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Thesis

**VALUE OF DIGITAL GAMES IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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Tato stránka bude ve svázané práci Váš původní formulář *Zadání dipl. práce*
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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis deals with the topic of value of digital games in the English language teaching. The main purpose was to explore the potential of modern technology, such as digital games, in language teaching. In the theoretical part, the value of digital games for language teaching is explained, as well as the value of modern technology in language learning. The greatest importance is put on emphasis why digital games are important and why they can be used for language acquisition. The theoretical part of this thesis deals also with the description of the current state of modern equipment in schools, which is necessary for game-based learning. The practical part, realized by interviews and questionnaires among secondary school students, was designed to investigate students' perception of digital games and their potential for learning. This part of the thesis also examined students' affection towards playing digital games at school, especially in English classes. The results indicate that most of the students enjoy playing games and they can imagine playing them at school, but not in every single class. Most of the students are also aware of the fact that digital games can improve their language skills.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This graduate thesis deals with game-based learning and its use in the English language teaching. In last several decades digital games experienced steep evolution and their teaching potential was noticed. Therefore the evolution of digital games is followed and the learning potential of digital games is examined and connected to student's motivation.

This thesis is divided into two main parts, theoretical and practical.

In the first part there is theoretical information provided. It consists of the description of games in general, further it continues with the definition of digital games and their brief history. This beginning of the thesis provides an insight into issues in steep development of technology in last several decades.

The thesis continues with the description of games in learning process and education. This part introduces a list of twelve items, which explains why digital games are so interesting for children, such as interaction, problem solving or competition. This section is accompanied by a brief description of motivation, which is an important tool for every teacher. In this part differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are described, as well the benefit of shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, which can be caused by digital games.

Even though game-based learning is relatively new topic, it was soon discovered that it has a potential for teaching. Therefore several project for implementing game-based learning into schools are introduced and they are mentioned in this thesis as well. The next section introduces language games in classroom, with the description of its benefits, such as lowering anxiety and encouraging shy learners to take part. A short chapter is also devoted to the introduction of basic differences between digital and non-digital games.

The next section introduces different types of games and their genres. In this section basic differences between many genres of digital games and there are also some genres recommended as more suitable for digital game based learning than others. At the end of the theoretical part of the theoretical part, there are mentioned two studies which show that digital game based learning certainly have learning potential in the English language teaching.

In the second, the practical part of this thesis there is a research study outline. At the beginning, there are described methods of this research and also principles of data collection. The aim of the research was to discover student's perception of the English language and their relationship towards digital games. In the first part, the most important and interesting answers of the students are presented. Firstly they are presented individually for each student; later there are discussed some common answers from the students. The questionnaire represents statistical data and is presented in a form of pie-charts with commentaries. At the end of practical part there are described implications for teaching and also limitations of this research.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical part of this thesis is focused on digital games and their value for language teaching. Brief history of digital games is described, as well as several reasons why digital games are entertaining for children. Playing digital games is conditioned by modern equipment, therefore current situation of using modern technology in schools is described, as well as projects focused on implementing game based learning into classes. The potential of digital games in language learning was tested and two researches are present in this part of the thesis to display the educational value of digital games.

Games in General - Definition and History

A game itself can be defined as: "a set of voluntary activities which has participants, goals, rules, and some kind of competition (physical or mental). The competition can be against oneself, others, or a computer" (Sun, 2011, p. 80). Salen and Zimmerman (2003) define a game as "a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (chapter 7). In both citations, there are mentioned key aspects of games. They have a set of rules, which should be followed by the player; they have goals and outcomes.

Games accompany people from their childhood and are very important for one's future development. As Hamza (2015) states: "games are a basic human activity involving learning and work. For children the primary motivation is enjoyment; for adults it has a rather relaxing effect, which can lead to positive influence on one's mental health" (p. 8 – author's translation). Sajnarová (2015) concurs and adds: "... a person is engaged in games his or her whole life, but in childhood they have specific status - they are a major activity" (p. 3 – author's translation). Games are important for one's development during childhood - children learn through games.

Hamza (2015) divides games into manipulating games, sensoric games, imitative games, psychomotor games, word games, intellect games and constructive games. Each of this category has to be practiced by children and parents, so child develops habits vital for its further development. The lack of games, played in childhood, can be observed in children from children's home. Sometimes they don't have some skills developed, which is partly a consequence of lack of games with adults (Bryknerová, 2010).

Digital game can be defined as: "an interactive program for one or more players, meant to provide entertainment at the least, and quite possibly more" (Sykes & Reinhardt, 2013, p. 42). This definition clearly states that digital game should be interactive and provide at least entertainment. From Sykes & Reinhardt's definition it is possible to presume that 'possibility for more' could be learning. In addition to this definition, Sun (2011) divides games into two parts, 'Educational game' and 'Entertainment game':

Educational game: This is a game whose design and game play is based on a set of educational objectives or learning outcomes.

Entertainment Game: A game that is designed to give pleasure to the player while the player is actively involved in game activities. Although entertainment games are not specifically designed for purposeful learning, incidental learning happens while playing such games. (p. 1181)

With certain simplification, Educational game can be labeled with the term Serious Game (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007). This adds to Sykes & Reinhardt the educational side. Most digital games were originally designed as entertainment games, but even entertainment games have a learning potential, especially in learning language. In time, and with contribution of massive expansion of technology, digital games started to have educational potential and nowadays there is a plenty of games whose main focus is education.

Digital games underwent massive expansion in last few decades. It was caused mainly by the steep development of computers and technology as such. One of the biggest contribution for improving computers and making them smaller was the invention of printed circuit, approximately 30 years ago. Before that, computers were very large and their performance was quite poor (compared with nowadays technology). But even with this technology it was possible to play games.

The first game, considered to be a computer game, was presented in 1952 by Alexander S. Douglas as a part of his dissertation on the topic of human computer interaction. The game was called *OXO* and basically it was an electronic version of tick-tack-toe. The important issue is that it had a visual output. It was not a classic monitor, as we know it nowadays, but the output was displayed on an oscilloscope. The next game was introduced in 1958 and it was called *Tennis for Two*. It was a game for two players with

simple graphics. Both players had to be people, because the idea of player, controlled by computer, was too complicated for simple computers. The visual output was also realized on an oscilloscope Tišnovský (2011).

