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Exploring the Use of Role-Playing as a Viable Teaching Method in EFL Education

A Practical Investigation of Dungeons & Dragons
in Norwegian 7th Grade Classrooms

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This thesis is worth 30 study points

Summary

This master thesis investigates the use of role-playing games (RPGs), specifically Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), as a teaching method for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the Norwegian LK20 curriculum framework. The study is grounded in the educational theories of Vygotsky, Bandura, and Bakhtin, emphasizing the significance of social interaction and observational learning. Through an observational study involving 7th-grade students, the research explores the impact of RPGs on vocabulary acquisition, student engagement, and interaction quality.

The findings reveal that RPGs can significantly enhance student engagement and provide a dynamic environment for practicing language skills. Students actively used and expanded their vocabulary in meaningful contexts during the role-playing sessions, demonstrating the method's potential to facilitate language learning. The study also identifies challenges such as the need for teacher preparation.

The literature review complements the observational study by analysing previous research on the educational use of RPGs, highlighting their benefits and limitations. Despite the challenges, the integration of RPGs into EFL education shows promise. It suggests that with proper planning and implementation, RPGs can be a valuable tool for language learning in Norwegian classrooms. This thesis contributes to the academic discourse on innovative teaching methods and offers practical insights for educators seeking to enhance EFL instruction through engaging and interactive pedagogies.

Foreword

When writing this thesis I have had many ups and downs. Throughout all this there have been many people supporting me, all deserving of my great appreciation. Starting with my supervisor, Erika Kvistad, who provided me with constructive feedback and guided me in the right direction at all turns. Thank you for believing in me and never giving up on this thesis, even when I had my doubts. With your time and effort you have immensely improved the quality of my MA-thesis.

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1 Introduction

Whilst studying at university in my second language, English, I found myself wondering how I learned English when I was younger. I used to play a lot of video games in English, and whilst there exists a large variety of video games, I found myself most interested in the types of video games where you could create your own character. In those games you could role-play as the character you created as you made choices within the story that changed the narrative of the game. These games are called RPGs: Role-Playing Games. However, role-playing is not exclusive to video games. Role-playing is a recreational activity where participants assume the roles of characters and act out scenarios in a fictional setting. In a role-playing game (RPG), each participant typically controls a character, and together with a group they create a story through their actions and interactions. A popular role-playing game, outside of video games, is the old tabletop game known as Dungeons and Dragons (DnD). A tabletop game is usually defined as game you would play at a table, and not with a computer. Some known examples of tabletop game are Chess and Monopoly. In DnD you have to use your imagination to create a story together with friends. Unlike Chess and Monopoly, DnD has not been translated into my first language, Norwegian, so I had to quickly learn the words in English to understand the rules of the game. Together with friends, and some strangers that became friends, I created stories in a language I did not yet fully speak at the time. These reflections upon my language journey led me to asking a lot of questions surrounding this method. Why did playing a character in a different language work well for me? And could it work well for others?

Eventually I would get the opportunity to test this out. During a teaching practice for university I got the chance to work together with my peers as we made a whole school day of DnD. We did not exclusively focus on English as we combined several subjects into this day. Both Maths, English and Arts were incorporated into the tasks the students were given. We saw the students use their imagination and vocabulary to create stories together in ways they had not previously done whilst we were teaching them. I was delighted to see how active the students were across all tasks. Even the students who usually remain silent during in EFL class managed to find a few sentences in English to contribute to the story when taking

actions and describing their character. After talking with my peers and the teacher mentoring us during teaching practice I wondered if this could be a viable way to teach EFL in the future. This inspired me to explore this method of teaching further. The aim was to see what discussions already exists on this topic. Could this be used in classrooms teaching EFL on a more regular basis? Would it change the way some students learn English?

1.1 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is structured to provide a comprehensive exploration of the use of role-playing games (RPGs) as a teaching method in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. In chapter one there is an introduction as well as an outline of the thesis, including the explanation of the research question. The background chapter offers an overview of the LK20 curriculum and details the role-playing method in educational contexts. The theoretical framework chapter explores key learning theories by Bandura and Vygotsky, supporting the pedagogical effectiveness of RPGs in enhancing language learning. Research methods are explained in a chapter that describes the observation study and literature review process. The results and findings chapter presents empirical evidence from the observational study on student engagement, language use, and interaction quality during role-playing activities. A literature review chapter compares the study's results with existing research, drawing broader conclusions about the efficacy of RPGs in EFL learning. The discussion chapter synthesizes these findings, evaluating the viability of RPGs as a vocabulary teaching method within the LK20 curriculum and addressing theoretical and practical implications. The thesis concludes with a summary of key findings, recommendations for educators and policymakers, and suggestions for future research. A comprehensive reference list follows, citing all academic sources used.

1.2 Research Question

In this thesis, I formulated a research question to guide my study of the viability of using role-playing games (RPGs) as a method for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

learners, particularly within the framework of the new LK20 curriculum. The research question is:

"Can using role-playing games be a viable method for teaching EFL learners with the new LK20 curriculum?"

This question is structured to address two critical aspects of educational research: the practicality of implementing RPGs in the classroom and their effectiveness in enhancing language acquisition among EFL learners. By focusing on these areas, the research aims to provide insights into the potential benefits and challenges of integrating RPGs into traditional language teaching methods.

The rationale behind this research question stems from personal observations and experiences during my teaching practice. Notably, I witnessed how a day dedicated to Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) engaged students across various subjects, including English, mathematics, and arts. The enthusiasm and creativity displayed by the students, particularly those who were usually reserved in EFL classes, prompted a deeper inquiry into whether RPGs could be systematically used to improve language skills.

The new LK20 curriculum emphasizes innovative teaching methods that foster student engagement and active learning. This aligns well with the immersive and interactive nature of RPGs, which require players to use language dynamically and contextually. The discussion of LK20's competence aim will be expanded upon further in the background chapter.

By addressing this research question, the thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of how RPGs can be used as a pedagogical tool in EFL education. It seeks to determine not only the feasibility of incorporating these games into the curriculum but also their potential impact on students' language development and engagement levels. The findings could inform future educational practices and encourage more widespread adoption of innovative teaching methods in language education.

2 Background

Over the years as a master thesis student I have read and discussed the new competence aims, LK20, and studied how it differs from its predecessor LK06 as it is relevant to know how the competence aims have developed throughout the years. There were many changes and new additions to the new set of competence aims as they developed. Once they were finalised there was one particular aim that stood out to me as I had not heard much about using this method in EFL education before: "Explore and use pronunciation patterns and words and expressions in play, singing and role playing" (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019, p. 7). It was this last part, role playing, that invoked some curiosity. Although using role-play as a method can be used in a variety of subjects in school, I will be focusing on the English Subject because of its relevancy to my education. Moreover, I will be discussing its relevancy to the Norwegian EFL classroom as I highlight the mention of this method in LK20. By looking at the details of LK20 chapter aims to give an understanding of the knowledge needed before going into the thesis.

2.1 Role-Play as a Method in Norwegian Classrooms

After reviewing the existing research on this topic, I found that there has been little research done specifically in Norwegian classrooms for EFL education. It is evident that this method is not uncommon. However, a quick overview of the previous research done on this method showed that in Norwegian classrooms it was more prominent in other subjects such as History or Social Studies. There are some studies done for the EFL classrooms in Norway, but they have seemed to concentrate on a specific use of role-play.

2.1.1 Role-playing Method in other Norwegian School Subjects

Amongst the research done concerning Norwegian schools in the past decade there was a master thesis done in 2018 by André Evensen. It focused on studying how role-playing could be used make students feel more connected to subjects they do not experience on a day-to-day basis nor have close ties to in Social Studies (Evensen, 2018, p. 3). Similarly, in 2015 there

was a study done for a master thesis by Erlend Takle Nesland where he looked at how the students responded to a role-play of the United Nations negotiations. This role-play was done as part of the student's Social Studies classes and the study found that the reaction seemed positive (Nesland, 2015, p.56). Although these results seem promising it is not directly relevant to EFL. In a master thesis study done in 2018 by Nikolai Ursin he found that teacher's own enthusiasm and knowledge of this method influenced other teachers to adopt this method in the classroom (Ursin, 2018, p. 36). His main focus was its relevancy to Social Studies, but his findings could be relevant across other subjects in school.

2.1.2 Studies on Role-Play in Norwegian EFL Classrooms

There are some studies done concerning the use of role-play in Norwegian EFL classrooms. These will be discussed later in closer detail in the literature review section. This said, they mostly seem to look at a specific role-playing game called *Reacting to the Past* (RTTP). A method that has been commonly used the USA for years but more recently adapted for use in EFL classrooms. According to these studies role-play, specifically the RTTP pedagogy, can effectively transform English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms by increasing student engagement, improving oral communication skills, and fostering a dynamic learning environment (Grindahl, 2019, p. 34). The use of RTTP in Norwegian EFL classrooms has demonstrated that students benefit from the active learning strategy, as it encourages them to speak more and engage deeply with the content, which is not always the case in more traditional classroom settings (Grindahl, 2019, p. 46).

Moreover, the research indicates that while RTTP is highly beneficial for many students, it might not suit every individual due to varying preferences in learning styles and teaching methods (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 22). The method also requires a considerable amount of preparation and adaptation to fit different classroom contexts and student groups (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 30). Additionally, it challenges both students and teachers to step out of their comfort zones, which can be seen as a positive disruption that encourages more interactive and communicative forms of learning (Soltveit, 2019, p. 18).

Practically, RTTP can be integrated into EFL classrooms, but its success largely depends on the willingness of teachers to relinquish some control in the classroom, allowing students to lead the way through role-playing activities. This pedagogical shift not only enhances language skills but also develops critical thinking and empathy among students (Soltveit, 2019, p. 24). Teachers interested in implementing this method need to be prepared to handle the increased dynamism and potential unpredictability that come with active learning environments (Soltveit, 2019, p. 24). These three studies seem to have both a practical view on the use of role-play in EFL and a positive impression of their findings when using RTTP.

2.2 LK20 and the Role-Playing Method

As mentioned, role-playing has been written into the Norwegian Curriculum as of the competence aims set into works in 2020. In its predecessor, LK06, role-playing was not part of the curriculum of the English subject. Each curriculum aims to guide in students' language acquisition and vocabulary development. Essential components to effective language learning. Traditional instructional methods often rely on memorization and drill exercises, which can lead to limited engagement and reduced long-term retention. As we have seen with RTTP reaching EFL classrooms in Norway innovative approaches have emerged to attempt to make vocabulary learning more interactive and engaging for students. The implementation of role-play methodologies such as RTTP aligns with the core values and principles outlined in the subsections "Social learning and development" and "The joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore" of the LK20 Core Curriculum. These sections emphasize the importance of fostering an engaging and socially interactive learning environment, which is crucial for effective education in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

The subsection "Social learning and development" underscores the significance of social learning and development, highlighting how educational experiences are deeply social and can significantly influence students' learning outcomes (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 10). Role-play inherently supports this by providing a dynamic platform for students to interact, negotiate, and collaborate using the target language, thereby not only enhancing language skills but also fostering social development.

Moreover, the subsection "The joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore" emphasizes the joy of creating, engagement, and the urge to explore as fundamental to the learning process (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 8). Role-play methods like RTTP tap into these aspects by turning the classroom into an explorative and creative environment where students are actively involved in constructing their learning experiences. This engagement is crucial for motivating students and making the learning process enjoyable and meaningful.

