e.g., Fabricatore et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Yee 2006).

Relevant to this study, Sweetser and Wyeth (2005) developed and validated a framework to evaluate a game's engagement, called the *GameFlow model.* It evaluated a game's flow elements, such as concentration, immersion, control, clear goal, challenge, player skills, feedback and social interaction. Through this model, the elements of flow are taken into consideration, which can be applied to evaluate KTaNE. KTaNE in the view of this model has, a) a task to be completed: a clear goal of cooperation and communication, and b) you have to focus and concentrate on the game, which in turn influence immersion, and c) there is a sense of control over the actions, and d) the game is effortless, which means it is somewhat easy, thus the skill level of the player can be accommodated, and finally e) elements of flow, which is to be tested: what is the sense of altered duration of time?

Connolly, Stansfield and Hainey (2008) also presented a framework for evaluating game-based knowledge, and proposed seven key aspects to be considered when examining the effectiveness for learning:

- Learner performance. Has learning taken place? Is there a performance improvement?
- Motivation. Students' motivation, interest, and participation in the game
- Perceptions. Views of the students towards the experience of time passing, the realism of the game, complexity, support received, and level of perceived proficiency within the game
- Attitudes. Feelings of the teachers and learners towards the subject itself and the use of games within that subject
- Collaboration. The regularity and effectiveness of working together
- Preferences. Inclinations of the learners and teachers towards, for example, different learning styles or modes of interaction
- Environment. Factors associated with the game itself include design, use of scaffolding, usability, levels of social presence, and how the game is deployed.

<div align="right">Connolly, Stansfield and Hainey (2008)</div>

These are some ways in which teachers determine if a game is suitable for educational purposes. The many different frameworks give teachers the opportunity to pick one that fits the chosen learning outcome.

2.5 Literature Review

Several educators, scholars, and researchers on video games for learning have influenced the knowledge base and theoretical foundation for both myself and this master thesis. Noteworthy books, papers, and studies have been read, and some have already been mentioned. However, due to the limitations of this paper, only a selected few are discussed to support the different concepts of the master thesis. In this chapter, a brief literature review is presented.

Using video games for language learning is a method perceived as fun and engaging and is according to Gigoni and Rujan (2018), a tested and verified method. Several meta studies do indeed report positive effects when using video games for educational purposed (e.g., Clark, Tanner-Smith & Killingsworth, 2016; Boile & Connolly, Hainey & Boile, 2012; de Freitas, 2018), but some also request further investigations with qualitative approaches to research specific games for specific subjects of purposes (Boile et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2012). Within the field of language learning specifically, or second language acquisition (SLA), mainly English as a foreign language, there has also been numerous reports of games acting as effective learning tools (e.g., Annetta 2008; Aubrecht 2012; Fokides 2018; Prensky 2001). These meta studies are very useful in finding general trends and descriptions in studies that focus on the effectiveness of games in English language learning. Reading these studies, enabled me to shift through large volumes of data in a systematically order. Studies on games for educational purposed most commonly deal with skills such as vocabulary, reading, writing and integrated language, and Alsoufi and AbuSeileek (2021) points towards a shortage in measuring other skills and areas. They add that research on games for learning have received more attention the past years, and video games for learning has become a trend in English language learning (Alsoufi & AbuSeileek, 2021). Nevertheless, they reported that research studying games as learning strategies proved gaming to be more effective than regular methods (Alsoufi & AbuSeileek, 2021).

From the beginning to the end of this thesis, Nicola Whitton (2014) has provided me with a well-thought-out theoretic overview of video games for learning. In her book, *Digital Games and Leaning,* she offers evidence of the many different roles video games can have in learning, and the broad methods available for evaluating games for such a purpose (Whitton, 2014). Through her summary of research conducted on video games for language learning, she cites positive results for communication, cooperation and motivation. However, she criticizes how some case studies are typically based on past experiences or known data from previous studies and argues it is impossible to draw any conclusions based on that (Whitton, 2014). She shares concerns with other game studies scholars, that studies on games' effectiveness for learning can be problematic like any 'meaningful' learning measurements. Like James Paul Gee (2003;2009), another author essential to this thesis, they share enthusiasm towards the less measurable learning outcomes a game can present, the 21st century skills. They emphasise the real potential of games is their ability to engage learners with higher levels of learning outcomes, such as synthesis, creativity, teamwork, evaluation and critical thinking, aptitudes not easily evaluated with a standard test (Gee, 2003 in Whitton 2014).

As the main characteristic of video games is 'learning by doing', it can be used to construct and interpret knowledge and apply that knowledge into real-life situations (Whitton, 2014). She adds that games could also teach terminologies in a comprehensible yet playful way to both test and learn the target language at the same time (Whitton, 2014). When discussing previous research within the field of game-based learning, Whitton (2014) state that there are no established guidelines or unified theoretical basis, and she wishes searchers implemented theories of second language acquisition into their research. Other researchers also draw attention to the lack sound theoretical grounding in the field, as Wu and colleagues (2012) indicate, game-based learning research has not typically been based on learning theories. This thesis will be based on SLA learning theories, as further elaborated in the theoretical frameworks chapter.

Sara de Freitas (2007), another researcher, educator and gamer, also weights additional empirical work in the field, as the existing evidence of games for language learning is too insignificant for policymakers to ascertain video games as practical educational tools (de Freitas, 2007). However, Klabbers (2003) argued a few years in advance, that the evidential reinforcement lies in exploring case studies instead of a unified theoretic basis. Nevertheless, research on the efficiency of video games for learning has been challenging for several reasons. Dankoy and colleagues (2021)

proclaims that case studies for games used in formal situations are scarce, thus limiting the effectiveness as any experience is short-lived. They believe any small-scale innovations to learning lacks influence on overall learning in general, or life-long learning as we practice in Norway (Dankoy et. al., 2021).

The authors of *Spillpedagogikk* (2021), Jørund Høie Skaug, Aleksander Husøy, Tobias Staaby and Odin Nøsen has also been great inspiration of this thesis. These educators, researchers and gamers were initially who encouraged me to write this thesis. They made sure I know the extensiveness of this subject, that games for learning is not just something we believe to be true. They argue that the natural virtue of the game can in itself be motivating and provide player engagement. Games can offer an arena where failure is part of the process (Skaug et al., 2021). These are the continuation of thought from Prensky (2001), the predecessor of research on video games for motivational purposes, who came to the conclusion that games are inherently motivating. He asserted that games are fun activities that keep learners engaged for long periods of time, thus in itself being inherently motivating (Prensky, 2001). Since then, numerous studies have been conducted on the matter, including Plass, Homer and Kinzer (2015) almost one and a half decade later. They insisted that the primary significance of using games for educational purposes, are essentially player engagement and playful learning environments (Plass et al., 2015). Much like Goundar (2019) a couple of years after that again, who believes video games can motivate learners to make them more willing to interact and learn the target language.

Numerous factors are proclaimed to influence the success rate of learning EFL, such as previously mentioned motivation, but also the students' abilities, intelligence and attitudes (Dos Santos, 2021). Furthermore, Dos Santos (2021) also argue that motivation might be the most important aspect of language learning, as it influences the student's attitudes towards it, perhaps making them want to learn. He also suggests that video games can enhance motivation, by ultimately teaching students about different approaches to language learning (Dos Santos, 2021). Educators Gidoni and Rajuan (2018) adds that video games can be utilized as an informal activity that can challenge traditional classroom settings. As the game functions as a safe (virtual) environment, it offers space to practice the target language with fellow ESL learners, a space that feels less restricted to the 'four corners of the classroom' (Gidoni & Rajuan, 2018).

Different games offer different opportunities, and as Rinaldi (2020) suggests, the game has to be chosen depending on the lesson's objective. However, the effectiveness of that lesson depends on the teacher's preparedness (Rinaldi, 2020). Yakubov (2022) stresses the vital role of teacher when 'spicing up' English lessons. He suggests that games can be used before a lesson to warm up a class, during the lesson to give the students a break from tough subjects, to re-energize learners, or at the end of a lesson to end on a positive note. The game has to be chosen for the right purpose.