In 1962 there was another revolutionary game, called *Spacewar!*. The idea presented by this game was that this game was the first game situated in a non-traditional context - e.g. space. It introduced an idea that electronic games do not have to imitate existing games (such as *OXO* and *Tennis for Two* did). *Spacewar!* took place in space and the player controlled a spaceship, which destroyed other objects. This idea of different worlds is nowadays massively wide-spread in games, there are many fictional worlds, where games take place (Tišnovský, 2011).

In 1966 the *Brown Box* was introduced. It was basically a predecessor to the modern Playstation and Xbox devices. It's main virtue was that it used something a lot of people already had at home - television. This solved the problem of a visual output. The *Brown Box* was also relatively small and it had a pair of controlling devices (Weber, n.d.).

The break in video games is the game *Pong*. It was released in 1972 and it was basically a result of unsuccessful, or a rather too ambitious plan to create a car-driving game. When it was apparent that the technology was not as evolved as needed for a driving game, a young engineer named Al Alcorn created a game of Ping Pong and named it shortly *Pong*. The commercial success of this game basically started an era of arcade electronic games. This success can be even seen in movies from North America where teenagers spent a lot of time in arcade centers, filled with arcade cabinets. These cabinets usually could play just one game, such as *Spacewar!*, *Pong*, or *Ms. Pac-Man* (Weber, n.d.).

In 1977, Atari released its video system called Atari 2600. It was a video-gaming system, which was able to play more than just one game. This system improved the above mentioned *Brown Box* and the sales were very good. This gaming-system was used with modification until 1990 (Weber, n.d.).

The whole time there was an endeavor to improve the visual side of games. The tendency was to create games, which would be on the visual side similar to real world. Several film studios were created, such as Lucasfilm and Pixar. These companies were mainly focused on producing movies, but the improvement in technology helped them to create animated movies, using computers. This development also helped to improve the visual side of computer games.

Another milestone occurred in 1989, when Nintendo released a handheld console called *GameBoy*. Graphically the games were most similar to *Pong*, the display was simple monochromatic. But the truly revolutionary fact was that this gaming console fit in a pocket. It was powered by batteries and it could be taken anywhere, a person was not limited by the size (Weber, n.d.).

From 1993 on the visual side of games changed, when 3D games started to be produced. One of the most famous games is *DOOM*. It was a simple 3D action game from first-person look, which was massively popular and was presented on several platforms. Another important year was 1995, when Sony released its first PlayStation – a gaming console which connected to television. The games were on discs and their graphic and audio features were on high level. This selling hit was substituted in year 2000 by PlayStation 2 and only one year later a competition occurred in form of Microsoft's Xbox (Weber, n.d.).

With the improvement of the visual look of the games, a lot of gaming genres emerged. From basic shooting games there are also strategies, building games (*Minecraft*), car racing games or games that interpret real lives (*Sims*) (Weber, n.d.).

Games in Learning Process and Education

Considering the development of the modern technology and internet, the way younger people spend their time have changed. Twenty years ago children played with toys or outside the house with friends. Nowadays many children rather use modern technology and play games on personal computers or gaming consoles. Leaving out some negative effects it can have on their development (insufficient movement, insufficient development of fine motor skills etc.), playing games is a great opportunity for children to learn a foreign language. Some games are not translated to children's native language and if the game is popular and children want to play it, it is necessary for them to learn the language. The biggest advantage of this approach is that children want to learn the language themselves, they don't need any extrinsic motivation (see below) (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007).

Marc Prensky, one of the leading figures in field of Digital Game Based Learning, created a list of twelve items why digital games are good and engaging way for children to learn a language:

1. Games are a form of fun. That gives us enjoyment and pleasure.
2. Games are form of play. That gives us intense and passionate involvement.
3. Games have rules. That gives us structure.
4. Games have goals. That gives us motivation.
5. Games are interactive. That gives us doing.
6. Games are adaptive. That gives us flow.
7. Games have outcomes and feedback. That gives us learning.
8. Games have win states. That gives us ego gratification.
9. Games have conflict/competition/challenge/opposition. That gives us adrenaline.
10. Games have problem solving. That sparks our creativity.
11. Games have interaction. That gives us social groups.
12. Games have representation and story. That gives us emotion.

(Prensky, 2001, Chapter 5, p. 1)

Prensky (2001) furthermore discusses that games are the only thing that provides all of these characteristics. Prensky (2001) states that books and movies are closest to meet all the criteria, but they are not interactive and they are usually experienced alone.

Games give us enjoyment and pleasure, in a lot of games learning is not the main target, but more of a side-effect, which is very beneficial. Prensky (2001) mentions an interesting fact: "Enjoyment and fun as part of the learning process are important when learning new tools since the learner is relaxed and motivated and therefore more willing to learn" (chapter 5, p. 5). Certainly this is true, fun games are perceived by students as something relaxing and sometimes they even don't consider it learning, but fun. But the effects of games in learning are undisputable (Prensky, 2001; Reinders, 2012).

Game rules among other things are an inseparable aspect of games. Each game should have a set of rules, which guides the player through the game. Prensky (2001) says that rules give the game structure. Sykes & Reinhardt (2013) concurs and adds that "A player voluntarily plays a game knowing he or she is bound by a set of rules (these can be followed or flouted)" (p. 12). There is also an option of a player who does not follow the

set of rules, but this definitely slows the progress in the game. But ultimately it is the player's decision, if he or she wants to follow the rules or not.

In the list of items, Prensky (2001) mentions also goals and outcomes and feedback. If students can achieve goals, they are motivated to do so. Based on these goals there is also feedback. It can take various forms; some games have just simple win-lose outcome, but others have scales (how is a person doing against the competition). If he or she is moving towards the goal, or if he or she is breaking any rules. There is also an important role of a referee, which can be the teacher or the computer itself. Sykes & Reinhardt (2013) concurs: "Games require effort to reach a goal (this goal can be open ended or clearly defined, yet it is always ultimately authenticated by the player" (p. 12). Sykes & Reinhardt (2013) adds that the goal is always dependent on the players themselves and continues: "Games will often result in a variety of differing outcomes, some better than others" (p. 12). These outcomes are again dependent on players themselves.