Integrating role-play into EFL teaching strategies aligns with the curriculum's focus on building competencies that are not only academic but also social and communicative. It provides a practical application of language skills in a context that mimics real-life interactions, thereby adhering to the curriculum's goals of preparing students for real-world challenges by developing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and interactive skills.

Overall, the use of role-play in EFL settings as suggested by these curriculum sections provides a robust framework for enhancing language learning, ensuring that it is not only interactive and engaging but also deeply integrated with the core educational values of social development and explorative learning (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, pp. 8-10).

2.2.1 Why 7th Grade? Cognitive and Social Considerations for Language Play

The placement of the competence aim "Explore and use pronunciation patterns and words and expressions in play, singing and role-playing" specifically at the 7th grade level, rather than in 4th grade or beyond 7th grade, can be deliberated from several educational and developmental perspectives.

Firstly, the cognitive and linguistic development of students around the 7th grade age, typically 12 to 13 years old, marks a critical transition. At this stage, students possess a more refined ability to grasp complex language structures and subtle nuances in pronunciation compared to younger students in 4th grade. They are also generally more capable of abstract thinking and can handle more sophisticated aspects of language learning, such as the varied

phonetic elements found in a foreign language. This developmental stage makes 7th graders ideally suited to actively engage in pronunciation exploration and practice through creative and interactive methods like play, singing, and role-playing.

Furthermore, the social dynamics of 7th graders are significantly different from those of younger students. At this age, students are increasingly conscious of peer interactions and are developing a stronger sense of identity and confidence. Integrating language learning with play and role-playing activities not only makes the learning process engaging and less intimidating but also leverages their growing social skills. This method of learning supports peer learning and encourages a more relaxed environment where students feel comfortable experimenting with new sounds and language structures without the fear of making mistakes.

In contrast, introducing this competence aim at a grade higher than 7th might miss leveraging the peak of linguistic flexibility. As students grow older, their language acquisition processes become more rigid, and they often become more self-conscious about their linguistic abilities in front of peers. Thus, engaging older students in play-based language learning might not be as effective or readily embraced.

Moreover, curriculum structuring also plays a role in the placement of this competence aim. By 7th grade, students typically have a foundational grasp of the language from earlier grades, allowing them to better appreciate and utilize the complexities of pronunciation and expressions. This foundational knowledge makes the 7th grade an optimal point for deepening language skills through more interactive and participatory methods, setting a robust language foundation before they advance into more complex language use in higher grades.

Thus, placing this competence aim in the 7th grade strikes a balance between cognitive readiness, social development, foundational language skills, and curriculum progression, making it a strategically positioned learning objective that maximizes educational impact in language learning.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter examines the relevance of Albert Bandura's, Lev Vygotsky's and Mikhail Bakhtin learning theories to the use of role-playing in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

3.1 Learning Theories

Bandura's social learning theory highlights the importance of observational learning and self-efficacy, demonstrating how students learn by observing and imitating role models. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes social interaction and scaffolding, introducing key concepts such as the zone of proximal development. Bakhtin's theories on dialogism speak to a dialogue between individuals that continues to shape through interaction.

By applying these theories, role-playing can be utilized as an effective pedagogical tool in EFL classrooms. This chapter explores how integrating Bandura's and Vygotsky's principles into role-playing activities can enhance student engagement, linguistic skills, and cognitive development through structured social interaction and guided learning.

3.1.1 Bandura

Bandura's theories of social learning suggests that students learn not only through direct instruction or reinforcement but also by observing and imitating others, particularly those they perceive as role models. In the context of school, this means that students do not just learn from teachers telling them what to do, but also from watching their peers, teachers, and even characters in educational materials like videos. Bandura also emphasized the importance of self-efficacy, which is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in specific tasks. When students observe others successfully completing tasks or overcoming challenges, it can boost their own confidence and belief in their ability to do the same (Brandmo, 2014, p.191).

These theories of Bandura are highly relevant to using role-playing as a teaching method. Role-playing involves students acting out scenarios, often in collaboration with their peers,

which creates a rich environment for observational learning. During role-play, students can observe the actions, problem-solving strategies, and social interactions of their peers, who serve as immediate role models. This observational learning is crucial, as students have the opportunity to see practical applications of theoretical knowledge and witness firsthand the successful execution of tasks and overcoming of challenges. Moreover, role-playing allows for the modelling of positive behaviours and skills by both teachers and peers. When students see their classmates or instructors effectively manage a scenario or demonstrate a particular skill during role-play, it reinforces the learning process. They are more likely to imitate these behaviours, internalize the techniques, and apply them in similar situations, enhancing their learning experience.

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy is particularly significant in the context of role-playing. As students participate in role-playing activities and observe their peers succeeding, their own self-efficacy can be strengthened. Witnessing others navigate complex scenarios and achieve positive outcomes can instil a sense of confidence in students, making them more likely to believe in their own capabilities. This increased self-efficacy can lead to greater engagement, persistence, and resilience in learning tasks.

Additionally, role-playing often includes elements of feedback and reinforcement, which further supports Bandura's theory. Teachers can provide immediate, constructive feedback during or after role-playing sessions, reinforcing positive behaviours and guiding students towards improvement. This combination of observation, imitation, feedback, and reinforcement creates a holistic learning experience that aligns well with the principles of social learning theory. Integrating Bandura's theories into role-playing as a teaching method leverages the power of observational learning and the development of self-efficacy. By creating opportunities for students to observe, imitate, and receive feedback within a supportive and interactive environment, role-playing can enhance their learning outcomes and build their confidence in applying new skills and knowledge. Although this theory could be used for a variety of subjects in school, it does have relevancy to EFL. Having role models that can show the way for use of language could be important for students' learning process.

3.1.2 Vygotsky

Learning theorist Lev Vygotsky argues that learning hinges on social interaction, emphasizing language as the conduit for such interaction and subsequent learning. Two key ideas he theorized were the "zone of proximal development" and "scaffolding". The former suggests that a knowledgeable adult, often a teacher, guides a student towards challenges slightly beyond their current grasp, propelling them forward. This process, facilitated by "scaffolding", sees the teacher supporting the student until they can manage independently. Scaffolding manifests in various forms, from dictionaries to digital tools or simply an adult's guidance. As the student grows adept, the scaffolding is gradually removed, signifying realization of the zone of proximal development, where independent task-solving becomes achievable (Karlsdottir & Hybertsen, 2013, pp. 254-255).

Vygotsky's theories are highly relevant to using role-playing as a teaching method. Role-playing inherently involves social interaction and communication, key components of Vygotsky's learning theory. When students engage in role-play, they are often placed in scenarios that require them to navigate situations just beyond their current abilities, thus situating them within their zone of proximal development. The teacher, acting as a facilitator, can provide scaffolding in the form of structured guidance, prompts, and feedback, helping students to navigate these scenarios effectively.

Moreover, role-playing provides a dynamic and interactive environment where students can practice language and social skills in a context that mirrors real-life situations. This aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of social context in learning. As students interact with their peers during role-play, they are not only practicing new skills but also learning from each other, with more knowledgeable peers acting as additional sources of scaffolding. This peer interaction enhances the learning experience and supports the development of higher order thinking skills.

As students become more proficient in the role-play scenarios, the teacher can gradually reduce the level of direct support, encouraging students to take on more responsibility for their learning. This gradual removal of scaffolding helps students to internalize the skills and

knowledge they have gained, enabling them to perform tasks independently and confidently. In this way, role-playing as a teaching method not only makes learning engaging and interactive but also effectively operationalizes Vygotsky's principles, fostering deeper understanding and skill acquisition through social interaction and guided support.

Overall, the integration of Vygotsky's theories with role-playing activities in the classroom can lead to a more enriched and effective learning experience, helping students to bridge the gap between their current capabilities and their potential for independent problem-solving.

3.1.3 Bakhtin

Mikhail Bakhtin introduced concepts such as dialogism, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque, which, though not directly linked to educational theory, provide valuable insights into how RPGs could be effectively integrated into teaching EFL. Bakhtin's theories can illuminate the potential of RPGs to create engaging and communicative learning environments that align well with the goals of the LK20 curriculum, which emphasizes active learning, student engagement, and the development of critical and creative thinking.

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism refers to the ongoing dialogue between individuals, texts, and ideas, where meaning is continually shaped and reshaped through interaction (Silseth, 2014, p.149) This is particularly relevant to RPGs in an EFL context, where students actively engage in dialogue as part of the gameplay. In RPGs, students can assume various character roles, each with distinct voices and perspectives. This setup mirrors real-life interactions and encourages students to use English in authentic, communicative contexts, thereby supporting the LK20 curriculum's focus on communication skills and practical language use.

Heteroglossia describes the coexistence of multiple 'languages' or voices within a single narrative, reflecting various viewpoints, ideologies, and social languages (Silseth, 2014, p.153). In the context of RPGs for EFL learners, heteroglossia manifests through the diverse characters and scenarios that students encounter. Each character or role that a student plays can introduce new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and cultural contexts, enriching the student's understanding and command of English. This diversity in linguistic expression

supports the LK20 curriculum's aim to foster students' ability to understand and interact within a range of social contexts and registers.

Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque – characterised by a temporary suspension of hierarchical structure and norms where roles can be reversed – can transform the EFL learning experience by making it more inclusive and democratic. RPGs inherently disrupt traditional classroom dynamics and empower students to take charge of their learning. This democratization of the learning process aligns with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on student-centred learning and can help in cultivating a classroom environment where students feel free to experiment with language without the fear of making mistakes, thereby enhancing their language acquisition process.

Incorporating RPGs into EFL instruction under the LK20 curriculum involves more than just playing games for fun. It requires careful integration of Bakhtinian principles to ensure that the games reinforce curriculum objectives. For instance, teachers can design RPG scenarios that require students to solve problems, negotiate meanings, and collaborate on projects using English, thereby developing not only their language skills but also their critical thinking and teamwork abilities – key competencies highlighted in the LK20 core curriculum.

While Mikhail Bakhtin did not specifically address educational theory, his ideas on dialogism, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque offer a robust theoretical framework for utilizing RPGs in EFL teaching. By fostering an interactive, multivoiced, and liberated learning environment, RPGs can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language learning, making them a viable method under the new LK20 curriculum. This approach not only aligns with the curriculum's goals but also addresses the broader educational mandate to prepare students for active participation in a multilingual, globalized world.

4 Research Methods

This chapter will present which methods were used and why these were chosen. I have used two different methodologies for this thesis, observation, and literature review. My primary source is from the literature review. The observation study is a support alongside it.

4.1 Research Design

In my research, I have chosen to include a literature review in addition to conducting a small observation study. The primary reason for using both methods is to get an overview of the field using role-play as a teaching method in addition to getting a secondary input source.

The literature review serves as a foundational element of my research. By systematically examining existing studies, articles, and theoretical frameworks related to role-play in education, I can gain a broad perspective on the topic. This review enables me to identify key themes, prevailing theories, and significant findings that have emerged in the field over time. Moreover, it helps in recognizing gaps in the current knowledge, thereby highlighting areas that require further investigation. This foundational knowledge is crucial as it sets the context for my own study, ensuring that my research questions are relevant and informed by existing scholarship.

On the other hand, the small observation study provides empirical insights that are grounded in real-world applications. Through direct observation, I can gather qualitative data on how role-play is implemented in educational settings, how students and teachers interact during role-play activities, and the outcomes of such interventions. This firsthand data collection allows me to understand the practical challenges and benefits of using role-play as a teaching method, adding a layer of depth to my research that purely theoretical studies might not capture.