Measurable versus non-measurable learning outcomes may be the major controversy when researching video games for educational purposes (e.g., Gee, 2003; Whitton, 2014). According to Hanghøj and colleagues (2018), any learning outcome is difficult measuring in a meaningful way, which in turn makes it difficult to identify the efficiency of video games as educational tools. They suggest that it is important for researchers to be conscious of differentiating formal assessment and formal education. Researchers might find it challenging to acquire evidence-based learning of they fail to consider unintended knowledge learnt, such as negotiation and teamwork, knowledge not usually considered in the formal curriculum (Hanghøj et al., 2018).

There are however researchers and educators who believe games can teach specific learning outcomes more easily evaluated, for example words and grammar, but also writing, reading and speaking skills (e.g., Panagiotidis et al., 2018; Yakubov, 2022). Panagiotidis and colleagues (2018) complements games for their ability to facilitate learners focus, increase energy levels and confidence, which in turn facilitate interaction. Additionally, it has been reported that video games made learners more talkative in class, and the 'shy' learners opened up and spoke more English during play (Panagiotidis et al., 2018; Yakubov, 2022).

Several studies encourage teachers to use video games to make students more talkative during lessons, as games remain practical and fun (e.g., Barr, 2018; Klimova, 2015; Reinders & Wattana, 2011;2012;2014; Panagiotidis et al., 2018; Yakubov, 2022). Klimova's (2015) argument is that video games can improve English fluency and increase talkativeness, even without students realising it.

Researchers such as Reinders and Wattana (2012;2013;2014) has a particular interest in this aspect of video games in concordance to willingness to communicate. In one of their studies, *Can I say something? The effects of digital game play on willingness to communicate* (2014), they investigate thirty Thai university students' willingness to communicate when learning English as a foreign language through video games. They modified an existing game called *Ragnarok Online,* to make sure the game included special instructions or quests that encouraged collaboration and communication. To measure their participants WTC, they designed a series of questionnaires inspired by MacIntyre et al.'s (2001) WTC scale and other studies on language and communication anxiety (e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; McCroskey & Richmond, 1982) and perceived competence (e.g., Compton, 2004; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). These questionnaires were administered before and after six gameplay sessions. The first results showed that most of the EFL learners had low confidence, high anxiety, low perceived competence, and low WTC. However, the final set of result showed a significant improvement amongst the students, especially with participants feeling more confident, less anxious, more competent and more willing to communicate. Their conclusion was that with careful construction, games can have a positive effect on the language learning process (Reinders & Wattana, 2014). Although their study did not investigate SLA, they felt limited in claiming benefits of games for learning. They did claim that it is very likely that increased willingness to communicate will lead to more interaction, however, this is something they have yet to investigate even though they found positive effects in an earlier pilot study (Reinders & Wattana, 2012 in Reinders & Wattana, 2014).

Recent studies have also tried to capture the situated nature of WTC, and in one of them by Cao and Philp (2006) identified group size, self-confidence, familiarity with the fellow participants and their participance as factors which has great influence on the frequency in which student's self-initiate communication. In response to MacIntyre's (2007) request for more research on situated WTC, there has been revealed several psychological influences on WTC emergence in the classroom. In MacIntyre and colleague's (2011) research, participants were asked which situations they were willing and which they were unwilling to participate in L2 education (in this case French). They concluded that subtle differences in the communicative contexts can quickly change learners' affective filters, making them more willing to communicate.

As previously mentioned, WTC is a highly discussed topic received much interest in the past years. Another research shown to be central to mine, is Tomoko Yashima, Peter McIntyre and Maiko Ikeda's (2018) *Situated willingness to communicate in an L2: Interplay and individual characteristic and context.* Their interventional study was conducted on 21 Japanese university students, in a class for teaching EFL. With group discussions, they investigated students' trait and state of WTC within a classroom context, as they sought to reach a fuller understanding of what makes EFL learners decide (or not) to participate in communication. Their findings revealed that personality and proficiency, as well as contextual influences such as student's reactions and the group dynamics played a vital role for the frequency in which the participants partook in English communication (Yashima, et al., 2018). They observed how student's communication fluctuated dynamically and their anxiety gradually reduced throughout the semester. Their research is especially interesting as I also am to investigate the context in which WTC may occur, if L2 WTC is situated or similar to their L1.

I have previously mentioned Ngyuen's (2017) master thesis in chapter 2.3 when discussing extra mural activities amongst tweens in Norway, but another master thesis that has been a great inspiration to mine is Lindland's (2021) *Gaming as a Tool in English Language Teaching.* Her research could be viewed as a counterpart to mine, as she investigated teacher's experiences with games as educational tools and does in fact also use Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes (KTaNE) for that purpose. The teachers in her study were required to partake and conduct a premade lesson plan in which Lindland (2021) provided, and in turn be interviewed about the experience. The results were positive, and all six teachers agreed that KTaNE had an educational value and would be interested in using it again. Even though some teachers reported that it was their own lack of competence that may hinder their use of games for educational purposes, they all agreed that it was a positive experience for both themselves and their students (Lindland, 2021).

3 Theoretical Framework

The many researchers discussed in 2.5.1 literature review do agree that video games can offer a fun environment that can make learning (and language learning) into a subconscious affair, which in turn can make learners more interactive and willing to communicate in the classroom. One of the key aspects to video games is that learners more actively participate with the activity (e.g., Garcia-Carbonell, Rising, Montero & Watts, 2001), which means that games have to potential to

encourage interaction between EFL learners. Therefore, I will briefly discuss the importance of interaction when learning EFL in addition to other key theories relevant to this master thesis. If the question is whether Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes can be used as an effective facilitator for learner communication for EFL, I want to discuss theories of SLA as recommended by Whitton (2014) and the authors of *Spillpedagogikk* (Skaug et al., 2020).

First, the concept of second language acquisition will be presented, followed by Krashen's (1985) input and Swain's (1985) output hypotheses. Then, the main terminology of this study, willingness to communicate will be elaborated in relation to video games for second language acquisition (Foster 1998; Krashen, 1985). Then, the fundamental learning theory of this thesis will be presented, communicative language teaching (CLA). Lastly, theories of game-based learning also must be mentioned.

3.1 Second language acquisition

Second language acquisition, otherwise referred to as L2 acquisition is according to Krashen (1985) a subconscious process that is more essential than *learning*, which is a product of formal instructions. This inductive type of approach to learning focus on the learner's involvement in authentic conversations or meaningful interactions (Krashen, 1998). Krashen (1985) established five different hypotheses of SLA, which Foster (1998) claims is a combination of cognitive development and social learning. Krashen believes language acquisition does not require extensive teaching of grammatical rules (and syntax?), neither does it require tedious drilling in the target language. His acquisition-learning hypothesis explain the difference between what he believes to be the two independent systems of foreign language learning: the acquired and the learned (Krashen, 1985). The latter being the product of formal instruction and the former a product of a subconscious process, remarkably similar to the process of acquiring a first language: through meaningful interaction – the act of communicating. Krashen (1985) emphasizes that language acquisition requires meaningful interaction – authentic conversations – where speakers are concerned with the message they are conveying, not the form of their utterances (Krashen, 1998). The process of acquiring a second language may be a subconscious endeavor, where people are unaware of the acquisition, but aware of using the language for communication.

Therefore, from the perspective of Krashen's (1985) SLA theories, when learners get to use the English language to communicate in a video game, they can naturally and subconsciously enhance their language acquisition process. It may be likely that KTaNE can enhance self-confidence and even reduce anxiety among students, consequently making English language acquisition easier for them. In the next chapter, I will present some relevant theoretical principles for language learning, which can often be found in video games.

3.2 Willingness to communicate

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis could be understood as the theory of willingness to communicate (WTC) and foreign language anxiety (FLA), as these factors are believed to influence learner participation in their target language. The concept of WTC which were originally developed to address communication patterns in learners first language (L1), but were applied and tested for L2 contexts in Canada by Peter MacIntyre and associates (i.e., MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre and Clément, 1996). It is though the research of SLA and communication that established some learners remain reticent to practice oral skills, regardless of their linguistic competency. This might be the reason why the study of WTC has been attracting attention from many researchers these past few decades. In the earlier conceptualization of L2 WTC, it was viewed as characteristics or predispositions that made learners initiate or avoid conversation (McCroskey, 1992). Within this conceptualization, it is suggested that higher levels of WTC enable practice of the L2: language learning entails students who are willing to seek out communication and the have the will to communicate in them. However, this view is overruled by the advancements of MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998), and now WTC is regarded as individual characterizes. They present L2 WTC as a consequence of several aspects, comprised of both individual tendencies as well as intergroup relations. They coined the term as, the intention or desire to initiate communication, more specifically "a learner's readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using an L2" (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This contextual shift of focus resulted in a whole set of studies aimed to disclose situated, personal and context-related variables for L2 WTC in classroom settings. (MacIntyre et. Al. 1998).