Prensky (2001) also defines the term *feedback*, connected to games: "Feedback comes when something in the game changes in response to what you do - it is what we mean when we say computers and computer games are *interactive*" (chapter 5, p. 13). The interactive part is one of the key features in electronic games, which highly differs from non-electronic games. Everything a person does in an interactive game has some immediate reaction whether it is in a form of a correct answer or changing a difficulty based on this action. Burgos et. al. (2007) add one more feature of feedback in game based learning: " feedback can improve learning and help the learner to take decisions about his strategy and it also encourages the learner's motivation. However, too much feedback can in some situations lead to a weaker strategy by the learner to solve the problem presented, resulting in a lower performance" (p. 1). In the second to last item from the list, Prensky (2001) mentions *interaction* again. It is discussed that there can be interaction between the student and the computer, but also between students. It creates social groups, which also helps to make the games more enjoyable and fun (Prensky, 2001; Reinders, 2012).

Another thing Prensky (2001) mentions is conflict/competition/challenge/opposition. He defines it as: "problems you are trying to solve" (chapter 5, p. 14). It is an aspect that raises your level of adrenaline and it makes you excited about the game. Prensky (2001) and Reinders (2012) discusses that competition is a human nature. On one hand more competitive people favor games, and on

the other hand less competitive people like more teamwork and cooperative games. This might be an important issue when creating or presenting a game in class, because teachers should know their class and they could adjust the game based on the class environment. Very competitive students could create one group, where everybody will 'compete' for himself or herself. The less competitive group could work together and present their group progress.

Prensky's list of twelve items clearly indicates how games can be beneficial for students and shows some reasons why games are enjoyable. The list can also be used as a guide when creating a game. If all of the criteria are met, it is possible that the game will be well accepted by students and it will serve its purpose, which is learning.

Sykes & Reinhardt (2013) adds to this topic that games are: "a problem solving activity, approached with a playful attitude" (p. 12). Sykes & Reinhardt (2013) continues and completes Prensky's list: "As a problem-solving activity games are entered willfully; have goals, conflict, and rules; can be won and lost; are interactive; have challenges; create their own internal value; engage players; and are closed, formal systems" (p. 12). There are typical features of games listed and also the fact that games are entered voluntarily. Certainly, not all of them, but a large number of students return to some game because of their own interest and also because of the "fun" factor that gaming and learning give.

Motivation

Motivation is one of the key aspects that teachers have to take under consideration when they design a lesson. In order to make lessons interesting and beneficiary, it is important to keep students motivated and focused on the task.

According to Holeček (2007), motivation is: "summary of factors that encourage, focus and regulate person's behavior" (p. 122 - author's translation). Holeček (2007) explains this definition as person making some endeavor, based on reasons. There are two motivational reasons, one that comes out of the person itself, and second which is influence of one's surroundings. Motivation coming from person itself is called intrinsic (internal) motivation, the second type, which originates in external factors, is called extrinsic (external) motivation (Holeček, 2007; Plhánková, 2003).

It would be ideal for a teacher if students were motivated enough by their intrinsic motivation. It usually depends on student's focus. If someone likes English more than Biology, their intrinsic motivation to learn English is higher. In connection to motivation there are motives, basically they are the reasons, why we do something. In intrinsic motivation the reasons can be one's interests, hobbies, habits, positions and personal values. It is obvious that this motives comes from person itself. As mentioned above, in extrinsic motivation the motives comes from one's surroundings and they can be rewards, punishments, orders, requests and offers (Holeček, 2007; Plháčková, 2003).

There is sometimes a common mistake that teacher is the one who works with extrinsic motivation. He or she is giving students tasks and evaluates them. But the task of teacher is to rouse students intrinsic motivation for their subject or education as a whole. (Holeček, 2007; Plháčková, 2003). This problem is also mentioned by Hanson-Smith (2016). In her article she argues that with playing games in classes, students accomplish their task with a certain result. But they often try to do the task again, to learn from their behavior in the last try and they try to improve their result. Hanson-Smith (2016) connects this behavior to motivation. From what was originally extrinsic motivation (in form of teacher's submission or certain grading criteria) becomes suddenly intrinsic motivation. Students want to master the game and to improve their score, regardless of whether it would help them get better grade from the teacher. Hanson-Smith (2016) states:

If we envision extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as a continuum, rather than opposites (...) we can see how gaming might work, encompassing as it does both rewards external to the self and internal rewards that enhance enjoyment and self-worth (beating one's own best record, mastering aspects of the game). (p. 231)

Hanson-Smith describes the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation and also adds the reason why: "Games move the student from extrinsic motivations toward intrinsic motivation because they lead to the satisfactions of achievement and mastery" (Hanson-Smith, 2016, p. 231). This is what could help teacher in motivating students and raising their interest into the subject, fun methods of education which would cause this shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation.

Holeček (2007) also takes under consideration motivation and one's performance. It is obvious that if someone is not motivated, his or her performance is very low,

sometimes nonexistent. It is interesting to focus on opposite case, if someone is highly motivated. In the picture (Figure 1) it can be seen that with highly increased motivation the performance lowers. Therefore Holeček (2007) defines term: "zone of optimal motivation" (p. 125 - author's translation).

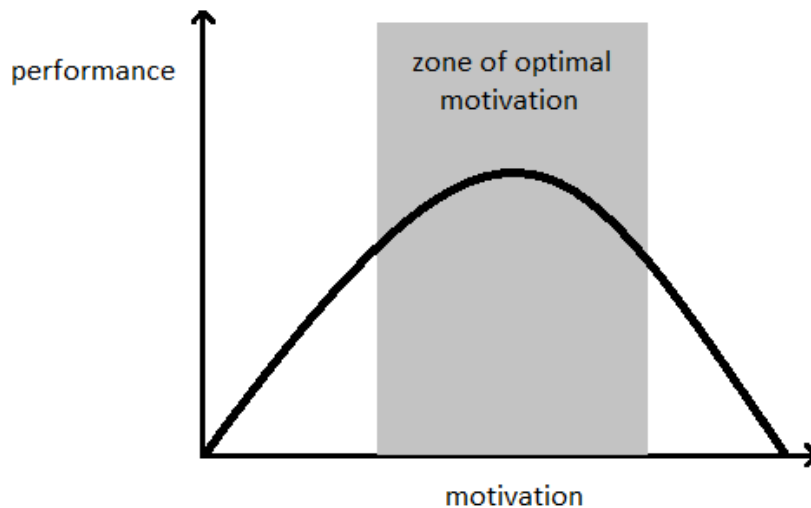


Figure 1. *Motivation*

Therefore it is important to know that if person is expected to perform well, he or she should be adequately motivated. It is common to hear term 'over-motivated person' in sports, when there is for example a very good player, but his or her motivation is very high and then his or her performance rapidly lowers. He or she cannot do a good pass, good shot and usually the person is helping itself fouls. This behavior is interesting, because this player can be known for his good techniques and in many matches he or she could have proved it. But when his or her motivation is too high, their performance is negatively affected by this state of mind.