By integrating both the literature review and the observation study, my research benefits from a balanced approach. The literature review offers a macroscopic view, presenting a wide-ranging analysis of what has been previously discovered and discussed. In contrast, the observation study provides a microscopic view, offering detailed insights from specific instances and contexts. This combination ensures that my understanding of the role-play method in education is both broad and deep.

Ultimately, the dual approach allows me to see through the field of research in its entirety. It gives me an overview of the academic landscape while also enabling me to engage closely with the practical realities of implementing role-play in educational environments. This comprehensive understanding is essential for drawing well-informed conclusions and making meaningful contributions to the field.

4.2 Observation

The methodology chapter of this thesis outlines the design and implementation of an observation-based study conducted in a classroom setting. The thought behind using an observation component in this study is to gain firsthand insights into how role-playing as a teaching method is implemented and received in the classroom. By directly observing classroom interactions, student engagement, and the practical application of role-playing, I aim to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of its effectiveness and challenges in a real-world educational setting. The primary focus of this part of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching method for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. This chapter details the activity used for observation, the data collection process, measures taken to ensure research credibility, limitations encountered, and ethical considerations.

4.2.1 The Activity

The chosen activity for this study was a role-playing exercise inspired by the game Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). This activity was selected due to its potential to engage students in creative thinking, storytelling, and interactive dialogue – key components of language

learning. It was a two-part activity that was designed to see both their written skills as well as their oral skills while focusing on role-playing. The students were first introduced to the concept of D&D, including its basic rules, the role of characters, and the narrative structure of the game.

The initial task required students to individually create an original character. Each student was asked to write a detailed description of their character, including the character's name, background, personality traits, strengths, and weaknesses. This part of the activity aimed to encourage students to think creatively and practice their writing skills in English. Students were given a set amount of time to complete their character profiles, during which they were encouraged to use dictionaries and other resources to aid their writing.

Once the character creation task was completed, students were divided into small groups. Each group was tasked with role-playing a scenario where their characters met for the first time on a road. This role-playing exercise was designed to foster interactive dialogue and collaborative storytelling. Students were instructed to stay in character and interact with their group members as their characters would, discussing their backgrounds, goals, and potential adventures.

4.2.2 Data Collection

The data collection process for this study was observational. During the role-playing activity, I observed the students' engagement with the task, their use of language, and their interactions with peers. Specific focus areas included:

Student Engagement: Observing how actively students participated in both the individual and group tasks.

Language Use: Noting the vocabulary and grammatical structures used by students during the role-play.

Interaction Quality: Assessing the nature of interactions, including how students responded to and built upon each other's contributions.

Detailed notes were taken throughout the observation to capture these aspects comprehensively. To collect data, I observed the students' engagement with the material during role-playing activities and listened to their verbal interactions. By taking detailed notes on these observations, I documented various aspects such as the level of student participation, the nature of their interactions, and their overall enthusiasm and responsiveness to the role-playing tasks. This qualitative data collection method allowed me to capture the dynamic and multifaceted nature of classroom interactions, providing rich insights into the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching method.

4.2.3 Research Credibility

To ensure the credibility of this research, I conducted the observation independently, with only the main teacher present in the classroom to maintain the normal classroom environment. My role was to observe without interfering, allowing for an authentic and unobtrusive assessment of the role-playing activities. This approach helped to minimize bias and maintain the integrity of the observational data. However, it was difficult to avoid being uninvolved completely, as the students and their teacher a few times needed help and asked questions about the activity.

4.2.4 Limitations of a Small Observational Study

One significant limitation of this observational study is the challenge of capturing every classroom interaction and detail. Although the small class size facilitated focused observations, some interactions might have been missed, highlighting the inherent difficulty of conducting real-time, comprehensive observations. This suggests the potential benefit of additional support, such as video recordings, for more extensive studies.

The presence of an observer may have also influenced students' and teacher's behaviour, potentially altering their natural responses to the role-playing activity. This observer effect is

an important consideration when interpreting the results and understanding the context of the observations.

Additionally, the results may not work in other situations. Conducted in a specific educational setting with a particular group of students, the results may not be applicable to other contexts. Cultural differences, varying educational systems, and differing levels of familiarity with role-playing games could affect how these findings translate to other classrooms.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the use of role-playing games as a teaching method in EFL classrooms. The qualitative data collected offers a foundation for understanding the potential benefits and challenges of this approach. Future research employing more extensive observational methods and exploring diverse educational settings could further validate and expand these findings.

4.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount in conducting this study, especially given the involvement of children. All necessary permissions were obtained from the school, parents, and guardians prior to the observations. To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the students, no identifying information was recorded. The observations were conducted in a manner that minimized disruption to the students' normal routine, respecting their right to a safe and comfortable learning environment.

Additionally, the study received approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). This approval allowed for the retention and utilization of observational data collected during the study. The data, comprising reflections and notes from classroom sessions, were securely stored on a personal computer with no names recorded, ensuring confidentiality. However, the name of the school was included in the thesis as an acknowledgment of their cooperation, following the NSD's guidelines.

Furthermore, the lack of familiarity between the researcher and the students might have influenced their interaction with the role-playing game. As an unfamiliar figure, I could have

been perceived as an authority figure, potentially affecting the students' behaviour and the outcomes observed. I bring up these dynamics to transparently discuss it in the thesis to ensure an accurate representation of the study's context and implications.

By adhering to these ethical standards, the study aims to maintain the integrity of the research process and contribute positively to the academic community, ensuring that the findings are presented in an unbiased and respectful manner.

4.3 Literature review

The purpose of including a literature review in this study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the field of using role-play as a teaching method. By examining existing research, I aim to identify key themes, trends, and gaps in the literature, providing a solid foundation for our own study. This review will offer insights into the various perspectives and findings within the field, allowing us to position the research within the broader academic discourse.

4.3.1 Data Collection

To gather relevant information for this literature review, a systematic search of academic databases, journals, and conference proceedings was conducted. This process involved identifying and analysing existing studies, articles, and papers that specifically address the use of role-playing games (RPGs) as a teaching method in educational settings, with a particular focus on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The search was designed to capture a comprehensive view of the current state of knowledge in this area and to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives and findings.

The search terms used included "RPGs in EFL classrooms," "RPGs in Norwegian classrooms," "role-playing as a teaching method," and "role-playing in EFL education." Articles and studies that directly examined the application of role-playing games for language learning were prioritized. Sources that primarily discussed the theoretical underpinnings or

outlying aspects of role-playing without a clear connection to classroom implementation were excluded to maintain a focus on practical and applicable insights.

The data collection process also involved a critical evaluation of the methodologies and outcomes of these studies. Key criteria for inclusion were the relevance to the research question, the robustness of the research design, and the clarity of the findings. Studies were assessed for their contribution to understanding how RPGs can facilitate vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and overall language proficiency in EFL learners.

This literature review meticulously selects credible sources to build a comprehensive understanding of integrating role-playing games in EFL teaching. It highlights both the benefits and challenges of using RPGs for language instruction, focusing on practical applications and tangible outcomes. The review aims to provide a nuanced analysis of RPGs' impact on vocabulary acquisition, learner engagement, and overall language proficiency in EFL contexts. This foundation supports a thorough examination and discussion in the thesis, contributing to the broader discourse on innovative pedagogical strategies in language education.

4.3.2 Research Credibility

Ensuring the credibility of the research included in this literature review was a critical component of this thesis. The selection process aimed to focus on peer-reviewed articles and studies from reputable academic journals to guarantee the reliability and validity of the information presented. To assess the credibility of each source, several key factors were considered.

Initially, priority was intended to be given to works authored by experts and recognized researchers in the field of educational methods, particularly those with a focus on language acquisition and pedagogical innovations. However, it was found that many relevant and insightful studies were conducted by master's students like me. These studies, while not always authored by established experts, provided valuable and practical insights into the use of role-playing games in EFL education. The inclusion of such studies was based on their

methodological soundness and relevance to the research question, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The methodological rigor of each study was critically evaluated, with emphasis on those employing robust research designs such as randomized controlled trials, longitudinal studies, and mixed methods approaches. Assessing the appropriateness of data collection and analysis methods, as well as the clarity and transparency of the reporting, was essential. Studies demonstrating rigorous methodologies, even if conducted by master's students, were prioritized as they provided a reliable foundation for understanding the impact and effectiveness of role-playing games in EFL education.

Articles published in high-impact academic journals and conference proceedings known for their rigorous peer-review processes were still favoured. This peer-review process ensures that the research has undergone thorough scrutiny by other experts in the field before publication. However, recognizing the value of master's thesis and other less traditionally peer-reviewed sources allowed for a richer and more diverse body of literature to be included, reflecting a broader range of perspectives and findings.

Additionally, studies that provided detailed descriptions of their methodologies and offered comprehensive data to support their findings were deemed more credible. Transparency in reporting allows for the replication of studies and validation of results, which is crucial for building a reliable body of knowledge. By adhering to these criteria, the literature review aimed to present a trustworthy and accurate overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the use of role-playing games in EFL education. This careful selection process ensured that the sources included not only contributed valuable insights but also upheld high standards of academic integrity and research quality, whether they were authored by established experts or emerging scholars.

4.3.3 Limitations

While this literature review provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Due to time and resource constraints, only a limited number of articles and studies were included. Consequently, this review may not capture the full breath of research on using role-play as a teaching method. There is extensive research on the use of role-playing as a teaching method globally, but some studies were written in languages I do not speak and thus could not be included.

Moreover, many relevant studies were conducted by master's students like me, which, while valuable, may not carry the same weight as those authored by established experts in the field. This could affect the perceived credibility of the findings. Additionally, the specific focus on Norwegian classrooms may limit the generalizability of the results to other educational contexts and cultures.

Another limitation is the exclusion of studies that did not have a direct focus on role-playing as a teaching method, even if they provided useful peripheral insights. This decision aimed to maintain a sharp focus on the primary research question but may have omitted potentially valuable perspectives on the broader educational impacts of role-playing.

Despite these limitations, the selected studies offer a significant glimpse into the research in this field and provide a foundational understanding of the potential and challenges of using role-playing games in EFL education. Future research with a broader and more inclusive approach could further enhance the understanding and application of role-playing methods in diverse educational settings.

4.3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were an integral part of conducting this literature review. I ensured that all sources were properly cited and credited to respect intellectual property rights. Additionally, I was mindful of presenting the findings in an unbiased and objective manner, avoiding any misrepresentation of the original authors' work. By adhering to ethical standards,

I aimed to maintain the integrity of this review and contribute positively to the academic community.

When searching through the field of role-playing in EFL classrooms I sometimes ran into problems of finding articles published that at first glanced seemed legitimate. Upon beginning to read or by doing some research on the author I found quickly out that some of the articles were not conducted in a setting of peer- reviewed research. Therefore I made sure that when selecting sources, preference was given to peer-reviewed articles and studies from reputable academic journals to ensure the reliability and validity of the information presented. The inclusion criteria were strictly followed, focusing on studies relevant to the research question and demonstrating methodological soundness. This rigorous approach ensured that the review was comprehensive, credible, and reflective of diverse perspectives within the field.

Additionally, transparency in reporting was emphasized. Detailed descriptions of methodologies and comprehensive data support were prioritized to allow for the replication of studies and validation of results. This transparency is crucial for building a reliable body of knowledge and upholding high standards of academic integrity and research quality. By following these standards for this research, this literature review aimed to provide a trustworthy and accurate overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the use of role-playing games in EFL education, ensuring that the insights presented were both valuable and ethically sound.