Psychology professor Peter McIntyre (1996;1998;2000;2003;2007) has shown great interest towards willingness to communicate and what factors influences the frequency in which students engage in communication. He believes that communication is instrumental in language

development (MacIntyre et al., 1998; MacIntyre et al., 2003), thus should be the ultimate goal of language teaching. He respectively proclaims that a teaching program that fail to produce learners' willingness is a failed program (1998). MacIntyre and colleagues (2003) examined the key factors that influence L2 WTC and established that WTC does indeed significantly affect an individual's fluency, though WTC is also influenced by an individual's perceived competence, anxiety levels and motivation. Similarly, in 1998, MacIntyre and colleagues commented that authentic communication in L2 is a result of a complicated system of interconnected variables. Thus, scholars refer to communication behavior broadly, including activities such as watching L2 films and series, reading L2, and using L2 in casual and social communication.

Motivation, apparent language proficiency and confidence are three principal factors that can contribute to L2 WTC, the concept of foreign language anxiety (FLA) has also been highlighted. FLA is arguably a crucial factor associated with and perhaps most responsible for WTC (MacIntyre, 2007). Some students might feel anxiety when usure about their own language competency or if feeling unsafe in the classroom, or if they do not understand the topic of discussion or scared of making mistakes. According to Ellis (2004), many students may experience uncertainty about particular situation, which in turn are often associated with anxiety. Additionally, learners tend to compare themselves with other students, which could also be a contributory factor for language anxiety. Ellis points towards the many factors in which can contribute to FLA which decrease WTC, which makes students reluctant to practice L2.

As MacIntyre contends, the main goal of language teaching should be to motivate and encourage students to communicate efficiently (MacIntyre, 2007). Swain (2005) adds that language learning can be considered adequate when learners are persuaded into having willingness to use the target language, and video games being an instrument to do so. The comfortable, non-threatening and cooperative game environment could potentially make learners more willing to participate (Swain, 2005). Theoretically, if children receive early exposure to English through certain games, they may be more likely to develop more confidence in their EFL skills, thus more willing to participate in class activities.

3.3 Learning Principles Often Found in Games

MacIntyre (1996;1998;2000;2003;2007) and many different colleagues in many different contexts, argued that confident students with high motivation, who feels safe and open to input, would indeed learn languages. They point towards the attitudes of the learners influencing the relative success of second language acquisition. Viewed in this way, contemporary theories of willingness to communicate can be related to Krashen's (1985) *Affective Filter hypothesis* (Krashen, 1985). According to this hypothesis, factors such as low motivation and self-esteem can act as filters that hinder language learning as they form a 'mental block'. Krashen (1985) firmly believes learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety and extroversion may be better equipped for SLA.

What Krashen (1985) refers to 'language acquisition', one of the most prominent theorists in sociocultural theory Lev Vygotsky (1978) uses 'internalization'. These concepts are based upon the same assumption: language is learned through interaction with others. Krashen's inductive approach to language learning focus on learners' meaningful interactions through negotiation with others, with 'input' one step over the current state of linguistic competence (Richards, 2006). Similar to a concept in Vygotsky's theory of *mediation*, one of three main concepts related to cognitive development. The mediator in his theory, must be someone or something in which enable learning, more competent than the learner themselves (Imsen, 2015, p. 192). It is through such a social process that Vygotsky argue that internalization occurs: an individual develops skills as they internalize cultural influences (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, when students cooperate to solve a puzzle to defuse a bomb, they need to think, talk, plan and strategize how to convey right information through communication. Video games could potentially be used as a mediator in this sense, as they offer guidance and rapid feedback throughout playing. But they do require students to actively interact with the activity at hand.

Krashen's (1985) emphasizes language learning as a social process and stresses the significance of social interaction for the development of language proficiency. In his concept of comprehensible input, students must receive comfortable and easy challenges that are slightly above their level (Krashen, 1985). He argues that input should not be too difficult, but neither too easy, to achieve the established learning objective (Krashen, 1985). Unreasonable amounts of input can hinder learners from relying on previous experiences and knowledge (Krashen, 1985). Similarly, Skehan

(1998) proclaimed that input should be experimental and activate learner's long-lasting memories in order to process new knowledge. Muñoz (2007) further expressed that input should be relevant, valid and authentic. Teachers should offer relevant contexts of language use where learners can reproduce precise language from actual situations that allow communication to flow naturally. For output to be produced, Reinders and Wattana (2011) argues that learners must be encouraged by being offered relevant contexts in which they can produce language. Access to such input, is according to Richards and Renandya (2020) the beginning of the learning process, preferably input one step over their present linguistic competence (Richards, 2006).

Comprehensible and meaningful input alone is argued insufficient by Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985;1995;2000;2005), which insists that learners must also be given opportunities to produce comprehensible output when interacting to develop language competency. It is through negation of meaning, that Pica (1994) argue learners can make input comprehensible, which in turn help them produce comprehensible output – or speech as I may refer to it as henceforth. In Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, he makes similar claims towards the correlation of negotiation of meaning during interaction. He agrees that interaction has as a significant contribution for L2 comprehension and development (Long, 1996). Similar to Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, the interaction hypothesis is a theory of SLA which focus on the role of input, interaction, and output. In this view, input is made comprehensible by the learner through negotiation for meaning, which in turn could lead to student participation.

Previously, I have referred to how video games can facilitate interaction, which initially has been found to be a vital component for language acquisition, in addition to input and output (e.g., Krashen 1985; Swain, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Chapelle (2001) defines interaction as the interpersonal activity that can take place face-to-face, but also within our minds. In language learning, interaction can be viewed as a key component to generate comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), which can facilitate noticing (Schmidt, 1990), which in turn can encourage output (Swain, 1985), or at least lay the foundation for negotiation of meaning (Pica, 1994). With Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, learners could potentially be forced to input and output throughout the game, by reading an extensive manual, give and receive instructions and confirmations and internalize this information to output in the form of speech or disarming of a bomb.

Informal leaning can be viewed as an essential feature in pedagogical research and emphasizes the significance of life-long learning. John Dewey (1953; 1986) is amongst the researchers who pioneered the idea of informal learning, but contemporary theories are based on the argument that leaning happens through an individuals' experiences (Livingstone, 2001). Informal learning is usually unofficial and can happen both intentionally and unintentionally. In contrast, Jay Cross (2007) defines formal learning as the learning that occurs in official environments such as school or other learning setups, typically based on a curriculum. Based on the definitions given by Livingstone (2001), learning that occurs when an individual is playing video games for recreational purposes are informal, as the learning that occurs are spontaneous and incidental, not based on recognized curriculum. When Sundqvist and Sylvén (2012) examined aspects of SLA in extramural activities, they concluded that language learning must occur in informal setups. Many entertain themselves with video games for educational purposes, for example when a learner decides to play a game where they communicate with other players to improve their communication skills. Although there might be a deliberate intention to learn, it is not mandatory for learning to occur (Sundqvist, 2009). Accordingly, traditional school and classroom settings are characterized as formal settings, but the introduction of video games is a way of making the formal more informal.

It is vital that teachers deliver instruction that are comprehensible to their students, in addition to creating a safe learning environment that lower affective filters so more input is allowed to pass through. In *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes,* learners are interactive, forced to receive *input* from a *mediator*, *internalize* meaning before producing *output* in order to defuse the bomb and win the game. It is a social interaction which gives learners opportunities to produce appropriate *meaning* for a specific context.

3.4 The Communicative Language Approach

In the previous chapters, I have clarified the idea of willingness to communicate and the crucial factors that can influence it. WTC is a vital component for communication, which then makes it important for the communicative language approach. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Krashen's theories of SLA serve as a solid foundation for the communicative language teaching (CLT). Based upon Noam Chomsky's philosophy from the 1960s, the methodology can be

perceived as a guiding ideology regarding foreign language teaching and how humans learn languages (Richards, 2006). As Jack Richards (2006) explains: "Since its inception in the 1980s, CLT has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practices worldwide" (p.1). CLT in language learning emphasizes communication as both a means and the ultimate goal of language learning. And in CLT, language is the means for communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Within this view of language learning, students are encouraged to actively practice their oral skills with each other, as the teacher facilitates various 'authentic' contexts in which to do so.