In conclusion, motivation is very important factor and teachers should be familiar with this topic. It is the main driving force for students to learn. It is important to know that there are two components of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. For teacher it is important to use extrinsic motivation, but his or her task is also to increase student's intrinsic motivation for the subject, or education and knowledge as a whole.

Projects for Game-Based Learning

Game-based learning is still quite a new discipline for most teachers. It is most likely caused by the fact that there were practically no electronic games when they were growing up. Prensky (2001) describes them as *digital immigrants*: "they haven't had experience with technology from early on and need to learn how to use it. On the other hand, children growing up in the digital times, are used to technology " (Šelong, 2012, p. 11 - author's translation). Prensky (2001) argues that this changes their thinking, when compared to previous generations. Other problem is that students are usually better in using computers than their teachers and this could be a reason, why older teachers do not want to use computers and game-based learning frequently. This younger generation is called *digital natives*, as opposed to above mentioned *digital immigrants* (Prensky, 2001; Šelong, 2012).

Based on these facts, international organizations try to improve position of game-based learning in schools. There are several projects which should encourage game-based learning in schools. Šelong (2012) mentions some of them:

- 1) ENGAGE Learning
- 2) eMapps.com
- 3) How are digital games used in schools?
- 4) IMAGINE

(p.12-13)

Šelong (2012) mentions ENGAGE learning (European Network for Growing Activity in Game-based learning in Education) as one of the long-term project, based in Europe. Currently this project's website is disabled. Šelong (2012) argues in his work that one disadvantage of such a recent topic, which game-based learning certainly is, could be insufficient number of studies connected with the topic and also their short time of existence. Project ENGAGE's purpose was to: "prove that game-based learning is a method applicable in every level of education and it should support the adaptation of game-based learning on local and cultural situation" (Šelong, 2012, p. 12).

Project IMAGINE (Increasing Mainstreaming of Games In Learning Policies) was a project which tried to enforce game-based learning to all three levels of education in Europe. It tried to persuade ministries and other authorities responsible for education that games in modern age have their place in education (Šelong, 2012).

Other two projects (eMapps.com and How are digital games used in schools) were focused on integrating game-based learning to primary and secondary education and they monitored students and also teachers affection in using such technologies. The result of this project was that younger teachers are more interested in the use of technology and game-based learning. On the other hand older teachers were not very keen on using them, which could be accounted to their status of *digital immigrants*. (Felicia, 2009; Šelong, 2012)

ICT in Classes

The development of technology and computers and the steep growth of computer users definitely have benefits in teaching. It could be accessibility of information, accessibility of foreign documents and movies and also using new methods for teaching. As the topic of this thesis is game-based learning and digital games, there is a necessity to mention technology-readiness of schools. To play (and to learn through) video games it is necessary to have a required equipment and also teachers who are familiar with technology (see above *digital natives* and *digital immigrants*).

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, children nowadays are familiar with using technology from very young ages. However, the school realities are different. Czech School Inspection focused on using ICT in pre-school education (nursery schools). The results were quite poor, only in 4,3% of inspection of classes was ICT used. It is stated in Czech School Inspection's Annual report that: "Despite the fact that nursery schools are strengthened in area of material equipment, e.g. with interactive boards, they are not used adequately and to their full value in education process" (Česká Školní Inspekce, 2015, p. 26 - author's translation).

In primary education the situation was a little different, ICT was used in 24.6% of classes by teacher with simple frontal teaching. In less cases (under 10%) there was used special educational software, in 5.6% of classes the special software was used only by teacher and in 7.1% of classes the special software was used by all the students. In 33,2%

of classes ICT was not used at all and in 24.1% of classes ICT was not available (Česká Školní Inspekce, 2015). Compared to situation before two years, schools now have more technology. It was stated in Výroční zpráva České Školní inspekce (Annual report of Czech school inspection) that: "Priority of material development in primary schools was provision of ICT (in 65.4% of monitored schools), which is a long-term trend" (Česká školní inspekce, 2013, p. 52). From the Annual report it is also visible that before two years, ICT was not used in 63% of classes. (Česká Školní Inspekce, 2013). Compared to the situation nowadays there is a great improvement in this area.

In secondary education the situation is quite similar to the one in primary schools. If ICT is used in the class, it is used mostly by the teacher (36.9%). ICT was not used in 32.8% of classes and was not present in 19.7% of classes. The lowest numbers are again in usage of special software (under 10%). Egri (2013) attributes this low usage of special software to its cost. Usage of software for classes usually is not free and the licenses can be very expensive. The problem is there are several licenses of education software (Full version, Shareware, Freeware, Trial version and Free software). To use the software in classes, a usually full version is necessary. Egri (2013) states:

Full version. This type of program is "the best" because it is not limited in time or in functions. The full version contains all the functionality of the software. The downside is that you have to buy the software and as it will be presented in the following chapters, software prices are not low.

(Egri, 2013, p. 17)

Schools have lately invested a lot of money for improvement of their ICT equipment. It is apparent that it would take some time to invest again in educational software.

	Nursery schools	Primary schools	Secondary schools
ICT used by teacher for frontal teaching	4.3%	24.6%	36.9%
Special software used by teacher	no data	5.6%	4.9%
Special software used by some students	no data	9.3%	3.4%
Special software used by all the students	no data	7.1%	7.6%
ICT not used	no data	33.2%	32.8%
ICT not available	no data	24.1%	19.7%

(Table 1. Author's representation of results from Výroční zpráva České Školní inspekce 2014/2015)

The percentage in Table 1 represents amount of time of using ICT in the observed lessons.

Games in Language Learning - Language Game

The language of educational games for language learning could be simplified for learners. It can be adapted to their language level so they could progress in the game and learn from the game. Another matter is that games can practice certain areas of language and connect them to other language games which practice other areas.