5 Results and Findings

This chapter presents the results and findings from the observational study on the use of role-playing as a teaching method in an EFL classroom. The primary focus was to assess student engagement, language use, and interaction quality during the role-playing activity inspired by Dungeons & Dragons (D&D). The findings revealed a high level of student engagement, exceeding initial expectations. This chapter will detail the observed behaviours, interactions, and language skills demonstrated by the students, providing a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of role-playing in fostering an interactive and immersive learning environment. By examining these results, I can better understand the potential benefits and challenges of integrating role-playing into EFL teaching methodologies.

5.1 Students CEFR Levels and Role-Play Familiarity

Before getting into this classroom I had a talk with the student's primary teacher about the level of English in their classroom. This gave me an understanding of what to expect. The students have not formally tested their CEFR levels but for the purpose of this thesis I have given them an estimated level based on what I could observe from their writing and speaking as well as their role-play familiarity. Their exact CEFR levels are less important for this study because as the aim is not study improvement in skills. Therefore, the CEFR level is here to give a general sense of how students at different fluency levels respond to the exercise. Figuring out their role-playing familiarity was done by asking the students before the activity had started. Figure 1 shows the students by groups and their CEFR levels as well as their role-play familiarity.

Table 1 Groups and CEFR Level

Group	Students	CEFR level	Role-play familiarity
1	1A	B1	Familiar
	1B	B2	Experienced
	1C	A2	Familiar
	1D	A2	Familiar

2	*2A*	*B1*	*Unfamiliar*
	2B	*B2*	*Unfamiliar*
	2C	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	2D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
3	*3A*	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	3B	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	3C	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	3D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	3E	*B1*	*Unfamiliar*
4	*4A*	*C1*	*Experienced*
	4B	*A2*	*Experienced*
	4C	*B1*	*Familiar*
	4D	*A1*	*Familiar*
5	*5A*	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	5B	*B1*	*Familiar*
	5C	*A2*	*Familiar*
	5D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*

5.2 The Groups Responses

The five groups were all different from each other in both level of English and familiarity with role-playing. Group one and two were even in English skill level with two students being very fluent and two students spending a bit more time to find their words. It became clear quickly that in group one the students were more comfortable with role-play than in group two. This did not stop group two from producing text when writing the story about their original character.

In group three there were two students who seemed to struggle a lot with EFL. The three other students who sat at this table were decent at EFL and did at times help these other two students when it came to writing their characters. I also noticed the two students who were struggling a bit more with their English used the examples on the board a lot more than others. One of them did an almost exact copy of one of the example characters.

In group four they were all familiar with role-playing games, two of them were playing a Dungeons & Dragons game in their leisure time at home with each other and a few other friends outside of this class. Their EFL skills were varied between the four of them.

In the fifth group they switched over to Norwegian often when helping each other. But with a gentle reminder from their teacher, they switched back to English. They also seemed more interested in the writing process than in the role-playing process at first.

5.2.1 Part One: Creative Writing

In an observational study on the use of role-playing as a teaching method in an EFL classroom, distinct variations in creativity and initial participation were evident among students of different CEFR levels. It seemed that the activity highlighted how students with higher language proficiency levels tended to engage more quickly and creatively in constructing their characters and narratives compared to their lower-level peers.

Students such as 1B (CEFR level B2) and 4A (CEFR level C1), who not only had higher proficiency but also prior experience with role-playing games, exhibited a notable ease in delving into the task. Their familiarity with both the English language and the role-playing format allowed them to creatively express their ideas without needing substantial support. These students quickly grasped the requirements of the activity, leveraging their language skills to enrich their storytelling with complex structures and a richer vocabulary.

Conversely, students with lower CEFR levels, like 3A and 3B (both at CEFR level A1), demonstrated a slower start in the role-playing activity. Although these students were less familiar with both role-playing and using English in such a creative context, they were not

devoid of ideas. They often knew how they wanted their characters to act and interact within the story. However, they encountered difficulties in expressing these ideas in English, frequently requiring assistance with translation and formulation of their thoughts. This support often came from their peers, such as those in group 3 (3C and 3D at CEFR level A2), who provided translations and suggestions, thereby fostering a collaborative learning environment.

The need for more structured support was particularly evident in group five, where students like 5A (CEFR level A1) switched to their native language (Norwegian) to discuss and develop their ideas before being reminded to use English. This group showed a keen interest in the writing process once they overcame initial language barriers, indicating that lower-level students can engage creatively once they receive the necessary linguistic support.

Overall, the study underlines the importance of scaffolding and peer assistance in role-playing activities within EFL classrooms. While students with higher CEFR levels may dive into creative tasks with little hesitation, those at lower levels display a potential for creativity that can be fully realized with appropriate support. This dynamic not only enhances language learning but also encourages a collaborative classroom atmosphere where students learn from each other, aligning well with the objectives of the LK20 curriculum to foster communicative competence and confidence in language use.

5.2.3 Part Two: Team Based Oral Activity

During the oral component of the role-playing activity in an EFL classroom, differences in participation levels and the extent of in-character dialogue varied notably across groups, influenced in part by the students' familiarity with role-playing and their English proficiency.

Group 1, comprising students like 1A (CEFR B1) and 1B (CEFR B2), who were familiar and experienced with role-playing, demonstrated a high level of engagement in character portrayal. Their dialogue often reflected a deeper understanding of how to embody their characters, which enriched the storytelling aspect of the activity. This group's prior

experience with role-playing allowed them to use English more fluently in a creative and dynamic manner, making their interactions particularly lively.

Group 2, despite being less familiar with role-playing, showed significant effort in staying in character. Students such as 2A (CEFR B1) and 2B (CEFR B2) managed to adopt their roles effectively, though their dialogues were occasionally less fluid compared to Group 1. The lower familiarity impacted their ability to spontaneously generate responses, but they still actively participated, showing that exposure to role-playing could bridge their initial hesitation.

Group 3, which included students with lower proficiency like 3A and 3B (both CEFR A1), also engaged in the role-playing. Although these students had struggled with the writing component, they participated orally with encouragement and cues from their peers. The supportive environment enabled even those who were initially less confident, such as 3C and 3D (both CEFR A2), to contribute to the narrative, enhancing their spoken English practice through role-play.

Group 4's interaction was robust, with students like 4A (CEFR C1) leading with strong narrative skills. Their familiarity with role-playing was evident as they seamlessly slipped into character, which helped scaffold the participation of less fluent members like 4D (CEFR A1). The group dynamics facilitated a more inclusive participation, where even the less experienced were drawn into the flow of the game.

Group 5 showed a mix of engagement levels, with students like 5B (CEFR B1) and 5C (CEFR A2) taking active roles in driving the narrative forward. The group worked collaboratively, often helping each other with language and encouraging each other to express their character's perspective, regardless of their initial struggles with the written task.

Overall, the oral part of the task highlighted how role-playing familiarity somewhat influenced the students' ability to engage in character-driven dialogue. However, all groups, regardless of their initial comfort with the English language or role-playing, eventually embraced their roles and actively participated in the task. This involvement was facilitated by

the interactive nature of role-playing, which inherently encourages communication and cooperation. Even those who had faced challenges during the writing phase found the oral interaction to be enjoyable and accessible. The task not only supported language development but also fostered a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment among all participants, demonstrating the potential of role-playing activities to enhance language learning in an engaging, supportive, and enjoyable manner.

5.3 Findings

The utilization of role-playing as a pedagogical strategy in an EFL classroom, drawing inspiration from Dungeons & Dragons, was thoroughly observed to evaluate its implications on student engagement, language proficiency, and interaction dynamics. The findings from this empirical study illuminate the multifaceted advantages of role-playing, underscoring its significant impact on enhancing student engagement and facilitating effective language acquisition, consistent with the aims of contemporary EFL teaching methodologies.

Regarding student engagement, the observations revealed a consistently high level of involvement across diverse groups, transcending their previous experience with role-playing or their respective levels of English proficiency. Notably, the engagement was particularly pronounced during the oral components of the role-playing activity, where students displayed an enthusiastic participation that extended even to those who initially encountered difficulties in the writing segment. This observation highlights the capacity of role-playing to capture and sustain student interest, a critical element in the successful acquisition of a new language.

The investigation also detailed variations in language use and creativity linked to different Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels. Participants with higher language proficiency, evident in Groups 1 and 4, demonstrated superior fluency and creative aptitude, quickly adapting to the demands of role-playing by employing complex language structures and expansive vocabularies. Conversely, participants with lower proficiency levels showcased creativity but required significant support to express their ideas in English, as seen in Group 3, where students frequently depended on their peers for translation assistance and expression of complex thoughts. Such findings underscore the

necessity of scaffolding within role-playing exercises, ensuring inclusive and effective participation across all proficiency levels.

Furthermore, familiarity with role-playing influenced participants' engagement and interaction quality significantly. Participants with previous role-playing experience, such as those in Groups 1 and 4, exhibited a nuanced understanding of character embodiment and narrative construction, facilitating deeper and more immersive interactions. Conversely, participants unfamiliar with role-playing demonstrated initial reticence, which gradually diminished as they became more immersed in the activity, suggesting that role-playing can serve as an inclusive educational tool that caters to varied learner needs and promotes robust language engagement.

Additionally, the collaborative aspect of role-playing emerged as a key component, enhancing language learning through peer-to-peer interaction. This was particularly evident in scenarios where participants assisted each other in overcoming linguistic challenges, fostering not only effective communication but also a supportive learning environment. Such dynamics illustrate the beneficial social interactions encouraged by role-playing, which aid in language development and enhance learner confidence.

Overall, the results from this study affirm the efficacy of role-playing in EFL settings. This method not only supports active and engaged learning but also enhances linguistic skills and fosters essential social competencies through collaborative storytelling and character interaction. The observed improvements across various groups—in terms of creativity, language use, confidence, and collaboration—demonstrate that role-playing is a powerful educational tool. It aligns well with the objectives of the LK20 curriculum, offering a dynamic, communicative, and inclusive learning environment that equips students for real-world linguistic and social interactions.

6 Literature Review

The literature review will provide some insights from previous studies to underline the findings in the observations done for this thesis. This chapter examines whether role-playing games, specifically Dungeons and Dragons, can serve as effective tools for vocabulary acquisition within the framework LK20, for 7th grade learners. This section will delve into a selection of articles and studies that address similar educational strategies and methodologies.

Given the expansive research available from various educational systems around the world, it is important to note that the works reviewed here constitute only a fraction of the global research. This literature review aims to illuminate how role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons can align with the goals of the LK20 curriculum by enhancing vocabulary learning among EFL students. The selected studies not only resonate with the specific educational context of Norway but also reflect a diversity of approaches.

6.1 From Theory to Practice: Using RPGs for Vocabulary Learning in EFL Settings

This subsection examines three pivotal studies that explore the integration of role-playing games (RPGs) into educational settings, specifically focusing on their potential to enhance vocabulary acquisition for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The research conducted by Richard Heinz Patrick Prager offers a broad analysis of how RPGs, including digital platforms like MMORPGs, can facilitate language learning through immersive narrative experiences. Tasia Nakasone's work further contributes by evaluating the practical usability of Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) as an educational tool through a web-based resource, providing insights into how such games can be structured to enhance educational outcomes effectively.

In contrast, Fredrik Nilsson's thesis delves deeper into the specific application of D&D in the EFL classroom, highlighting how the game's complex storytelling and character interactions

can be harnessed to improve language learning in a classroom setting. Each of these studies was selected for their relevance to the overarching question of this thesis: "Can using adventure-style role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons be a viable way to teach vocabulary for EFL learners with the new LK20 curriculum?" Together, these articles provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities presented by RPGs in educational contexts, offering both theoretical insights and practical considerations for their implementation within Norway's LK20 curriculum framework.