The CLT approach has been inducted into the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR), which is now built upon collaborative and action-oriented approaches to language learning (Council of Europe, 2018). CEFR views language learners as 'social agents' who convey information through speech or writing to explain, translate and express personal responses (Council of Europe, 2018, pp. 103.104). One could argue the use of CLT has gained momentum in Europe because it aligns with the CEFR, which has played a critical role in teaching practices across Europe (Soproni, 2020). The CEFT has promoted methodological innovations and new strategies to develop the communicative approach and has since its inception offered a standardized method for measuring learner's language learning progress (Byram, 2021).

According to Rahman and Pandian (2018), the CLT strategy is most effective when learners work in pairs or groups, as this imitates realistic communication that can further encourage fluency and grammatical competency. They have established five tips teachers could apply to the CLT approach: 1) communicative activities such as pair discussion, 2) these activities should specific context, speakers' roles and a purpose for communicating, 3) teachers should encourage learners to practice informal and formal interactions through role-play and games, 4) teachers should focus on creating supportive learning environments and individualized instructions, and finally 5) utilizing the appropriate tools for assigning and creating communicative activities (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Arguably, *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* facilitate communicative interacting through pair discussion, it also offers designated roles and a purpose for communication. The game could help create supportive learning environments and students can receive individualized instructions. It could in fact be viewed as an appropriate tool to encourage learners to practice informal interaction in a formal setting. Which leads me to the ideas of formal and informal learning.

The main idea of CLT is that language is learned through social, relevant and meaningful interactions and engaging conversations, similarly to learning theories presented by Vygotsky (1978), Krashen (1985) and Swain (1985). In the endeavor to promote meaningful and authentic use of the language in class, a teacher could use activities such as video games. As interaction is viewed as a means to language learning, video games are famous for their cooperative properties to be used for such a purpose. In a classroom where learners are taught English under the CLT approach, learners are continuously encouraged to talk to each other, instead of traditional lectures.

3.5 Game-Based Learning

Educators and researchers do acknowledge that games can be used in non-playful environments to enhance formal learning: formally known as game-based learning (GBL). Due to the rapid technological advancement and digital skills viewed as a necessity, the rationale behind game-based learning comes from the growing interest in the pedagogical benefits it may provide. For GBL to be considered an approach, Margarida, Veloso, Pepastergiou, and Kordaki (2010) identified three main paradigms: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism, all to be found within this theory. GBL entails, according to Kirriemuir and McFarlane (2004), "activities that have a game at their core, either as the main activity or as a stimulus for other related activities, and have learning as a desired or incidental outcome" (p. 7). Moreover, De Freitas (2006) underscores that game-based learning offers immersive and engaging learning experiences with specific focus on educational goals. The main characteristics of games is learning by doing, thus GBL necessitates active participation and encourage activities such as cooperation, problem solving and memorization. It required active participation where students practice and learn language and terminologies whilst playing. Students must be provided with opportunities to construct and interpret knowledge, to input and internalize, and apply that knowledge in to real-life situations, to output through speech.

The flow theory has been deemed an effective model in understanding how learners engage with GBL. Mihaly Csíkszentmihály (1975) first coined the psychological concept of *flow,* a theory describing a state of mind in which an individual is fully engaged in an activity (Mahfouz et al., 2020). It can also be characterized as the state of concentration when absorbed in a task. The flow

theory explain the effects of playing video games, and concerns a person's challenges, enjoyment, thinking, behaviors and reactions when concentrated on a game (Mahfouz et al., 2020). This 'total concentration' could potentially mask the fear of making mistakes, their anxiety, and provoke English communication. The most suitable way of measuring flow is by asking students about their experience of the phenomenon through interviews. The participants of this study will be asked about their experience with *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes,* their reaction and what they were thinking whilst speaking English. Additionally, they were questioned about their perception of time, if they experienced time as going fast, slow or normal.

4 Methodology

This study aims to get an insight into the learner's personal experiences using video games for learning English and their thoughts on utilizing *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes*. Considering this, qualitative interviews have been deemed a suitable method to generate relevant results for this research question. In this introductory chapter on methodology, the overall plan for the research project will be presented. Bryman describes the research design as the framework for data collection and analysis (Brymann, 2016, p. 40). A qualitative method can aid me in seeking detailed descriptions from the participants, as this method is open and flexible, making room for participant's personal views (Høgheim, 2020). As the study is now based on a qualitative data set, there is a natural decision to apply a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis.

This thesis is concerned with investigating factors of KTaNE that can contribute to EFL learning. How do the learners experience the effects of the game on their WTC. What they believe KTaNE has to offer. With this as the purpose of the master thesis, I use what Bryman calls ´comparative design´ when comparing the three interviews, into five categories to compare the results.

In the first chapter 4.1, I will present the interview as a qualitative approach and why this was the choice of method. In chapter 4.2, the participants and their selection will be elaborated, before moving on to 4.3, where the interview guide and initial instructions are articulated. In chapter 4.4 the interview process is made clear and in chapter 4.5 the transcribing and analysing process if presented. Last but not least, in chapter 4.7, research ethics are considered with subchapter 4.7.1 to offer validity, reliability and confirmability is taken into account.

4.1 Interview as a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is a broad field that can be organized into several perspectives. This research will take a phenomenological approach, which is according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2010), typically interested in illustrating how people experience a certain phenomenon in their own life (p. 33). The phenomenological perspective was founded by the Czech-German philosopher Edmund Husserl around the 1900s but has been further developed since then. At the beginning, phenomenology mostly regarded awareness and experience, but is now extended to also include people's world in which they live, the human body and human's actions in historical contexts (p. 45). Today and within qualitative research, phenomenology exhibits "an interest in understanding

social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives and describing the world as perceived by the informants, based on the understanding that the real world is what people perceive" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010, p. 45, my translation). This perspective is quite suiting for this research, as I want to investigate how English as a foreign language learners experience a particular phenomenon. And as the research concerns itself with the participant's recollections and descriptions of their experiences within a specific game, it is essential that they get to try the game of the research before they answer questions about it (Høgheim, 2020).

Semi-Structured interviews as a method is commonly used in qualitative research, and in this case, it will provide insights into the participant's experienced world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2010), an interview is an exchange of views between two people about a subject in which both have a mutual interest (p. 22). The goal of the interview should be to create an open and accessible conversation where the interviewees feel comfortable reflecting and elaborating on the subject matter. To make room for spontaneous stories, a semi-structured interview guide should give the participants enough space to talk freely and be asked follow-up questions when needed or for clarification. I do, however have to steer the conversation to some extent, which is one of Kvale and Brinkmann's one of ten qualification criteria of a good interviewer (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010, p. 177). I want to conduct an interview where the participants can tell their own stories and thoughts on learning oral English in general, and their experience with Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes.

In semi-structured interviews you get an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to get a better understanding of the participants' point of view. Kvale (2007) insists that the goal of the interviewer is to have the interviewee share their beliefs, opinions, experiences, and views in their terms naturally rather than change or interrogate their initial stands. Thus, the interview was also conducted in the participant's native language, Norwegian; to promote spontaneous talking and get the "experiences naturally in their own terms". The use of native language allowed participants to express themselves with ease, naturally and exactly.

Group interviews were the researcher's preferred choice because it would provide a rich dimension of understanding the experiences of learners playing KTaNE. As I wanted the

experience discussed and elaborated, group interviews would stimulate learners to recall the game's experiences they might have forgotten. And in interaction with each other, I could get insights into their willingness to communicate stimuli associated with playing KTaNE. However, according to Bryman (2016), group interviews could potentially offer a different dynamic, and some negative outcomes. Some students may find it uncomfortable to talk in front of many people, especially about vulnerable topics such as foreign language anxiety. But on the positive side, by listening to the other participants answers could provide a deeper understanding of the topic and bring the conversation further (Bryman, 2016).