Prakash (2013) furthermore develops the idea of language games in classrooms. He introduces a list of seven items that make language games more acceptable for students:

- Language games add interest to what students might to not find very interesting.
- Language games provide a context for meaningful communication.
- The meaningful communication provides the basis for comprehensible input.
- The emotions aroused when playing games add variety to the sometimes dry, serious process of language instruction.
- The variety and intensity that games after may lower anxiety and encourage shy learners to take part.

- Language games can involve all the basic language skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing and number of skills are often involved in the same game.
- Language games are students centered in that students are active in playing the games and games can often be organized such that students have the leading roles.

(p. 60)

In some cases Prakash (2013) agrees with Prensky's list mentioned above, but in his second item Prakash also states that games provide a context for meaningful communication. This is an important issue for students. They can see how this part of language can be used in real life and it gives them motivation to learn it. Jacobs concurs and adds: "Even if the game involves discrete language items, such as a spelling game, meaningful communication takes place as students seek to understand how to play the game and as they communicate about the game: before, during, and after the game" (Jacobs, n.d., p. 2). It is visible that even in simple games, such as spelling ones, language is practiced - students have to read directions or they are given directions; they can discuss them and then they proceed to playing games. In creating a game, this should be one of the key issues, to create a context for meaningful communication.

Prakash (2013) furthermore states that meaningful communication provides basis for comprehensible input. Jacobs (n.d.) explains it as: "what students understand as they listen and read, interaction to enhance comprehensibility, e.g., asking for repetition" (p. 2). The key item is that students sometimes need repetition of certain tasks, so if it is not written in the game, but given orally (using headphones for example), there should be an opportunity for students to play the instruction again. Based on the language level of students, this opportunity for playing the instructions again should be limited to certain number of repetitions.

In third to last item on the list, there is mentioned grouping, shy students and their anxiety. Using computers, as most of students nowadays do, gives them 'safer environment'. For some students it is easier to communicate with their group online, using chats in games. No one can see if it takes them longer to put together a sentence and they can participate without such anxiety, which they might have in front of real people (Lester,

2008; Prakash, 2013; Prensky, 2001). Therefore it is important when designing a learning digital game to add some kind of chat, or some kind of possibility for players to communicate online. This apply mostly for game which are meant to be played in groups, or if playing in groups is one of the options.

In the last item from the list, Prakash (2013) mentions leading roles. In single-player games (games played by just one person), each person is the leading role of the game. In multi-player games (games played by more people), the leading role often emerges, which is given on one hand by people's nature, but sometimes also by the character, they play in the game. Neville (2009) focused on the behavior of leading figures in the game and also of more experienced players, which usually are the leading figures. He states that: "digital game-based learning allows players to interact with one another, exchanging experiences and knowledge, while working together to solve a common problem. (...) More advanced players help novice players become more adept at gameplay" (Neville, 2009, p. 48). Jacobs (n.d.) adds that this behavior also helps students to create social bonds and improve their social skills and team work.

Non-Digital vs. Digital Games

It is obvious that some of these definitions can be applied to ordinary, non-digital games. Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) took under consideration, why it is more fun for children, to play digital game. He introduces some of the reasons, such as the feeling of using modern technology, clearly stated rules, speed of digital games, graphic representation of unreal things and opportunity of playing against artificial intelligence (AI).

Nowadays children are used to using technology and they certainly appreciate this possibility in learning. As far as the rules are concerned, Egenfeldt-Nielsen (2007) stated that during ordinary, non-digital games, people spent a lot of time arguing about rules of the game. In digital games, the rules are given and there is not a place to argue about them. They are set in the same way to any player.

There is also mentioned speed of digital games, reaction of the games are much faster, especially when playing against the artificial intelligence. Introduction of AI gave people opportunity to play games alone, just against (or with) the computer.

Therefore, as the above mentioned paragraphs suggest, digital games are more fun for children. If ordinary games in class and digital games in class would be compared, more people nowadays would enjoy the digital games. (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007; Prensky, 2001)

Types of Games

The division of digital games is usually based on their genre. Sun (2011) divides games into: "Action games, Adventure games, Fighting games, Puzzle games, Role-playing games, Simulation games, Sports games and Strategy games" (p. 1182). All these games have something in common, the player is given a certain task. If the player's L1 is not English and they receive the task in English, they want to proceed in the game and they have to find out, what it means, which leads to learning.

Action games are usually games for quick responses and fast decision making. They are usually represented by shooting games or car racing games, such as Counter-Strike, Call of Duty or Burnout. The first two games can be played in single player and also multiplayer, which gives the player opportunity to communicate with their team members who are from all around the world. The language used for this purposes is usually English and it is one of the best environments where to use the language, because it is completely safe even for shy people.

Adventure games are more suitable for use in language classes; the player usually has to find a way to something or out of somewhere, following directions and accomplishing tasks. In these games the player doesn't have to decide their actions as fast as in action games, therefore for learning purposes these games are more suitable. Interesting games in this category are for example Machinarium, Terraria, Botanicula or Until Dawn.

Fighting games usually have two characters that fight against each other, using some combinations of moves. These games are, for learning purposes, not as interesting as others. Puzzle games are very suitable for learning language. The puzzle could be in form of putting together the correct form of a sentence, assigning pictures to words, solving a mystery from story etc.

Role-Playing Games and their subcategory Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG's) are very popular with modern children. They are usually played at home, but the key is that these games are usually played with unknown people from different parts of the world. The usual language of these games is English and it is one of the best environments where to use the language, because it is completely safe even for shy people. The most popular games in this genre are World of Warcraft, Final Fantasy or Fallout.

Simulation games are usually digital representatives of certain actions in real life. They simulate driving, flying or controlling machines. These games are very good for extending one's vocabulary. There is usually a tutorial how to play the game, with detailed description of how to manipulate certain machine. Games such as Train Simulator 2014, Surgeon Simulator 2013 or X-Plane 10 belong to this category.

Sports games represent certain sports. They can be good for learning sport terminology. Typical representatives are NHL, FIFA or NBA, which represent ice-hockey, football and basketball, respectively.

The last category are strategy games. They involve very good understanding of rules and high level of planning moves. The tasks are usually quite complicated and the player has to study best possible options how to proceed in the game. These games would be best for advanced language learners (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, 2007; Prensky, 2001; Sun, 2011).