This subsection will critically analyse the contributions of each study to the discourse on game-based learning, discussing how their findings can be integrated into effective teaching strategies for 7th grade EFL learners. Through this analysis, the potential of RPGs to transform traditional learning environments into engaging, dynamic, and effective educational experiences will be explored.

6.1.1 The Pedagogical Potential of RPGs in EFL Learning: A Review of Prager's Findings

In the rapidly evolving field of educational technology, role-playing games (RPGs) such as Dungeons & Dragons have been increasingly recognized for their potential to enhance language learning and curriculum engagement, particularly within structured frameworks like Norway's LK20 curriculum for 7th graders. The research conducted by Richard Heinz Patrick Prager (2019) from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto explores this intersection, analysing how RPGs can foster key educational outcomes such as collaboration, problem-solving, and effective communication among students (Prager, 2019, p. 3).

Prager's study delves into the mechanics of RPGs, highlighting how these games naturally integrate narratives and character development with curriculum goals, thus making them a viable tool for vocabulary learning among EFL learners. His findings suggest that when RPGs are appropriately integrated into the classroom setting, they not only make learning more engaging but also enhance students' mastery of content through complex, context-driven challenges (Prager, 2019, p. 4). These games encourage students to apply and practice new

vocabulary in varied and meaningful contexts, thereby deepening their understanding and retention of the language.

Moreover, Prager identifies several challenges and limitations in implementing RPGs in educational settings, such as varying levels of familiarity with gaming among teachers and students, and the logistical constraints of classroom integration. However, he also notes that these challenges can be mitigated through careful planning and the inclusion of formal debrief periods, which help consolidate learning and reflect on the vocabulary and concepts encountered during gameplay (Prager, 2019, p. 5).

The broader implications of Prager's research for the thesis question about the viability of using adventure-style role-playing games for teaching vocabulary are significant. By situating vocabulary learning within the engaging and interactive context of an RPG, educators can potentially transform and enhance the learning experience for 7th-grade EFL students under the LK20 curriculum. This approach not only taps into students' inherent interest in games but also aligns with pedagogical strategies that promote active learning and student-centred teaching (Prager, 2019, p. 6).

In conclusion, Prager's exploration into the use of RPGs in education provides a valuable framework for understanding how these tools can be adapted to meet specific educational needs, such as vocabulary acquisition in EFL contexts. His research underscores the need for further studies that would explore this approach in diverse educational settings, offering insights into how role-playing games can be effectively harnessed to enhance educational outcomes in a way that is both innovative and pedagogically sound (Prager, 2019, p. 7).

6.1.2 The Practical Application of RPGs in Education: A Case Study by Tasia Nakasone

In her study, Tasia Nakasone explores the integration of Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) into educational settings, specifically focusing on the design and evaluation of a web-based

resource for educators (Nakasone, 2020). This research is particularly relevant for evaluating the potential of role-playing games to engage students and enhance their learning experiences, addressing common educational challenges such as student engagement and the application of knowledge in real-world settings (Nakasone, 2020, p. 1).

Nakasone's paper highlights the development of a resource that facilitates the use of D&D to improve learning transfer—a critical aspect of educational success. Her findings suggest that game-based learning, particularly through D&D, can significantly boost engagement and help students apply learned concepts more effectively (Nakasone, 2020, p. 2). The study employed usability testing to gather feedback from educators, who reported that the website was easy to navigate and satisfied with the content provided, which supports the notion that well-designed educational tools can enhance teaching strategies (Nakasone, 2020, p. 4).

Moreover, Nakasone discusses the broader implications of using RPGs like D&D in classrooms, such as the development of problem-solving skills and the ability to work collaboratively. She notes that the interactive and narrative-driven nature of RPGs provides a dynamic environment for learners to explore and experiment, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and retention of subject matter (Nakasone, 2020, p. 5).

The study also underscores some challenges, including the need for teacher training on game-based learning strategies and the importance of aligning game activities with educational goals. Nakasone's work emphasizes that while the integration of RPGs into education holds great promise, it requires careful planning and support to be effective (Nakasone, 2020, p. 6).

In conclusion, Nakasone's usability study of a D&D educational resource provides valuable insights into the potential of role-playing games to enhance learning. By focusing on the usability and effectiveness of educational tools, her research contributes to a better understanding of how games can be integrated into educational frameworks to foster engagement and learning transfer (Nakasone, 2020, p. 7).

6.1.3 From Fantasy to Fluency: Exploring Nilsson's Use of D&D in Language Education

Fredrik Nilsson's thesis delves into the innovative application of Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), a popular tabletop role-playing game, within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The study is rooted in the concept of gamification in education, focusing on how D&D's narrative-rich and character-driven gameplay can enhance language learning through engaging and immersive experiences (Nilsson, 2023, p. 2). Nilsson argues that the complex world-building and role-playing elements inherent in D&D encourage students to utilize mental imagery and immersion, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and retention of new vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Nilsson's thesis outlines practical ways to implement D&D in the EFL curriculum, emphasizing the importance of adapting the game to align with educational objectives. He suggests that with careful scaffolding and preparation, teachers can effectively integrate D&D's dynamic environment into language learning, making it both an enjoyable and pedagogically sound educational tool (Nilsson, 2023, p. 28). This approach not only captivates students' interest but also enhances their motivation to learn and use English in creative and meaningful contexts.

The thesis also discusses the challenges of incorporating D&D in educational settings. One major challenge is the need for significant teacher preparation to manage the complexity of the game and ensure that its educational potential is fully realized. Nilsson also warns of the potential for the game's fun elements to overshadow its educational goals if not properly managed (Nilsson, 2023, p. 33). Despite these challenges, Nilsson presents a compelling case for the benefits of using role-playing games like D&D, which include increased student engagement and the opportunity for students to practice English in a functional and communicative way.

Further, Nilsson explores the theoretical underpinnings of using RPGs in language learning, connecting the immersive experiences provided by D&D with established language acquisition theories, such as Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. He posits that the

social interactions and narrative complexities of D&D provide a rich linguistic scaffold, supporting learners at various proficiency levels (Nilsson, 2023, p. 17). This makes D&D particularly suitable for diverse classroom settings where students' language abilities might vary widely.

In conclusion, Fredrik Nilsson's thesis offers a nuanced analysis of how Dungeons & Dragons can be adapted for EFL classrooms to enhance language learning through gamification. By harnessing the creative and collaborative aspects of RPGs, educators can provide students with a compelling and effective way to develop their English language skills. Nilsson calls for further research to explore the long-term impacts of RPG-based learning on language proficiency and to refine strategies for its implementation in educational settings (Nilsson, 2023, p. 33).

6.1.4 Comparison

The integration of role-playing games (RPGs) like Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) into educational settings has been examined in various studies, notably those by Fredrik Nilsson, Tasia Nakasone, and Richard Heinz Patrick Prager. Each of these researchers explores the pedagogical potential of RPGs but from slightly different perspectives, providing a rich foundation for evaluating the viability of such games within the LK20 curriculum.

Nilsson's thesis focuses specifically on the use of D&D in the EFL classroom, arguing that the game's narrative complexity and character interaction can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and language learning. His study emphasizes the role of world-building and storytelling in fostering an immersive learning environment where students actively use and understand new vocabulary through the game's contextual cues and interactions (Nilsson, 2023). This approach aligns closely with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on innovative, interactive learning methods that engage students in meaningful educational experiences.

In contrast, Nakasone explores the usability of D&D as an educational tool through a web-based resource designed for educators. While Nakasone does not focus exclusively on vocabulary learning, her findings suggest that the structured integration of RPGs can enhance engagement and educational outcomes, which could indirectly benefit vocabulary acquisition by increasing students' exposure to and use of English in a compelling context (Nakasone, 2020).

Prager's research provides a broader view, examining the effectiveness of RPGs in general, including digital platforms like MMORPGs, for language learning. Like Nilsson, Prager notes the benefits of immersive narrative experiences in RPGs for language development. However, Prager also points out that such games can sometimes hinder fluency due to their complex game mechanics and the cognitive load they place on players, which could be a consideration for their use in younger EFL learners' classrooms (Prager, 2019).

Together, these studies suggest that while RPGs, and D&D in particular, offer promising tools for engaging EFL learners and enhancing vocabulary learning through rich, immersive narratives and character interactions, their effectiveness depends significantly on the game's implementation and alignment with educational goals. The interactive and imaginative nature of D&D can motivate students and provide diverse linguistic and cognitive challenges, aligning well with the LK20 curriculum's focus on creative and communicative competences.

In conclusion, the research by Nilsson, Nakasone, and Prager collectively supports the potential of using adventure-style role-playing games like D&D within the LK20 curriculum to enhance vocabulary learning among 7th grade EFL learners. However, careful consideration must be given to how these games are integrated into the curriculum to ensure they contribute effectively to language learning objectives and do not overwhelm students with their complexity.

6.2 Virtual Worlds and Vocabulary Learning: Insights from Zheng and York for RPG-Based EFL Education

This subsection delves into two significant studies that provide insights into the use of virtual environments and game-based learning for language acquisition, exploring how these environments can be leveraged within an educational context. Zheng, Bischoff, and Gilliland (2015) provide an extensive analysis of how massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), such as World of Warcraft, can facilitate vocabulary acquisition through immersive and interactive experiences. Their study emphasizes the importance of context and social interaction in learning, which are crucial elements in engaging EFL learners.

Conversely, James York's research shifts the focus to a comparative study between virtual worlds and traditional classroom settings, investigating how different task modalities impact the oral performance of language learners. York's findings highlight the potential cognitive benefits and challenges posed by virtual learning environments, offering a nuanced perspective on the efficacy of such platforms for language education.

These articles were selected for their relevance to the thesis question: "Can using adventure-style role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons be a viable way to teach vocabulary for EFL learners with the new LK20 curriculum?" Both studies provide foundational knowledge on the dynamics of interactive and immersive game-based learning, which can inform the implementation of tabletop RPGs like Dungeons and Dragons in the EFL classroom under the LK20 curriculum. By examining these different approaches to game-based language learning, this subsection aims to illustrate how RPGs can be adapted to foster not only vocabulary development but also broader linguistic competencies in 7th grade EFL learners, aligning with Norway's progressive educational goals.

6.2.1 Context and Action Before Words

In their study, Zheng, Bischoff, and Gilliland (2015) investigate the impact of massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) on vocabulary acquisition, presenting a novel

perspective on language learning through digital game play. They focus on World of Warcraft (WoW), analysing how its interactive and immersive environment facilitates not just engagement but effective vocabulary learning (Zheng et al., 2015, p. 772). The study underscores the ecological and dialogical frameworks that provide context and meaning to language use within the game, arguing that these frameworks are critical for learning beyond traditional rote memorization techniques.

The researchers conducted detailed observations and analyses of player interactions, showing that the naturalistic communication in WoW allows for significant contextual vocabulary learning. Their findings suggest that the environment of MMOGs encourages players to negotiate meaning and practice new words in context, which enhances both immediate and long-term vocabulary retention (Zheng, Bischoff, & Gilliland, 2015, p. 775). This contrasts with traditional learning methods that often lack contextual depth and fail to engage learners in meaningful communication.

Moreover, Zheng, Bischoff, and Gilliland (2015) explore the cognitive aspects of learning within MMOGs, noting that the complexity and richness of the game's narrative and interaction demand a higher level of cognitive engagement from the players. This engagement is not only motivational but also deeply educational, fostering a learning environment that mirrors natural language acquisition processes seen in immersive second language settings (Zheng et al., 2015, p. 778).