4.2 Participants and selection

By using the qualitative research approach, I expected to collect as nuanced and detailed perspectives as possible. The number of participants in qualitative research is complex and heavily depends on the kind of research is being conducted (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 108-109). The recommendation from Tjora is between eight to ten informants (2021, p. 158), but Postholm argues how three informants can be enough for a smaller case if the interviewer manages to find shared experience or perspective amongst the informants (2010, p. 43). Based on their recommendation and the selection I was provided; nine informants were chosen. Hopefully, that will offer enough to find nuanced and common perspectives amongst them to answer my research question. I still expect with this number of informants, this research will provide an insight to the discourse.

When recruiting participants for this research, I chose to do this strategically as I wanted to find informants who would be able to express themselves reflectively on the topic (Tjora, 2021, p. 145). In addition to the participants having to fulfil a certain criterion, recruiting for this type of project can be difficult, especially with Covid-19 restrictions. In the end, I did not have much of a choice in participant selection. My subjects were selected by someone else according to my criteria, so it wasn't strategic in the end. However, the participants selected did fit the criteria of being randomly selected by someone other than myself, they were in 10th grade, 14 and 15 years old, different genders and different prerequisites of the subject matter being oral English and video games. I had a "key informant" who got me in contact with an English teacher that could provide me with nine participants in total, from one 10th grade in Norway. I wanted to interview

'older' learners, as they would be better equipped to give me elaborated answers. In accordance with research ethics, I did not know the participants prior to participating, relations would not affect my data. Additionally, the participants have received pseudonyms in this paper to keep their identities anonymous.

Group 1: Ben, Frank and Andy

Group 2: Joe, Sam and Nick

Group 3: Nora, Ella and Thor

4.3 Interview Guide and Initial Instructions

When designing the interview guide, I had two things specifically in mind: 1) To keep focus on the subject matter, and 2) the interview as a conversation between the participants and the researcher (Høgheim, 2020, p. 132). The questions must be transparent, open, and non-leading, which should be avoided as they can influence the participant's answers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2010). Although leading questions can be used to verify or check the statement's reliability, I decided to steer away from these types of questions. Additionally, the questions had to be comprehensible for the participants, avoiding complex jargon (Høgheim, 2020, p. 132). The interviews were also carried out in Norwegian to keep the conversations flowing naturally and give them opportunities to express themselves more freely. I do not expect the participants have the proficiency level to authentically express themselves in the same way they would with their native language.

The research of Yashima and colleagues (2018) and MacIntyre and colleagues (2011) were of great influence when deciding interview questions to get an insight to my participants situated WTC. Questions inspired by these were how they felt or thought whilst talking English, how they felt and thought when others spoke English, what situations make it easy to speak English, and in what situations are difficult to speak English.

The interview guide was divided into three parts for a better overview. The first part regarded background information of the participants, such as their name and age, their first language, but also questions to test their attitude towards the subject matter: if they play any video games,

what language they play and a final if they think they can learn anything from video games in general.

The second part regarded English and communication and contained questions to better understand the participant's English skills and communication. They were asked questions to rate themselves one to ten on their English oral skills, how comfortable they are speaking English in class and how comfortable they are speaking Norwegian in class. They were asked to rate themselves for these questions, as the answers were to be compared. I was interested if their willingness to communicate could vary depending on the language they were speaking (L1 and L2). They were also asked what situations they thought it was easy to talk English, what situations were difficult, what they feel and think whilst speaking, and what they feel and think whilst others are speaking. They were also asked how important it is for them to master oral English and how they learn that best. The questions of comfortableness and thoughts on the situation are questions similar to those asked in Yashima et al. (2016) – Situated willingness to communicate in an L2: Interplay of individual characteristics and context.

The third part of the interview regarding the experience with the game Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, and some of these questions were inspired by Lindland's master thesis (2021). But as her master interviewed the teacher of how she observed her pupils, these questions will be asked to the learners directly. Especially the question regarding flow theory, of how the participants experienced time whilst playing. Questions in this section regarded the experience itself, if they talked more during this game than a regular English lesson, If the threshold was higher or lower than a regular lesson, and if yes, was it because of the game itself or the situation being outside the classroom in a smaller group. They were also asked about the technical aspects of the game if they understood the game and the manual. They were also asked about potential challenges and opportunities the game represents and what they think about the game's learning potential. They were also asked if they learned anything from Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes today to finish the interview.

The participants did not receive such information upon participating. Still, they were informed that the purpose of this research was to explore whether Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes can be used as a learning tool for practicing oral English. They were informed that they were expected to

play the game, communicate in English, and afterward answer some questions in Norwegian. They were also told that their participation was voluntary, and they could contract their consent at any time if need be. Additionally, they were also reported that the interviews would be recorded and that the recordings would be deleted after this MA is written. This consent document had to be signed by both the participant and one of their parents, which their teacher did for me.

4.4 Conducting the Interviews

First, the learners were observed playing Keep Talking, and Nobody Explodes. One learner defused the bomb while two decoded the manual and conveyed information to the "defuser". Because language levels differed, they helped each other understand the manual.

In total, there were three interviews with three participants in each. They started out by receiving the premade instructions of the game and ordered to speak English. They played the game for three rounds, giving each of them an opportunity to play as the "defuser". Two of the groups did an additional round, but only because they were ahead of time and wanted to try a more difficult bomb. Even though the playing part were not officially observed, I will say that the participants surprised me when it came to their English capabilities. All of the groups managed to defuse the bomb, some quicker than others. All of the participants participated in their own manner, and only a few times did I hear code-switching to Norwegian.

The interview started out with a short briefing on the purpose of the interview, as recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann (2010). They were reminded of their rights, such as their option to withdraw their consent without consequences and pass on questions or have them repeated. This moment in the briefing was also to help them feel relaxed and comfortable in the setting, which is also an essential part of the ethics of interviewing (Tjora, 2021, p. 187-188). The quality of the research can be affected by this, as Kvale and Brinkmann point out (2010, p. 176). Similarly, the interview ended with a debrief, where they were asked if they had any final comments and thanked for their participation, as recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann (2010).

4.5 Transcribing and Analysing

The study was based on a qualitative data set, where natural decision also applies to data analysis. Qualitative content analysis because the research aimed an analyse the content of respondents' feedback. According to Krippendorff (2013), the content analysis aims to deduct valid and replicable extrapolations from texts so that several researchers can draw similar conclusions from an identical set of data.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach to psychological qualitative research with an ideographic focus, which means it aims to offer insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon

The content analysis will be a helpful approach for this study where the focus is on the learners' individual experiences of the game, rather than on the results or other directly quantifiable outcomes. This study not assessing if English language learning occurs when playing video games, but how the learners perceive or experience their use of English while they play. However, translating the interviews from Norwegian to English may present some complications. Translating their answers entails the construction of meaning and Marshall and Rossmann (2016) believes that analysis is happening when translating, even though it might not even be acknowledged. I should be careful not to analyse and possibly change the participant's statements, which is also why I decided to transcribe the interviews with both Norwegian and their English translation. Therefore, all quotes from the interviews are my own translations.

4.6 Research Ethics

In this chapter, I will critically assess my project to show that I have considered the ethics and given a statement of validity and reliability. Research ethics is an important consideration, mostly because the participants of this study were under aged, and there are strict rules when researching minors. Consequently, many of the choices and reasoning for this project is because of these informants. Prior permissions from *Norsk senter for forskningsdata* (NSD) were required as I were to interview minors and recorded the interviews. Before participating, they had to sign a consent form, from both parents and participants. Before signing, the participants had to know what they signed up for, so they were also provided sufficient information about the project

beforehand, so they knew what their participation entailed. Additionally, the participants were informed of their rights of anonymity and the ability to retract their consent if needed. The recordings were stored locally and deleted after transcribed. As a researcher, I have an obligation to keep personal information anonymous.

The researcher of this study is a teacher-student at the University of South-Eastern Norway with many years of experience in gaming. The researcher collected and analysed the data and in order to understand the learners' own experiences and views, it required me to do as Maxwell (2012) requests, to be open to their experiences without any preconceptions (Maxwell, 2012).

Within research ethics, Kvarv represented some principles one has to consider as a researcher. First, the interview is a correlation between two uneven powers dynamics (Kvarv, 2021, p. 94). This entails that I have to keep my prejudices and preconceptions when gathering and transcribing the findings – this regards principle of honesty. Second, my dissemination of such findings should be completely objectified. As I have a semi-structured interview, not all the findings will be presented in the thesis, as I have made conscious choices of deciding what to present in concordance with my research question and hypothesis.