Nowadays it is important to mention even mobile games, where a large number of them is designed specifically for learning a language. There are several well-designed applications for learning English, such as FluentU, MindSnacs, Memrise and Open Language. As in computer games, some of them are for free and some of them are paid. However, mobile games are not the main target of this thesis and they will not be further discussed.

Digital Games and Language Acquisition

Considering the value of digital games in English language teaching, which is the topic of this thesis, it would be interesting to introduce some research, which was already conducted. Aghlara (2011), an Iranian scholar, introduced a research study, which was

done in an Iranian school and measured improvement in student's vocabulary. These students had no previous knowledge of the English language. The research was conducted during forty-five days, three-times a week.

In this research, there were forty students, divided into two groups of twenty. One group was experimental, the second one was a control group. In the experimental group, students were playing digital game SHAIEx, which is a "web-based adaptive system that makes the individualized learning of English possible by means of adaptive computer based educational games" (Agudo, n.d., p. 1). The students in the control group "didn't use digital game and were taught lessons using the traditional methods" (Aghlara, 2011, p. 556). After forty-five days, students were given a test to evaluate their knowledge of English words, which were present in the game. The experimental group overall scored higher points than the control group. The knowledge was assessed on a scale from zero to ten. The experimental group scored seven point eight points; the control group scored six point six points. This research suggests that learning through games was more beneficial for students.

Aghlara (2011) admits the positive contribution of digital games to learning and compares it with a former approach of adults, who considered playing games as a waste of time or as an unworthy activity. Nowadays research shows that playing digital games can be beneficial to students' language skills. Some other authors, Rankin, Gold and Gooch (2006) agree with this opinion. They have conducted another research study with more advanced students. The main target of their research was the evaluation of conversational skills and vocabulary. The game used in this research was more advanced, it was a 3D game called Ever Quest 2. This game represented different world and a person was asked to explore the world, interact with object and another players.

In comparison to SHAIEx, Ever Quest 2 is not a game designed for language learning. It is more of a game for fun (see Entertainment vs. Serious games above, pg. 4). But this research shows that these games also have a great potential for language learning.

In this research there were three groups of students - advanced, intermediate and high-level beginner students. During the whole research, students were asked to keep logs, which were further used to evaluate their progress in language acquisition. Another criteria was students' interaction with each other in-game chat.

The study showed that "The advanced students expressed greater confidence in their English reading, writing and conversational skills than their counterparts, generating 6 times more chat messages than the high-level beginner and 2.5 times more chat messages than the intermediate students" (Rankin, Gold, & Gooch, 2006, p. 4). It is obvious that the most advanced students interacted with each other the most, but it is a good sign that even lower level students interacted with their peers. Rankin et al. (2006) further discuss the fact that during the sessions, lower level students started to use the chat more. After the sixth session the lower level and intermediate level students gained confidence and started to use three times more messages. On the other hand, the most advanced student's frequency of chat contribution lowered in the fifth and sixth sessions (Rankin et al., 2006).

On this account, the authors conclude that "Rather than blindly assuming that the benefits of games will transfer to learning in any domain for students of various backgrounds, both educators and designers of instructional technology must develop appropriate methodology for evaluating games as learning artifacts" (Rankin et al., 2006, p. 5). Felicia (2009) concurs and adds:

Not all digital games are built with learning objectives in mind; however, they all possess intrinsic learning qualities that challenge and foster learners' cognitive abilities. Digital games are based on the premise that players need to learn, to memorize, to collaborate, to explore or to obtain additional information to progress further in the game. Playing is learning and one of the main advantages of digital games is their ability to let players learn in a challenging environment, where they can make mistakes and learn by doing. (p. 8)

According to Rankin et al. (2006) and Felicia (2009), game-based learning is relatively a new field of study and it is important to establish methodology for evaluating games, for example which games are more suitable to use in class and what their main benefits are like. The environment of games is designed to challenge students and motivate them to obtain certain information for some progress in the game. Overall, both studies show that game-based learning has its place in education. In the first study with experimental and control group there was a clear difference between the groups.

Summary

The theoretical part of this thesis is mainly focused on the value of digital games in language teaching. Based on their steep evolution in the last several decades, digital games gained attention of researchers and their learning potential has been examined. Digital games are considered as the only media, which connects twelve specific items, such as games are fun, they have rules and goals, games are interactive and they are focused on problem solving, which makes them fun for children. Games are strongly connected with children's motivation, which can be shifted from extrinsic to intrinsic while playing digital games. This shift would be very beneficial to students' language acquisition. Another important issue for games based learning is the necessity of technological equipment, which is used for playing digital games. Most of the schools have some kind of ICT equipment, but it is mostly used only by the teacher. Digital games can be played in several genres, such as action games or strategies. The findings of various studies around digital games indicated that students are able to learn more with use of digital games that they would be from ordinary class. The following part of the thesis explores the topic of digital games in lives of secondary school students.

III. METHODS

This thesis deals with the role of digital games in language acquisition, especially English language acquisition. In the theoretical part I described the current state of using ICT in language and also terminology, connected with game-based learning. The practical part is focused on student's perception of digital games as a learning tool and also their general perception of the English language. The English language is nowadays widespread and anybody gets in touch with English quite often. Therefore part of the practical part deals with English language lessons and importance of English in modern times. The practical part also examines student's willingness to play digital games at school and reasons why students play digital games. Recently, digital games were considered a waste of time, but with the spread of the internet and interconnection of different countries, there was added an element of a foreign language. This interconnection of gaming and learning a foreign language certainly has great potential.

Before conducting the research, the author prepared several hypothesis, which he hoped would be proven or disproven by the students.

The main hypothesis were:

- Students consider the English language important in modern times.
- Students are in touch with English somewhere outside of school.
- Students can learn from digital games, even though they play them just for fun.
- Students enjoy communicating in the virtual world in English, because it is a safe environment.
- Students consider the improvement in technology in last several decades beneficial.

There were several other questions in the research, which should help students to evaluate their attitudes toward the English language and learning through digital games.

Participants and Data Collection

The research was conducted at a secondary school in Most within one class. The age of the students was similar, between fifteen and sixteen years of age. The total number of respondents was fourteen, seven girls and seven boys. They were all studying the English language, but the time they spent learning English language sometimes differed.

They all had English as their first foreign language, but some of them started learning English earlier than others. Some of the students also attended language schools from young ages.