The study also addresses potential challenges and limitations, such as the variance in learner motivation and the need for structured guidance to maximize educational outcomes in gaming contexts. Zheng et al. provide recommendations for integrating MMOGs into language curriculum, emphasizing the importance of aligning game tasks with educational goals to effectively support vocabulary learning (Zheng et al., 2015, p. 780).

In conclusion, the research by Zheng, Bischoff, and Gilliland (2015) offers valuable insights into the potential of MMOGs like World of Warcraft as effective tools for language education. Their work suggests that these virtual environments can significantly enhance

vocabulary learning through mechanisms that engage learners in meaningful, contextual, and interactive ways (Zheng et al., 2015, p. 783).

6.2.2 Virtual Realities in Language Learning: Insights from York's Comparative Analysis

In his insightful dissertation, James York explores the nuanced impacts of modality and task complexity on oral language performance, contrasting interactions in virtual worlds with those in face-to-face settings. His study, conducted with 20 participants engaging in six dialogic tasks, seeks to uncover how these environments affect linguistic output in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (York, 2019, p. 2). The findings suggest a unique dichotomy where virtual worlds, despite hindering fluency, do not significantly impact the complexity or accuracy of language output compared to traditional face-to-face interactions. This indicates that while virtual environments may pose additional cognitive challenges that affect response time, they do not necessarily compromise the quality of language used by learners (York, 2019, p. 175).

Furthermore, York's research reveals that tasks performed in virtual settings exhibit a higher lexical density, suggesting that these environments might facilitate a richer use of vocabulary (York, 2019, p. 176). Despite the cognitive demands associated with navigating virtual spaces, participants showed a preference for performing language tasks within these immersive environments over conventional methods. This preference underscores the potential of virtual worlds as engaging tools for language education, aligning with the motivational benefits of gamified learning and the immersive nature of such platforms (York, 2019, p. 154).

The implications of York's findings are significant for the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), particularly within the emerging domain of game-based language teaching. His study supports the integration of virtual worlds in language pedagogy, proposing that they hold substantial value for enhancing certain linguistic competencies and learner engagement.

However, the mixed impact on fluency highlights the need for carefully designed instructional strategies that mitigate the cognitive load imposed by virtual environments (York, 2019, p. 207).

York concludes with a call for further research to explore the full spectrum of learning dynamics in virtual worlds. He emphasizes the need to investigate deeper into task design and learner interactions within these platforms to better harness their educational potential (York, 2019, p. 239). This future research could provide pivotal insights into optimizing virtual environments for language learning, ensuring they are as effective in promoting fluency as they are in enhancing complexity and learner engagement.

6.2.3 Comparison

The studies by Zheng, Bischoff, and Gilliland (2015) and James York (2019) both explore the utilization of virtual environments in language learning, but they approach the topic from distinct perspectives that offer valuable insights into the potential of using adventure-style role-playing games for educational purposes. Zheng et al. focus on massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs), particularly World of Warcraft, to examine how immersive, interactive game play can enhance vocabulary acquisition. They found that the game's rich narrative and dynamic player interactions foster a conducive learning environment for vocabulary development, highlighting the advantages of contextual and communicative language use facilitated by the game's design (Zheng et al., 2015).

In contrast, York investigates the broader scope of virtual worlds and their comparability with face-to-face interactions, specifically analysing task complexity and its impact on oral performance in language learning. His findings suggest that while virtual worlds may impede fluency, they do not significantly affect the complexity or accuracy of language output. York notes a preference among participants for engaging in tasks within these immersive environments despite the cognitive demands, underscoring the motivational benefits of such platforms (York, 2019).

Both studies underscore the potential of virtual and game-based environments in engaging learners more deeply than traditional learning settings. Zheng et al.'s findings support the use of MMOGs to enhance vocabulary learning through contextual immersion, which aligns well with York's observation that virtual worlds can facilitate complex language use. These characteristics are critical when considering the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on innovative, interactive learning methods that engage students in meaningful educational experiences.

For implementing adventure-style role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons in the LK20 curriculum, these studies collectively suggest that such games could effectively support vocabulary acquisition among 7th-grade EFL learners. The immersive nature of RPGs, akin to the environments studied by Zheng and York, can potentially replicate the engaging, context-rich settings that promote active language use and cognitive engagement. However, the challenge of maintaining fluency and the cognitive load highlighted by York should be addressed through careful task design and curriculum integration to ensure that these games not only motivate but also effectively teach the target language.

6.3 RTTP in EFL Classrooms

As mentioned, "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) is a role-playing pedagogy that emphasizes active student engagement and critical thinking through historical simulation. This chapter reviews master's theses from Norwegian universities that explore the application of RTTP in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within Norway. These studies highlight how RTTP, originally developed in the United States, has been adapted to the Norwegian educational context, enhancing oral competence, and transforming traditional learning environments.

The theses under review provide insights into how RTTP fosters a more interactive and communicative classroom atmosphere, crucial in language learning where participation is key. By integrating direct observations, surveys, and interviews, the research presents a detailed analysis of RTTP's effectiveness compared to conventional teaching methods and its transformative potential in education. This chapter explores the challenges of implementing RTTP in Norwegian settings, its impact on student and teacher experiences, and the

implications for future educational practices and research. These findings not only underscore the adaptability of RTTP across different educational frameworks but also point to its scalability and potential benefits beyond EFL classrooms.

6.3.1 Critical Thinking Development in EFL Students Using RTTP

Grindahl (2019) explores the adoption and implications of RTTP in Norwegian EFL classrooms, presenting a compelling argument for its effectiveness in enhancing oral communication and critical thinking skills among students (Grindahl, 2019, p. 1). The study identifies RTTP as not merely an educational tool but a transformative approach that encourages deeper student involvement and interaction compared to traditional learning methods (Grindahl, 2019, p. 2).

One of the primary benefits of RTTP highlighted by Grindahl (2019) is its capacity to significantly enhance oral communication skills. By engaging in debates and assuming historical characters' roles, students are challenged to articulate their thoughts clearly and persuasively (Grindahl, 2019, p. 34). This method not only improves their language skills but also boosts their confidence in public speaking and argumentation, essential skills in academic and professional settings (Grindahl, 2019, p. 35).

Further, the RTTP methodology fosters critical thinking by immersing students in complex historical scenarios where they must analyse, evaluate, and respond to multifaceted issues (Grindahl, 2019, p. 46). This active engagement is instrumental in deepening students' understanding of the content and developing key analytical skills, preparing them for informed participation in broader societal discussions (Grindahl, 2019, p. 47).

Grindahl (2019) also examines RTTP in comparison to conventional teaching methods, revealing that RTTP not only promotes greater engagement but also effectively cultivates communicative and critical thinking capabilities. However, the study suggests that RTTP requires careful curriculum integration to fully realize its potential, indicating a need for

educators to thoughtfully blend it with existing teaching frameworks (Grindahl, 2019, pp. 54-56).

The integration of RTTP into educational frameworks necessitates consideration of various pedagogical aspects, including curriculum alignment and teacher training. Grindahl (2019) stresses the importance of preparing educators to effectively facilitate RTTP sessions, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to guide students through the complex dynamics of historical simulations (Grindahl, 2019, p. 55).

Grindahl (2019) advocates for the expanded use of RTTP in Norwegian schools, highlighting its potential to significantly enhance educational practices by making learning more interactive, communicative, and reflective. The study calls for further research to explore RTTP's long-term effects on student performance and its adaptability across various educational settings (Grindahl, 2019, p. 68). This suggests a promising avenue for future studies to build on the foundational insights provided by Grindahl, potentially extending RTTP's applicability beyond EFL classrooms to other disciplines and learning contexts.

6.3.2 Interactive Learning with RTTP in Norway: Insights and Adaptations

Odland and Stensvand (2020) examine RTTP's adaptability to Norwegian 10th grade classrooms, particularly in the context of the newly implemented Subject Renewal 2020 curriculum (p. 1). This approach contrasts traditional educational methods by placing students in the driving seat of historical events, thereby enhancing engagement, and learning outcomes.

RTTP's effectiveness in Norwegian educational settings is highlighted through its ability to foster significant student engagement. According to Odland and Stensvand (2020), students reported a preference for RTTP over traditional learning methods, describing it as "more fun" and stating that they learned more effectively through this interactive role-playing approach (p. 39). This indicates a strong alignment with educational objectives aimed at enhancing student involvement and interest in the learning process.

Adapting RTTP to the specific requirements of the Norwegian educational system presented unique challenges. Odland and Stensvand (2020) detailed their process of adjusting the game to fit the 10th grade curriculum, aligning it with the competence aims of LK20. They adapted the "Ending the Troubles" game, ensuring it met educational standards and student capabilities (p. 39-43). This adaptation process is critical as it demonstrates the flexibility of RTTP to meet diverse educational needs and curricular standards.

The methodology employed by Odland and Stensvand (2020) included direct observations and surveys to assess the impact of RTTP on student learning and engagement. Their findings suggest that when properly adapted, RTTP can significantly enhance student participation and learning outcomes in the Norwegian context (p. 54). The observational data provided insights into how students interact within this pedagogical framework, highlighting increased active participation and critical thinking.

Odland and Stensvand (2020) conclude that RTTP holds substantial potential for inclusion in Norwegian secondary education, recommending further research to explore its long-term impacts on student academic performance and engagement (p. 67-68). They suggest that future studies could examine the scalability of RTTP across different educational levels and subjects to fully understand its efficacy and adaptability.

6.3.3 Transforming EFL Classrooms with RTTP: A Norwegian Study

"Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) introduces an innovative pedagogical approach, significantly enhancing student engagement and oral competence in Norwegian EFL classrooms. Soltveit (2019) explores the transformative potential of RTTP, moving from traditional 'silent classrooms' to environments of vibrant interaction and engagement. The study positions RTTP as not only a methodological shift but as a catalyst for educational transformation (Soltveit, 2019, p. 2).

Soltveit (2019) emphasizes RTTP's effectiveness in increasing student engagement and improving communication skills. By engaging students in role-play scenarios that mimic historical events, RTTP encourages active participation and critical thinking, which are vital

for language development in EFL settings (Soltveit, 2019, p. 36). This method fosters a learning environment where students are more likely to speak up and participate, thereby enhancing their language acquisition and communication skills (Soltveit, 2019, p. 34).

One of the pivotal challenges in EFL education is overcoming the silence often prevalent in classrooms where students feel insecure about their language skills. RTTP addresses this challenge by creating a safe, interactive environment that encourages students to express themselves without fear of making mistakes (Soltveit, 2019, p. 33). Soltveit's research highlights how RTTP helps students break out of their shells, giving them the confidence to engage in discussions and articulate their thoughts in English (Soltveit, 2019, p. 38).

Soltveit (2019) employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the impact of RTTP, incorporating observations, teacher interviews, and student surveys conducted across various secondary schools in Norway. This comprehensive methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of how RTTP influences both teachers' and students' perceptions of EFL learning (Soltveit, 2019, p. 24).

The findings from Soltveit's study reveal that both teachers and students perceive RTTP as a beneficial approach to EFL education. Teachers report increased student engagement and participation, while students find the method enjoyable and conducive to learning. The role-playing aspect of RTTP particularly helps in retaining students' interest and commitment to the learning process (Soltveit, 2019, pp. 41-45).

Soltveit (2019) concludes that RTTP can significantly transform EFL classrooms by enhancing student engagement and oral competence. The study suggests that further research should explore the long-term impacts of RTTP on language proficiency and its adaptability to different educational contexts (Soltveit, 2019, p. 68). Future studies could also investigate the scalability of RTTP across diverse language learning environments and age groups.