4.6.1 Validity, Reliability and Generalization

An important criterium within research ethics is validity. Validity is central to any research project, an Maxwell (2013) describe this term in relation to "the real world" (p. 121). He initially askes the question "how might you be wrong" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 121) when discussing the term. Validity effects verifiability and how I can justify if my findings are valid in relation to society.

Throughout this MA thesis, I have justified my choices and been clear on the overview to help the readers understand where I am coming from. I have been honest about the process and changes that occurred during. As I have argued for my choices throughout this project, it would affect my reliability. The qualitative research design used in the study has been done in a valid and reliable manner, thus meeting all the parameters of validity test, namely confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability. The results of the study should have a high degree of transferability to other contexts.

Generalisation is based on transferability, as how I evaluate my project can be transferred to the global debate on gaming for EFL learning (Thagaard, 2013). By using a qualitative method, I will be able to get a deep insight into some EFL learners understanding and experience with *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes.* The answer to my research question should be something researchers, educators and students can relate to. How this thesis makes sense. The findings will not be generalized based on this data collection, but provide an insight to it (Thagaard, 2013)

With the explanations and transparency throughout this thesis, I hope the research is regarded as valid, credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable and reliable.

5 Discussion of Findings

"This is what English is all about, being able to talk to other people", Sam

This chapter will represent and discuss the findings from the qualitative interview, in light of relevant theories and research considered previously in the thesis. As elaborated in 4.2 Qualitative Interview as an approach, the interviews will be referred to as group 1, group 2, group 3 and presented in the order in which they were conducted. The participants have pseudonyms to keep their anonymity. In total, the participants answered 24 questions and then their answers were transcribed and categorized as the chapters are named: chapter 5.1, participants' perceived English skills are presented, and in chapter 5.2, I report findings of situational speaking, how comfortable they are speaking English versus Norwegian etc. Chapter 5.3, regards the participants thoughts on the game of the study, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes. In chapter 5.4 and 5.5 the participants thoughts on potential opportunities and challenges with the game is revealed and discussed.

5.1 Participants' Thoughts on The English Language

English as a foreign language is essential for interaction in this contemporary and highly globalized world. The effectiveness of communication requires individuals to have a mastery of more than one language, preferably English. Policymakers worldwide, including those in Norway, have come to such a realization and are continually petition teachers to incorporate English as a foreign language in all the educational levels. The participants of this study were well very aware of the international role that English has, and pointed out how it is a universal language, essential for school, future work, and communication worldwide. Most of the participants in the study reported that they wanted to become as proficient as possible in the English language, so the motivation was high. All participants played video games of various sorts and agreed that English is crucial for gaming. Some agreed they have learnt more from English extramural (EE) activities than formal instructions, such as gaming and gaming culture, movies, series, reading and YouTube. These claims coincide with the remarks of Sylvén and Sundqvist (2011), that SLA must occur in EE activities.

In the first group, we had Ben, Frank and Andy who all rated themselves as five out of ten on their oral English skills. They all agreed that learning English is important to them, and they want to be as good as possible. Ben learnt best from playing video games, and they all agreed on that and they all played games in various forms occasionally, mostly in English. When answering what they can learn from video games, they all said they have learnt more English from games than school. Frank added that he also learnt best by watching movies. Andy had a more practical approach and learned best by using the language. He also said he sometimes code-switches and uses English words when not remember the Norwegian word for it.

Group 2 comprised of three guys, Joe, Sam, and Nick who were great friends and all gamers. They all played in English and even mentioned how games were poorly translated, preferring the games in its original language. Joe, who rated himself the highest of them, with a seven to eight out of ten, thoughtfully exclaimed he managed to do the most important thing of them all, to get his message across. For him, it is important to be proficient in English, as it is vital for gaming and communication. Sam agrees and adds that oral English is more important than written, and that "if you can talk English, it becomes easier to write in English." He also had a practical approach and said it is like theory and practice; "You learn it best when you get to practice it, if you know the theory." Sam rates himself as a six out of ten and said he had to think before speaking, no autopilot. Nick rates himself as seven out of ten and agrees with his friends that learning English is important, but not necessarily for school purposes. He prefers to learn also by watching engaging series.

Group 3 was the only one with female participants, Nora, Ella, accompanied by Thor. Both girls played mobile games, Nora in English and Ella in Norwegian. Thor declared himself as a gamer and plays several different games. Thor says the language he plays on depends on who he plays with, but the games are mainly in English. They all agreed upon the importance of English and Thor uses it "basically" every day. Nora started out by saying that, "now we communicate with the whole world and English being the language everyone knows," similar to what Joe said in the second interview, that English is a universal language that most people use. Also, like Sam from the second interview, Ella and Thor emphasized the importance of English for future work contexts and getting to know people, as Ella said, "collaborate with your boss and colleagues." Ella, who rated herself lowest of the three, with a four to five out of ten, feels like she does not learn from

reading and writing texts, but watching movies and series, in addition to games. She does express how she has to use the language to get comfortable with it, but that she has to learn it properly first. She does however notice that she is getting better by talking to her friends, who speak a lot of English on their spare time. Nora, who rated herself seven out of ten, said: "At school we are only told things, but if you watch movies, you can learn without noticing it yourself, capture words and such. At least that is how I learn best". She adds that it is easier to follow something that is not subject related, something not very serious that is not just for learning, but also for fun. Lastly, Nora adds that she code-switches when talking to friends, similar to Andy in the first group. Thor rates himself as seven to eight out of ten and also gives some credit to video games. He believes he got vocabulary from reading books, movies and series. But oral pronunciation and being comfortable when chatting, he got from online gaming, "a good mix really", he said. Nora explained how English is often taught in Norwegian, and not enough opportunities to practice oral skills with their peers. The third group expressed disappointment in how learning English is often taught in school, often based on reading books and following a script. This way, she adds, one is not fully prepared to have a conversation, "If I had met an English person, I would not have been quite sure how to proceed". This group were advocated for the communicative approach, and believed students should practice communicative skills to further develop English proficiency

Perhaps without realising it, many participants exclaimed that they learn best through the communicative approach, suggestively preferring Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. When asked how they learn best, some participants proclaimed that they must practice communication skills in the language to learn it, learning by doing. The second group were advocated for a practical approach and considered written skills as a consequence of oral skills. Joe said he managed to do the most important things of them all: to get the message across. Which according to the CLT approach, is the means and goal of language learning. Krashen (1985) emphasize meaning for interactions for acquiring second language acquisition, similar to the participants preferred learning method. Some of the participants requested more interactive activities in the classroom in order to further develop their English oral skills.

5.2 Participants' Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to communicate and situational speaking is not easy to measure. The participants were asked to rate their comfortableness whilst speaking in regular classroom settings, both in the English L2 and Norwegian L1 language, and when they are most comfortable and uncomfortable speaking English in general. Additionally, they were asked if they talked more in this gaming situation than a regular English class, if the threshold for talking were higher or lower than a regular English class, and the cause of the change in threshold. Was it because of the situation, being a small group outside the classroom or the game itself?

In group 1, Ben and Frank rated themselves as zero out of ten when asked how comfortable they are speaking English in class. Ben upped his rating to two when asked about his native language, Norwegian, but Frank remained at a zero. Andy however, said six out of ten when speaking English and ten out of ten when speaking Norwegian. They find it easier to speak English when on vacations, when talking to natives, when playing video games, similar thoughts as other participants. All of them spoke considerably more English whilst playing KTaNE than in a regular English class, and they all agreed the threshold for speaking was lower. They did think some of it might be due to the situation itself, but they also gave credit to the game creating that situation.

In the second group, Joe said he was an eight out of ten when speaking English and ten out of ten for Norwegian. His friends however, Sam and Nick had big differences in the comfortableness speaking English to Norwegian. They both said four out of five when speaking English, but Sam was ten out of ten for Norwegian and Nick said nine out of ten. Joe finds it easy to speak English when reading or playing calm games. He finds it a bit difficult in stressful situations like when for example playing Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes. Sam agrees that stressful situations make it difficult, but he feels it is more like a stage fright, when giving presentations. Nick also stresses the difficulty with presentations and finds it easier when playing something calm and when talking together, especially with native speakers. All of them thought the threshold for speaking English was lower whilst gaming than in a regular class, and all of them proclaimed that they speak considerably more English whilst playing than in a regular class. Sam and Joe think it is due to both, the game and the situation. Sam thought the game was so engaging, that he did not think about pronouncing words wrong. Nick gave credit to the situation making it easier, because he was in a smaller group of people he knew well.