The research had two main parts, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. In the research both qualitative and quantitative methods were used, the qualitative being represented by a semi-structured interview and the quantitative by a questionnaire.

Interview. The main part of research was interview, which was designed to prove or disprove the above mentioned hypothesis. The interview was semi-structured; therefore it was possible for students to specify some areas of their interest. It was also beneficial for the interviewer, because in semi-structured interview some questions can be added and some can be omitted, which depends mostly on the situation and it is the interviewers choice. The interviewer lead the interview in such way that he could collect all the important information. The chosen type of interview is also beneficial, because all the gathered answers posse some internal structure. The structure of this interview was made by eighteen questions (see Appendix A).

The interviews were conducted at secondary school in Most with all the respondents in one day. Each of the fourteen students was interviewed individually in an empty classroom. The interview followed questions, which were prepared in advance for the purposes of this thesis.

The process of the interview was similar with each students. The student was given basic information about this graduate thesis and its main targets. Than the student was asked for his or her consent with being recorded during the interview. Recording students on smartphone was chosen because of the amount of questions in the interview and the possibility of a lot of gathered information. Students were also informed that the interview is anonymous; they were asked just for their first name, which they could make up.

Than the interview itself could begin, it followed the structure which can be seen in Appendix A. As mentioned above, some questions were added in some interviews. During the interviews, the interviewer also took some notes with additional information.

The interviews were conducted in the Czech language, mostly because of the fluency and good understanding of the questions. There was also a risk that some students would not consider their English language skills as sufficient and rather omit some

information, than trying to explain it in English. Therefore students' L1 was chosen as a language for the interview. The interviews lasted from five to eight minutes.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was prepared in advance and was given to students immediately after the interview. A student was informed by which key to fill in the questionnaire and then was given time to fill in his or her answers. The questionnaire was prepared in the Czech language, for similar reasons why the interview was conducted in the Czech language.

The questionnaire consisted of seven statements and students were asked to mark their level of agreement or disagreement on the following scale:

- 1 - Souhlasím (I strongly agree)
- 2 - Spíše souhlasím (I rather agree)
- 3 - Nevím (I don't know)
- 4 - Spíše nesouhlasím (I rather disagree)
- 5 - Nesouhlasím (I disagree)

The questionnaire was designed for statistic purposes. Some of the questions were similar to those in the interview, but for statistic purposes it was better if the students marked their opinion of the given statement on a scale. The questionnaire was filled in between two and four minutes. Both the results from semi-structured interviews and questionnaires are analyzed in the following chapter. .

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This section presents the results of the semi-structured interview and questionnaire. At first, all the respondent's answers are analyzed separately. They are analyzed in a way of description of the interview and summary of the most important answers. After the analysis of each respondent's answers separately, there is a recapitulation of the most important and the most common responses. In these responses there are also answers to the above mentioned hypothesis.

Interviews

Interview 1

Name: Milan

Age: 16

Gender: Male

The first respondent, Milan, is a typical teenager with a positive approach towards technologies and games. During the interview I noticed his high-tech smartwatches and smartphone, which were signs that Milan is a technological enthusiast.

The first questions of the interview were designed to reveal respondent's approach towards English language. Milan responded that his relation towards learning English is very positive; he likes to learn this language. He also studies the German language and for one year he has studied Russian, but his favorite foreign language is definitely English, which he has studied the longest, almost eight years. The reason, why English is so important and interesting for him, is that English is spoken in many countries all around the world and it is also the language of most computer games, he plays.

The next part of the interview was aimed towards digital games. Its purpose was to find out why students play digital games and if they consider them valuable for their language skills. Milan plays digital games every day. Like most of the respondents he answered that he plays games just because they are fun for him. He does not play digital games with learning purpose in mind. Milan is quite capable in English, therefore he usually doesn't need any dictionary. Interesting fact was that even if he doesn't know some word, he can guess the meaning based on the context. This was very interesting answer and it showed Milan's English skills. He also accounts playing games to his knowledge of

English, he stated that he has been playing games from very young age and his English is where it is mainly because of playing games in English.

From his next answers it was visible that his most favorite games are Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games. These games are usually played in multiplayer mode and there is some kind of chat present, which allows players to communicate with each other. Milan stated that when he was younger, he usually used the in game chat to communicate. As his language skills improved, he started to use headphones with microphone and communicate over specialized software for gaming communication called Teamspeak.

As Milan's positive approach towards game suggest, he would like to play digital games in English lessons and he doesn't think that gaming would get boring after two months. But he stated that he can imagine other students getting bored with playing digital games in English lessons.

My last question: "do you consider the spread of technology beneficial to your language skills?" was partly answered earlier during our interview, Milan strongly agreed that technology is beneficial. He uses technology every day and he indicates that most of the programs are in English, therefore he needs to be able to communicate in English to use them.

Interview 2

Name: Markéta

Age: 15

Gender: Female

The second respondent was a girl named Markéta. Markéta studies English and German, eight and four years, respectively. She described her relation towards English as very negative, because she doesn't like learning this language. In spite of the fact that she doesn't like the English language, she stated that English is nowadays very important, for example for better job. Markéta's negative approach towards learning English does not correspond with her grades, she is one of the best students.

Within questions about her gaming experiences, Markéta stated that she likes to play games. She plays approximately four times a week, but mostly in the Czech language.

When she plays a digital game in the English language, it is mainly because the game was not translated to the Czech language yet. My next question, if playing games helped her English, was answered constrainedly, Markéta thought that playing English games may have helped her vocabulary. She stated that different things helped her English more, such as foreign movies and television series. This might be also given by the fact that Markéta watches English movies and television series every day for several hours.

Though Markéta is overall not a fan of playing games in English, she thinks that playing games completely in English is possible for her. Despite this fact, she doesn't consider playing digital games in English lessons as something that would be much entertaining for her.

Interview 3

Name: Veronika

Age: 15

Gender: Female

Veronika was the next interviewee, who had a positive approach toward learning English. She stated that English is interesting and necessary nowadays, the only reproach was that she mostly used English only at school. On my question if she tried to go to a language school or have some conversational seminars, she replied that language schools are quite expensive and they were mostly open only for morning classes. As far as conversational seminars are concerned, at this school they were optional and available only for last two grades before school-leaving examinations. Therefore Veronika can choose conversational seminar next year, which she will definitely do. Her grades in English are rather average, usually good or very good.