6.3.4 Comparison

Role-playing pedagogies like "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) are gaining traction in educational settings for their dynamic approach to teaching and learning. The integration of RTTP into Norwegian EFL classrooms has been the subject of several studies, including those by Soltveit, Odland & Stensvand, and Grindahl. Each of these studies offers unique insights into the adaptability of RTTP under the new LK20 curriculum, assessing its viability as a teaching method for EFL learners.

All three studies highlight the significant enhancement in student engagement and oral communication skills through the use of RTTP. Soltveit (2019) emphasizes the transformation of traditional 'silent classrooms' into interactive environments where students actively participate and engage in English communication (Soltveit, 2019, p. 2). Similarly, Odland & Stensvand (2020) observe increased student participation and enthusiasm, noting that students found the RTTP approach "more fun" and effective compared to traditional methods (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 39). Grindahl (2019) reinforces these findings by detailing how RTTP promotes critical thinking and enhances oral skills through role-play and historical simulation (Grindahl, 2019, p. 34).

While the core benefits of RTTP align across the studies, each research focuses on different aspects of its implementation. Odland & Stensvand (2020) concentrate on adapting RTTP to align with the competence aims of the LK20, showing a practical application that meets specific curriculum standards (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 39-43). Soltveit (2019), however, delves into the pedagogical shift RTTP brings, suggesting that it not only enhances language skills but also reshapes the educational culture (Soltveit, 2019, p. 68). Grindahl (2019) provides a comparative analysis between RTTP and conventional teaching methods, highlighting the greater engagement and communicative capabilities developed through RTTP (Grindahl, 2019, pp. 54-56).

The methodological approaches in these studies also differ. Soltveit (2019) utilizes a mixed-methods approach, incorporating observations, interviews, and surveys to provide a comprehensive view of RTTP's impact (Soltveit, 2019, p. 24). In contrast, Odland &

Stensvand (2020) focus more on direct observations and student surveys to assess engagement and learning outcomes (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 54). Grindahl (2019) similarly uses interviews and surveys but places a strong emphasis on the experiential feedback from both teachers and students (Grindahl, 2019, p. 55).

The adaptability of RTTP to the LK20 curriculum is crucial. The studies collectively suggest that RTTP can meet the new curriculum's demands by fostering a more engaging, communicative, and student-centred learning environment. This alignment is crucial as the LK20 aims to deepen learning and encourage active student participation (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 1). The flexibility of RTTP to integrate historical content with language learning objectives makes it a viable tool under the new educational standards.

Despite the positive outcomes, all researchers advocate for further studies to explore the long-term effects of RTTP on language proficiency and its broader applicability across various educational settings (Soltveit, 2019, p. 68; Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 67). Such research could provide deeper insights into how role-playing games like RTTP could be systematically integrated into the EFL curriculum, ensuring consistency and effectiveness in language acquisition.

The research by Soltveit, Odland & Stensvand, and Grindahl provides compelling evidence supporting the use of RTTP in Norwegian EFL classrooms under the LK20 curriculum. The shared findings underline the potential of role-playing games to significantly enhance student engagement and effectiveness in language learning, suggesting a promising avenue for innovative educational practices in Norway.

7 Discussion Section

This chapter examines the implications of the findings from the observational study and literature review on using adventure-style role-playing games, such as Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), to teach vocabulary to EFL learners under the LK20 curriculum. The primary research question addressed the viability of this method. The first section discusses the observation results, focusing on student engagement, language use, and the impact of prior role-playing experience. It evaluates the effectiveness of role-playing in vocabulary acquisition and highlights areas for further research. The second section reviews relevant literature, summarizing supportive studies, identifying challenges, and discussing theoretical and practical implications for EFL instruction. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential advantages and limitations of incorporating role-playing games into language education.

7.1 Pedagogical Theories and Role-Playing Method

Integrating role-playing games (RPGs) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms under Norway's new LK20 curriculum finds robust theoretical support in the educational theories of Albert Bandura, Lev Vygotsky, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Each offers unique insights into how RPGs can facilitate effective language acquisition and align with contemporary educational goals, making them a viable method for teaching EFL learners.

Albert Bandura's social learning theory posits that individuals learn not only through direct instruction but also by observing and imitating others within their social context. In RPGs, this translates into a dynamic learning environment where students can watch and mimic the language behaviours and problem-solving strategies of their peers and instructors. As students engage in role-play, they witness practical applications of language skills and observe successful communication strategies in action. This observational learning, coupled with the opportunity to see positive behaviours and language use modelled, enhances the learning process, and helps to build students' self-efficacy. This increase in self-belief is crucial as it

leads to greater engagement and persistence in language learning tasks, aligning well with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on active participation and practical language application.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further underpins the educational value of RPGs through his concepts of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) and "scaffolding." RPGs naturally position students in scenarios that stretch their current language capabilities, effectively placing them within their ZPD. Teachers facilitate these interactions, providing the necessary scaffolding through guidance, prompts, and feedback, thereby helping students navigate and eventually master more complex language use. Vygotsky's emphasis on the importance of social interaction in learning is particularly relevant here; as students collaborate and communicate within the RPG, they not only practice the target language but also develop critical social and cognitive skills. This peer-to-peer interaction serves as additional scaffolding, reinforcing the social nature of learning and the development of higher order thinking skills crucial for language mastery.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque also offer a theoretical framework that supports the use of RPGs in EFL learning. His concept of dialogism, where meaning is constructed through ongoing dialogue, reflects the communicative exchanges inherent in RPGs. This interaction fosters a multivoiced classroom environment where diverse linguistic expressions and cultural perspectives enhance the learning experience. Furthermore, Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque, where traditional hierarchies and norms are overturned, resonates with the role-playing setting. This environment allows students to experiment with language in an egalitarian setting, reducing anxiety and fostering a more inclusive and engaging learning atmosphere.

The integration of RPGs into EFL instruction under the LK20 curriculum is not only innovative but pedagogically sound, drawing on the principles of social learning, sociocultural development, and dialogic interaction. These games provide a rich, interactive backdrop against which students can develop linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and critical thinking skills. By leveraging the theories of Bandura, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin, educators can create a classroom experience that is engaging, educational, and aligned with

the goals of modern language education, making RPGs an effective tool in the repertoire of EFL teaching strategies.

7.2 Discussion of the Observation

The primary research question guiding this thesis was: "Can using adventure-style role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons be a viable way to teach vocabulary for EFL learners with the new LK20 curriculum?" The observational study conducted in the classroom aimed to explore the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching method for vocabulary acquisition among EFL students. This chapter evaluates the implications of these findings for the viability of role-playing as a vocabulary teaching method within the context of the new LK20 curriculum.

7.2.1 EFL Students Engagement

The findings revealed that students were surprisingly engaged in the role-playing activity. This high level of engagement was evident across various groups, regardless of their prior familiarity with role-playing or their CEFR level. The interactive nature of the Dungeons & Dragons-inspired exercise appeared to capture students' interest and motivate them to participate actively. This engagement is a critical factor in effective vocabulary learning, as it encourages students to immerse themselves in the language and practice it in a meaningful context.

The students utilized a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures during the role-playing sessions. Even those with lower English proficiency levels demonstrated a willingness to experiment with new words and phrases, often with the support of their peers and the provided scaffolding. The role-playing scenarios facilitated naturalistic language use, where students could apply vocabulary in context, negotiate meaning, and collaboratively

build narratives. These interactions align well with the goals of the LK20 curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence and active language use.

The study also found that students' prior familiarity with role-playing influenced their initial comfort levels and participation. Groups with more experienced role players, such as group one and group four, exhibited greater ease in transitioning into their characters and sustaining the role-playing dialogue. However, even groups with less experience, like group three and group five, showed marked improvement and increased engagement as the activity progressed. This suggests that while prior experience can facilitate smoother initial participation, the structured support provided by the activity allows all students to benefit from the role-playing exercise.

7.2.2 Evaluating Role-playing in EFL Learning

The results of this study may indicate that adventure-style role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons can be a viable method for teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms, particularly within the framework of the LK20 curriculum. The high levels of student engagement, effective use of language, and supportive group dynamics observed during the role-playing activities suggest that this method can enhance vocabulary learning by providing a stimulating and interactive learning environment. However, further research is needed to confirm these findings across diverse educational contexts and larger sample sizes. By continuing to explore innovative teaching methods like role-playing, educators can better equip students with the language skills necessary for their academic and personal growth.

7.3 Discussion of the literature reviews

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate whether adventure-style role-playing games, such as Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), can serve as viable tools for teaching vocabulary to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners within the context of Norway's LK20

curriculum. The literature review highlighted various studies that support the use of role-playing games (RPGs) for educational purposes, particularly in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among 7th-grade learners.

7.3.1 Integration of RPGs into EFL Learning

The studies reviewed in the literature section provide compelling evidence that RPGs can significantly enhance the vocabulary learning experience by creating engaging, interactive, and context-rich environments. Prager's (2019) findings suggest that RPGs foster educational outcomes such as collaboration, problem-solving, and effective communication, which are essential under the LK20 curriculum. These outcomes are achieved through the immersive narrative experiences that RPGs typically offer, allowing students to practice new vocabulary in varied and meaningful contexts.

Nakasone's (2020) research on the practical usability of D&D as an educational tool through a web-based resource further supports this assertion. The study underscores the potential of RPGs to boost engagement and facilitate the application of learned concepts in real-world settings. This aligns with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on active learning and student-centred teaching approaches.

Nilsson (2023) provides a detailed exploration of the use of D&D in EFL classrooms, highlighting how the game's complex storytelling and character interactions can significantly enhance language learning. By integrating RPGs into the curriculum, educators can captivate students' interests and motivate them to learn and use English in creative and meaningful ways.

7.3.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings from the literature review provide a strong theoretical basis for the use of RPGs in EFL classrooms. The alignment of RPGs with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development,

as explored by Nilsson (2023), illustrates how these games can serve as powerful pedagogical tools. They support learners at various proficiency levels by providing social interactions and narrative complexities that offer a rich linguistic scaffold.

Practically, the use of RPGs requires a well-considered approach to integrate these games into the LK20 curriculum effectively. Educators need to design activities that not only engage students but also align with educational objectives to foster vocabulary development and broader linguistic competencies.

7.3.3 RTTP's Place in Norwegian Classrooms

In the discussion of educational methodologies for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Norwegian classrooms, the use of "Reacting to the Past" (RTTP) offers a particularly insightful case study into the application of role-playing pedagogies. While RTTP shares many characteristics with other role-playing activities like Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), its academic and pedagogical foundations provide both unique advantages and challenges that merit careful consideration, especially as it is a relatively new introduction to the Norwegian educational landscape, contrasting with its established use in countries like the United States.

The primary advantage of RTTP, as noted in the studies by Soltveit (2019), Odland & Stensvand (2020), and Grindahl (2019), lies in its structured approach to role-playing that directly ties into historical and critical thinking components. This structure ensures that the educational content is deeply integrated into the gameplay, thereby not only making learning more engaging but also ensuring that the educational outcomes align with curricular goals (Soltveit, 2019, p. 2; Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 39). Unlike D&D, which is more open-ended and centred around imaginative and fantasy aspects, RTTP's scenarios are rooted in historical realities, offering a rich context for developing language and communication skills within the framework of understanding historical events and perspectives (Grindahl, 2019, p. 34).