Interestingly, in group 3 they had some different opinions of how comfortable they were speaking English versus Norwegian. Nora said she felt like an eight to nine when speaking English in class, and only seven out of ten when speaking Norwegian. When asked if she spoke more English during this gaming session she responded, "Yes, guaranteed. English is often taught in Norwegian, and we speak Norwegian during class. The only thing that is in English, is when we work on assignments." She adds that she would not have spoken less in a bigger group in a classroom situation as she usually speaks a lot in class, but the mix of the game and the situation made her speak more. Nora prefers to talk without a script, and using her own words makes it easier and more comfortable. She is disappointed with how often learning in school is based on reading from a book or a script, and not authentic talk. She proclaims that for this type of learning, "one is not fully prepared to have conversations", she adds "if I had met an English person, I would not have been quite sure how to proceed". She believes students should practice more authentic talk at school, to prepare students to actually use the language.

Only a few participants reported being uncomfortable speaking English in regular class, showing tendencies of trait WTC. Ella in the third group were the one with most apparent signs of foreign language anxiety. First and foremost because she rated her willingness to communicate three out of ten when speaking English in class, but a seven to eight out of ten when in smaller groups. Her rating for smaller group were equivalent to her rating when speaking Norwegian in class. When reading scrips for presentations, she finds speaking English difficult. However, she was very positive towards playing KTaNE and claimed to have spoken a lot more than she would in a regular English class. Yashima and colleagues (2018) discussed how group dynamics influence anxiety, similar to Ella who claimed the thought of making mistakes that makes her reluctant to speak English in class. However, when in smaller groups, preferably with people she knows, her threshold level was the same for L1 and L2.

Some of the participants showed signs of situated WTC. All of the participants, except one reported lower threshold when speaking their L1 than L2. However, many found partaking in L2 communication were easier on vacation, talking to native English speakers and playing video games.

They find it difficult to speak English in stressful situations, and many of the participants mentioned presentations as the worst way to practice English because of the uncomfortableness this entails. Some reported more reluctance for speaking English, especially Ben and Frank from the first group. Although Ben rated his threshold level for his L1 the same as his L2, Frank thought speaking Norwegian made it easier. However, he still rated his L1 WTC as two out of ten. Evidently, some participants found the situation to influence their WTC, claiming it was easier to participate in this situation compared to normal class environment. For the most part, when asked if it was the situation being a small, secluded group or the game, they thought it was a combination of both. They did believe that playing the game in a classroom environment could make them forget their anxiety, arguably making them more willing to communicate.

Ella believes the situation would make a difference and rated her willingness three out of ten when speaking in class, but a seven to eight out of ten when speaking in smaller groups, the same rating she gave to speaking Norwegian in class. She would have talked less if she sat in the classroom and others were watching, as she would be afraid to say the wrong things. Both Nora and Ella find it difficult to speak English during presentations where they have to follow a script, and Ella feels like she cannot let go of the script. Ella was very positive towards speaking English when playing KTaNE and exclaimed "I spoke a lot more English now, and I did not even speak much English! So, much more than I would have done in a regular English class".

Thor expressed how he usually speaks English in class, but not as much as he would like, and gave comfortableness an eight out of ten compared to nine to ten out of ten when speaking Norwegian. He also expressed how he thinks it is easier to talk English when there is competition involved, as it brings extra motivation. He does not think the situation would have made much difference in him talking English, but it could be more distracting with people around. The participants who rated their L2 WTC as lower than L1 WTC did

As discussed by MacIntyre and colleagues (1998), WTC is characterized as a learners readiness to enter conversations. With a contextual focus on individual characteristics, such as personality traits and situations in which can influence it, I have also investigated these tendencies in the participants. As originally predicted by early WTC theories, learners WTC L1 can correspond with WTC in L2, they can be closely related. The findings have shown that the learner's perceived

English skills and anxiety levels could indeed affect language output, especially when comparing themselves with other learners. However, some also believe that by implementing more communicative approaches where they get to practice using the language would make them more confident English speakers in the end.

5.3 Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes

The participants were questioned regarding the game, and asked about the experience itself, how they experienced the technical aspects, and if they learnt something from *Keep Talking and Nobody explodes* today. I initially argued that KTaNE could potentially enhance student's WTC because of the fun environment it represents and through its cooperative properties, where learners are 'forced' to communicate in order to solve complicated puzzles. I questioned if the learners got carried away by the fun aspect of the game, falling into the state of flow, and in turn can help evaluate the effectiveness of the game for game-based learning.

The main characteristics of KTaNE is communication through cooperation, thus I am not surprised that most of the participants reported talking more during this game than in a regular class. Some thought it was the situation, being a smaller group and part of an experiment, but others claimed they would talk just as much had it been in the classroom. In the third group, Nora who usually spoke English during class, added that she spoke considerably more English whilst playing.

Ben, Frank and Andy in group 1, all agreed that it was a good game. Ben said, "I thought it was quite a fun game that you can cooperate in". Frank described it as challenging and fun, and Andy wanted to play it some more. They all experienced the technical aspects and instructions as pretty good, but Andy would have liked to have read the manual beforehand. They did not learn anything in particular today, except that KTaNE is a good game.

In group 2, Joe thought the game was a lot of fun, especially as he played with his friends. They all agreed that they had good cooperation and experienced the technical aspects as just right. Not too easy, and not too hard. Nick thought the manual was clear and concise. Sam added how he thought the game provided a good opportunity to practice their oral English skills. When answering if he had learnt anything from KTaNE today, Sam answered that he learnt some

strategy, he also said "how to work together and how to use the English language to convey (meaning?) to others". Agreeing to Joe's answer that he had to think about how to convey information from the manual, to "make it easier for his teammates to understand.

The third group also agreed that the game was very fun. Nora appreciated that it was different than "sitting and looking down at the book and reading all day". She liked that you could communicate freely without a script. Ella shared these thoughts and felt like she could express herself more freely than a presentation and got to use more of her vocabulary. She hopes to do it some more and thinks that if she continued to play, she would have become more confident with speaking English and expanding her vocabulary and speak more spontaneously. Thor agreed that they got to talk more than usual and thought it might be due to the competition aspect of the game. He thought it was nice not having to think too much about what to say, that they were just talking. He appreciated how the most important thing was not his English, but that they were able to disarm the bomb. They all agreed the technical aspects were good, and well-structured and appropriate for their age group. Nora did not learn anything subject related, but she learnt "that there are other ways to learn English than what is inside the little box that is the curriculum". Thor didn't think he learnt anything from KTaNE directly but thought of it as a gradual exercise to help him become better in English.

When asked about their perception of time, the first group agreed that time went by pretty fast. In the second group, Joe experienced time as fast, especially on the harder difficulty. Sam experienced time as going fast when it was challenging, but also felt like time went slow when the group quickly solved the modules, so somewhere in between. Nick experienced time passing as normal. The third group had a mixed experienced of time depending on what role they had. Nora exclaimed "Time flies when having fun". Ella thought the time went faster when being the 'defuser' and trying to keep track of time. She thought time went pretty slow when reading the manual. Thor felt time went by faster when reading the manual.

The participants were positive towards KTaNE for learning oral English skills and believes the game could be used for such a purpose. A few expressed that they could acquire vocabulary from KTaNE, or at least a familiarity to using the language vocally. As some argued speaking English is more important than writing it, and that they learn more through interaction than reading a text.

The game teaches how to convey information and strategies to make yourself understood by the recipient. Although the game is easy to follow, it is yet challenging. The players must work together and could on average encourage more communication that traditional teaching methods. This can be seen in light of Krashen's (1985) theory of mediation and Vygotsky's (1978) theory of internalization. Throughout the game, they are bombarded with information, from both the game and fellow gamers. The game can act as a mediator in this sense, in addition to more proficient students. The game requires active participation and offer rapid feedback and guidance in return. These learning theories do emphasize language learning as a social process and highlight interaction as a means for learning. The game can offer comprehensible input and the game can be adapted to skill level. Although the input might not be relevant as Muñoz (2007) expressed, it may be valid and authentic for the students. By facilitating interaction, KTaNE offers comprehensible input, which can lead to negotiating of meaning for that specific context, that learners could potentially internalize, and in turn produce output through student participation. Reinders and Wattana (2011) agree with Muñoz (2007) that learners should be encouraged though relevant contexts. KTaNE is a way for teachers to offer a context in which language is allowed to flow naturally.