However, the implementation of RTTP in Norwegian classrooms is not without its challenges. The primary concern is the requirement for significant teacher preparation and the adaptation

of RTTP scenarios to fit the Norwegian curriculum and language proficiency levels of the students. This contrasts with more generic role-playing games like D&D, which, while requiring less specific academic preparation, may not directly contribute to curricular goals in a structured manner (Grindahl, 2019, pp. 54-56). Moreover, since RTTP is relatively new in Norway, there lacks a broad base of experienced instructors who are familiar with its methodology, unlike in countries like the United States where the method has been utilized and refined over decades.

Compared to D&D and similar role-playing activities, RTTP provides a more academically rigorous and focused experience that aligns with educational objectives. While D&D can be used to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork skills, it lacks the academic orientation that RTTP inherently provides through its emphasis on historical and cultural contexts. This makes RTTP particularly suitable for educational settings where learning outcomes need to be tightly coupled with content delivery (Odland & Stensvand, 2020, p. 54).

The fact that RTTP has been a successful method in various countries for many years lends credibility to its pedagogical value. However, its novelty in Norway means that there is a need for extensive training and adaptation to maximize its benefits within the Norwegian educational system. The experiences from other countries can serve as a valuable roadmap for implementation and highlight the potential long-term benefits of integrating RTTP into the EFL curriculum.

While RTTP presents several advantages over traditional and other modern role-playing methods, its successful integration into Norwegian EFL classrooms requires addressing specific challenges related to curriculum alignment, teacher training, and methodological familiarity. The experiences from other countries with a longer history of using RTTP can provide valuable insights and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

7.4 Role-playing Games in EFL: A Viable Method?

The primary research question guiding this thesis was: "Can using adventure-style role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons be a viable way to teach vocabulary for EFL learners with the new LK20 curriculum?" The observational study conducted in the classroom aimed to explore the effectiveness of role-playing as a teaching method for vocabulary acquisition among EFL students. This chapter evaluates the implications of these findings for the viability of role-playing as a vocabulary teaching method within the context of the new LK20 curriculum.

7.4.1 Student Engagement

The findings revealed that students were surprisingly engaged in the role-playing activity. This high level of engagement was evident across various groups, regardless of their prior familiarity with role-playing or their CEFR level. The interactive nature of the Dungeons & Dragons-inspired exercise appeared to capture students' interest and motivate them to participate actively. This engagement is a critical factor in effective vocabulary learning, as it encourages students to immerse themselves in the language and practice it in a meaningful context. The students utilized a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures during the role-playing sessions. Even those with lower English proficiency levels demonstrated a willingness to experiment with new words and phrases, often with the support of their peers and the provided scaffolding. The role-playing scenarios facilitated naturalistic language use, where students could apply vocabulary in context, negotiate meaning, and collaboratively build narratives. These interactions align well with the goals of the LK20 curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence and active language use. The study also found that students' prior familiarity with role-playing influenced their initial comfort levels and participation. Groups with more experienced role players, such as group one and group four, exhibited greater ease in transitioning into their characters and sustaining the role-playing dialogue. However, even groups with less experience, like group three and group five, showed marked improvement and increased engagement as the activity progressed. This suggests that while prior experience can facilitate smoother initial participation, the structured support provided by the activity allows all students to benefit from the role-playing exercise.

7.4.2 Evaluating Role-playing in EFL Learning

The results of this study indicate that adventure-style role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons can be a viable method for teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms, particularly within the framework of the LK20 curriculum. The high levels of student engagement, effective use of language, and supportive group dynamics observed during the role-playing activities suggest that this method can enhance vocabulary learning by providing a stimulating and interactive learning environment. However, further research is needed to confirm these findings across diverse educational contexts and larger sample sizes. By continuing to explore innovative teaching methods like role-playing, educators can better equip students with the language skills necessary for their academic and personal growth.

7.4.3 Role-playing in Pedagogical Research

The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate whether adventure-style role-playing games, such as Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), can serve as viable tools for teaching vocabulary to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners within the context of Norway's LK20 curriculum. The literature review highlighted various studies that support the use of role-playing games (RPGs) for educational purposes, particularly in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among 7th-grade learners.

The studies reviewed in the literature section provide compelling evidence that RPGs can significantly enhance the vocabulary learning experience by creating engaging, interactive, and context-rich environments. Prager's (2019) findings suggest that RPGs foster educational outcomes such as collaboration, problem-solving, and effective communication, which are essential under the LK20 curriculum. These outcomes are achieved through the immersive narrative experiences that RPGs typically offer, allowing students to practice new vocabulary in varied and meaningful contexts. Nakasone's (2020) research on the practical usability of

D&D as an educational tool through a web-based resource further supports this assertion. The study underscores the potential of RPGs to boost engagement and facilitate the application of learned concepts in real-world settings. This aligns with the LK20 curriculum's emphasis on active learning and student-centred teaching approaches. Nilsson (2023) provides a detailed exploration of the use of D&D in EFL classrooms, highlighting how the game's complex storytelling and character interactions can significantly enhance language learning. By integrating RPGs into the curriculum, educators can captivate students' interests and motivate them to learn and use English in creative and meaningful ways.

7.4.4 Challenges and Considerations

While the benefits are clear, the integration of RPGs into educational settings is not without challenges. These include the need for significant teacher preparation, familiarity with gaming among teachers and students, and the logistical constraints of classroom integration. Prager (2019) suggests that these challenges can be mitigated through careful planning and the inclusion of formal debrief periods, which help consolidate learning and reflect on the vocabulary and concepts encountered during gameplay. Additionally, the cognitive load imposed by virtual environments, as noted by York (2019), should be carefully managed to ensure that the game's educational goals are not overshadowed by its entertainment value. This is crucial for maintaining the efficacy of RPGs in language learning, particularly in diverse classroom settings where students' language abilities might vary widely.

7.4.5 Findings of the Observation and Literature Review

The observational study and literature review collectively demonstrate that adventure-style role-playing games, such as Dungeons & Dragons, hold significant promise as a method for teaching vocabulary in EFL classrooms, particularly within the framework of Norway's LK20 curriculum. The high level of student engagement observed during the classroom activity

underscores the potential of role-playing games to captivate students' interest and motivate active participation. This engagement is crucial for effective vocabulary acquisition, as it encourages students to immerse themselves in the language and practice it in meaningful contexts.

The observational study revealed that students, regardless of their prior familiarity with role-playing or their CEFR level, were able to engage with the activity and utilize a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. This aligns with the findings from the literature review, which highlight the ability of RPGs to create context-rich environments that facilitate naturalistic language use. The literature review also provides evidence that RPGs foster important educational outcomes such as collaboration, problem-solving, and effective communication, which are emphasized in the LK20 curriculum.

However, the integration of RPGs into EFL education is not without challenges. Significant teacher preparation and familiarity with gaming concepts are required to implement these activities effectively. Additionally, logistical constraints and the need to manage cognitive load in virtual environments must be addressed. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of RPGs for language learning, as highlighted by both the observational study and the literature review, suggest that with careful planning and implementation, role-playing games can be a valuable tool in the EFL classroom.

8 Conclusion

In this master thesis, I explored the viability of using role-playing games (RPGs), specifically Dungeons & Dragons (D&D), as a method for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within the framework of Norway's LK20 curriculum. This investigation was driven by a combination of theoretical exploration, an observational study, and an extensive literature review, leading to a multifaceted understanding of RPGs in educational settings.

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in the educational theories of Vygotsky and Bandura, which emphasize the importance of social interaction and observational learning in cognitive development. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding are particularly pertinent to the use of RPGs in teaching, as these games naturally create a scaffolded learning environment that challenges students just beyond their current abilities. In RPGs, peers, and the game scenario itself serve as the 'more knowledgeable other,' facilitating language acquisition through structured yet flexible interaction. Bandura's Social Learning Theory also supports the use of RPGs, where students learn behaviours, vocabulary, and language structures through observation and imitation of peer interactions within the game.

The observational study conducted as part of this research provided practical insights into the application of RPGs in a real classroom setting. This study was focused on a group of 7th-grade students engaged in a D&D-based activity, designed to assess the potential of RPGs to facilitate active language use and enhance linguistic skills. The findings revealed high levels of student engagement and participation. Students actively used English to communicate, negotiate, and operate within their roles, demonstrating the use of targeted vocabulary and more complex language structures. This suggests that RPGs can create a compelling and supportive environment that motivates students to use English more confidently and creatively.

The observations also highlighted the importance of teacher facilitation in maximizing the effectiveness of RPGs. Proper integration of RPGs into the classroom required teachers to be

adept in both game mechanics and pedagogical strategies to maintain a balance between learning and gameplay. The teacher's role in managing the flow of the game and ensuring that all students were included and engaged was crucial to the success of the learning outcomes.

The literature review extended the context of the study by comparing it with existing research on the use of RPGs in educational settings. This review underscored the growing interest and potential benefits of incorporating games in education, particularly in language learning contexts. Studies reviewed indicated that RPGs could enhance vocabulary retention, increase motivation for learning, and improve speaking fluency. However, the literature also pointed to challenges such as the need for substantial preparation time, the variability in student receptiveness to game-based learning, and the potential for games to distract from learning objectives if not well-integrated with curricular goals.

The discussion section synthesized the theoretical insights, empirical data from the observational study, and findings from the literature review to address the initial research question about the viability of RPGs in EFL learning. This synthesis affirmed that RPGs could significantly enhance EFL teaching by engaging students in meaningful communicative practices. The social and interactive nature of RPGs aligns well with the communicative competences emphasized in the LK20 curriculum, promoting a more dynamic and student-centred learning experience.

Moreover, integrating RPGs in EFL settings encourages a departure from traditional rote learning methods, favouring a more holistic and engaging approach that can cater to diverse learning styles and needs. The role of RPGs in fostering an immersive learning environment where language is used actively and contextually presents a compelling argument for their broader adoption in educational practice.

Based on the comprehensive analysis conducted through this thesis, it is evident that RPGs hold considerable promise as a tool for enhancing EFL education. They not only support the acquisition of language in a more engaging manner but also cultivate essential 21st-century skills such as collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. For educators looking to implement RPGs in their classrooms, it is recommended to undergo proper training on how to

effectively facilitate RPGs to ensure that the educational objectives, and not just the entertainment value, are achieved.

Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of RPG-based learning on language proficiency and academic performance, expanding the scope of studies to include diverse educational settings and participant demographics. This will help in refining RPG-based educational strategies and further validating their effectiveness across different learning environments and cultural contexts.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the academic discourse on game-based learning by providing empirical evidence and theoretical analysis that support the integration of RPGs in EFL classrooms. By harnessing the pedagogical potential of RPGs, educators can transform the teaching and learning of languages, making the process more engaging, effective, and aligned with modern educational paradigms.

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List of tables

Table 1 Groups and CEFR Level

Group	Students	CEFR level	Role-play familiarity
1	*1A*	*B1*	*Familiar*
	1B	*B2*	*Experienced*
	1C	*A2*	*Familiar*
	1D	*A2*	*Familiar*
2	*2A*	*B1*	*Unfamiliar*
	2B	*B2*	*Unfamiliar*
	2C	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	2D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
3	*3A*	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	3B	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	3C	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	3D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*
	3E	*B1*	*Unfamiliar*
4	*4A*	*C1*	*Experienced*
	4B	*A2*	*Experienced*
	4C	*B1*	*Familiar*
	4D	*A1*	*Familiar*
5	*5A*	*A1*	*Unfamiliar*
	5B	*B1*	*Familiar*
	5C	*A2*	*Familiar*
	5D	*A2*	*Unfamiliar*