Playing KTaNE can be a fun way to learn English, and as the participants in this study has requested, a way to communicate freely without a script. Additionally, it shows students that there are more ways to learn English outside the 'little box' we call a curriculum, as Ella exclaimed. The game makes them forget making mistakes and reported that the most important thing is not the learner's English but achieving the objective of disarming the bomb. The game made sure the learners could express themselves in a way that is not a formal presentation, and the participants believed that if they continued playing it in class, affective filters could be lowered, thus making more confident English speakers in the classroom setting. Playing KTaNE can be seen as a social interaction, a gradual exercise to help learners become confident communicators.

5.4 Potential Opportunities

In this section, the potential opportunities for video games for language learning will be presented and discussed. To investigate participants' beliefs of video games for EFL learning and what KTaNE can offer to the learning environment, they were asked questions such as: if they could learn

anything from games in general, their thoughts of KTaNE's learning potential and what opportunities they think the game presents.

Whether you can learn something from games in general Ben, Frank, and Andy all answer that games can teach you a lot, proclaiming that they have learnt more English from video games than in school. Andy added that he thinks games can also teach you maths and history. Joe, Sam, and Nick were also positive towards video games' learning potentials, especially when it came to learning English, but they also mentioned other important skills. Sam point towards Minecraft, a well-known game where you are challenged, and must think differently and creatively. Sam thinks that games can affect the way we are thinking, mostly positive ways but also in negative ways. Joe and Nick points towards cooperation, and Nick said, "If you play with each other, you learn to take care of each other and talk to each other, for example". Joe mentioned problem solving and critical thinking. Thor, Ella and Nora shared thoughts of learning English and cooperation. Thor said, "cooperation is needed in most games" and he thinks you can learn a lot of English conversation- and communication skills. Ella adds that she believes English oral skills get strengthened, especially when playing online.

What can you learn from KTaNE specifically? In group 1, Ben answered English, and made an example of how the manual for one of the modules is asking for odd numbers, to be able to solve that module you would have to know what odd numbers are. Frank thinks the game can teach you more advanced English and cooperation, "you also learn to work better together. You are like a team" he said. Andy explains that the game required him to "turn his head (brain?) on" and that "one can learn to explain things better".

The second group also had thoughts of communication and cooperation, and Joe even said the game offers "everything you need to be able to talk English". He goes on and adds "you might not learn how to defuse a bomb, but there's a lot of general English that you can learn." He also answered problem solving, that the game teaches you to act in unexpected situations. And that "cooperation is quite important in that game". Sam agrees with Joe and express the importance of communicating and being clear in instructions. He believes you can learn to communicate in English, and that "this is what spoken English is all about, being able to talk to other people".

Group 3 highlights the opportunity to practice conversation. Nora appreciated the opportunity to speak English more freely and being able to work on pronunciation. Not necessarily pronunciation per se but being independent from a script. Ella also appreciated freedom and liked that they could practice normal conversation for everyday life. She thinks the game offers opportunities to improve the conversational skill quite a bit. Thor also thinks the game can teach you to speak more freely and become comfortable speaking English. "And collaboration skills, of course". The participants agreed that games for learning and KTaNE specifically could enhance several of the 21st century skills as discussed by Gee (2003) and Whitton (2014) and be supported by the communicative language approach and game-based learning theories.

5.5 Potential Challenges

When asked about potential challenges of the game, the first group agreed that the level of English proficiency could be a potential issue when playing. Ben said, "your understanding of English gets tested", where Frank and Andy agreed. Joe and Nick both mentioned communications, and how it would be difficult to understand what someone is saying if their pronunciation is wrong. Sam mentioned that cooperation could be difficult, as well as explanations and propositions. It did however work out fine with them, and Sam said the challenges were comprehensible. Ella and Thor pointed out how communication and collaboration could be a potential challenge if students have low English proficiency levels. Ella added a potentially challenge could be figuring out how the game works. However, they both agreed that they did get into it quickly and it went quite well for them.

6   Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed how researchers and educators have invented numerous strategies, theories, and approaches for language learning, or second language acquisition. There is an ever-growing demand for competent fluent English communicators in the contemporary world. Consequently, ESL learners should be given appropriate opportunities to practice such skills, to meet the needs of different interactive real-world scenarios beyond the classroom environment. It is vital that teachers are accommodating to this challenge and offer their students communicative approaches to support their learners second language acquisition. Recognized by

its effectiveness of encouraging communicative interactions in the classroom, the communicative language teaching (CLT) methods have attracted attention worldwide for this purpose exactly. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate interaction and communication between the students, which is the general characteristics of many video games. With the new an upcoming game-based learning approach, CLT might have a real contestant in most effective communicative language approach.

As I have proclaimed throughout this thesis, video games like *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* (KTaNE) could potentially be utilized as a learning tool to inspire learners to develop appreciation and excitement for learning English as a second language. Teachers around the globe could utilize this game to 'spice up' lessons and increase awareness to this great source of idea for language learning. I have also proclaimed that KTaNE can utilized to improve students' speaking, reading, and listening skills, by making students more talkative in class. The participants also identified these attributes and explained how KTaNE could teach them communication skills and more advanced English through authentic conversation. They also highlighted some of the 21st century skills, specifically cooperation, problem solving, critical thinking as potential learning outcomes. Skills outside of the English subject curriculum. Furthermore, they emphasized that KTaNE can be a fun and practical way to practice English oral skills. One group speculated that they could indeed become confident and proficient English speakers if they continuously played this game with their classmates. The game can act as a facilitator through the CLT approach to encourage interaction, increase energy levels and over time build confidence with the English language. Additionally, KTaNE could possibly instil learners with a sense of *flow,* to make them focus and concentrate on the task at hand.

Arguably, the study has successfully identified indications that *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes* influence young learners' willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language. Through its inherently informal and communicative properties, KTaNE can create a non- formal and less threatening learning environment, which in turn can facilitate motivation and participation. The participants did indeed report a lower threshold to speak English whilst playing, as they appreciated the authentic situation it provided. They appreciated how the game made speaking English more applicable to real life situations, as opposed to reading from scripts and preparing for

exams. It is evidently argued that through real conversations, learners can practice their language and in turn develop communicative competence.

Thorough coursework and reading, I have discovered a fruitful selection of learning theories to support all my claims. It was intriguing to investigate and question other researchers about their beliefs. This thesis is a small-scale, but potentially useful intervention in further developing teacher practices, especially this researcher's development of teacher practices.

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7 Appendix

Appendix 1: Intervjuguide

Intervjuguide

Bakgrunns info
- Hva heter du?

- Hva er ditt morsmål?

- Spiller du dataspill? Hvis ja, hva da?

- Hvilket språk spiller du på?

- Kan man lære noe av dataspill? - attitude

Engelsk og kommunikasjon
- Hvor god er du på å snakke engelsk? Skala 1-10

- Hvor komfortabel er du med å snakke engelsk i timen? Skala 1-10

- Hvor komfortabel er du med å snakke norsk i timen? Skala 1-10

- I hvilke situasjoner er det lett å snakke engelsk?

- I hvile situasjoner er det vanskelig å snakke engelsk?

- Hva tenker eller føler du mens du snakker engelsk?

- Hva tenker eller føler du når du hører andre i klassen snakke engelsk?

- Hvor viktig er det for deg å bli god i muntlig engelsk?

- Hvordan lærer du best muntlig engelsk?

Om spillingen av KTaNE
- Hvordan var totalopplevelsen av KTaNE?

- Opplevde du at tiden gikk fort, sakte eller vanlig? (flow theory)

- Snakket du mer engelsk under spillingen enn vanlig undervisningstime?

- Var terskelen høyere eller lavere for å snakke engelsk enn en vanlig undervisningstime?

    o   Var det pga selve spillet eller situasjonen (liten gruppe utenom klasserommet)?

- Hvordan opplevde du det tekniske med spillingen? Var selve spillet og manualen vanskelig?

- Hvilke utfordringer tror du spillet byr på?

- Hvilke muligheter tror du spillet byr på?

- Hva synes du om spillets læringspotensiale? Kan du lære noe av KTaNE?

- Lærte du noe av KTaNE i dag?