Veronika is also one of the girls, who like to play digital games. She plays approximately three times a week and mostly on her playstation or smartphone. She stated that she is capable of playing a game completely in English. She usually plays some puzzles on smartphone or racing games on playstation. She doesn't play multiplayer games, although she considers communication in English with other people very beneficial. She explained it with the platform - it is hard to write longer sentences on playstation without keyboard. She does not play much computer games, which is caused by four family members sharing one computer.

As far as the benefits of digital games are concerned, Veronika stated that games helped mostly her vocabulary and listening skills. She can also imagine playing games at school, especially in English classes, but she thinks that in order to games would not get boring, they should be in different genres, or at least the difficulty should escalate during the school year. Veronika considers playing digital games very beneficial. She also thinks that reading books helped her English significantly. She quite likes her progress in English, which, by Veronika's words, improved a lot over last two years. She considers English very important, mostly because of international communication.

Interview 4

Name: Zuzana

Age: 16

Gender: Female

Zuzana is another student with excellent grades from English, which was reflected in her enthusiastic speech during the interview. She described her relation toward English as completely positive, she is interested in foreign languages and deals with them even in her free time. Zuzana has studied English for eight years, German for six years and French for two years. She considers English her favorite language, because she regards it the main language of the world. She also mentions some areas where English is important, such as travelling, future job and also interconnection of the whole world.

Zuzana's relationship to digital games is not as strong as it was with some previous interviewees. She does not have a problem to play a game completely in English, but she prefers other activities, than playing games, such as reading books or watching movies. She is able to understand movies in the English language and she also tries to read books in an original language, but she admits that she is not fluent in reading books and she has to use dictionary quite often.

Zuzana plays digital games approximately twice a month, she thinks that they are mostly beneficial to vocabulary and partly to grammar. Zuzana mostly likes to play digital games with certain tasks and descriptions, which she considers beneficial to her vocabulary. She can also imagine playing digital games in English classes, but she presumes that they would not be in each class, because it would get boring.

Compared to the first interviewee, Milan, who sometimes did not know some word and tried to guess its meaning from the context, Zuzana stated that she has to look into dictionary, because some words appear without, or just with little context. Therefore finding the meaning out from the context is sometimes impossible.

Interview 5

Name: Jakub

Age: 15

Gender: Male

Jakub is another boy, who likes to play digital games. He plays approximately four times a week and he uses exclusively the English language, while playing digital games. It is basically determined by the genre, he likes Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games, which they play with Milan together. Their most favorite one is World of Warcraft. It is interesting that Jakub stated that even if he knows, he is communicating with his classmate who knows Czech language, he uses English. It is determined by the fact that in their team there are usually people from different countries and they use English as universal language. This frequent use of English outside of school is also visible in Jakub's grades, which are very good. Same as Milan, Jakub stated that playing digital games helped to improve his English significantly, hand in hand with English movies.

It is obvious that Jakub's relation towards English is very good, he considers it an universal language of the internet, at least in Europe and America. Jakub is aware that English is not the most massively used language in the world, he himself stated that English is the third most spoken language in the world, but he considers it the language of the internet. Jakub can imagine playing games in school, but he thinks it would get boring, because he wants to play the games when he wants to and the exact genre he wants to play. As most of his classmates, Jakub stated that playing games mostly improved his vocabulary. He also perceives the technological evolution in last few decades as very important and very beneficial, mostly because he can search the internet for articles in foreign languages.

Interview 6

Name: Filip

Age: 16

Gender: Male

Filip is another student with excellent grades and positive approach towards the English language. He likes to play games every other day and his favorites are again Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games. He has studied English for seven years and his English skills are on such a high level, he does not need to use vocabulary while playing digital games. He rather tries to guess the meaning of the word from the context. This is, according to Filip, the biggest advantage of games, improving vocabulary.

Filip has also studied German for two years. He tried to compare both languages and he assumes that it is more beneficial to speak the English language, because more people can speak English. He added that the best situation is to know as many languages as possible, but if he had to choose one, it would be English. My question why isn't it Mandarin Chinese, the language spoken by the most people in the world, Filip responded that in Europe Chinese is spoken by very few people. However, Filip added that he sometimes watches some reports from digital game conventions and tournaments, where a lot of people are Chinese and they also use Chinese in their professional teams.

It is fair to say that Filip considers digital games beneficial to his language skills and he can imagine playing games at school, but it would have to be variety of games, so it wouldn't get boring.

Interview 7

Name: David

Age: 16

Gender: Male

Next respondent, David, is another digital game player, but compared to his classmates, with completely different approach toward digital games.

David has excellent grades from English and he also studies German, again with excellent grades. From young ages he was interested in languages and around his twelve years of age he started to read books in English. David seems like a perfectionist, even though nowadays he reads book in English in his free time without many problems, he thinks that playing video games completely in English is not possible for him. He explains it with vocabulary problems, when he doesn't know some important word, he looks it up

in a dictionary. He also mentioned that even if he sees some word, which is not important at the moment, he immediately looks it up in the dictionary, purely out of curiosity.

This respondent, David, considers playing games as beneficial to his language skills, mostly listening skills and vocabulary. Interesting fact is that he cannot imagine playing digital games in English classes, though he thinks it would be fun. He explains it with language books, which are prescribed by the school. He stated that books are full of information and sometimes they as a class fall behind other classes, therefore they do not have time to play games.

Interview 8

Name: Jakub

Age: 16

Gender: Male

Jakub is the next respondent from interviews. His relation towards English is very good, he also studies German, but he prefers English, because he thinks it is easier. Jakub stated that English is also more valuable for him and he is in touch with English every day, in contrast to German, which he uses only at school. The reason is that Jakub likes to read about gaming, he reads articles about it in English every day. He explains reading articles about games in English by more specialized foreign webs, which are, according to Jakub, of higher quality than the Czech ones. They also usually have more information because their redactors are actually present at some conventions and tournaments. Jakub was also asked about German servers about gaming, but he has never tried any of them, because his German is not as good as his English, which he has studied much longer, for eight years.

As can be anticipated from the first part of the interview, Jakub likes games. Jakub, as one of the few from these interviews, does not play games mostly for fun, but he stated that digital games mean escape from reality for him. For this reason, Jakub plays games every day for several hours, mostly multiplayer games. His most favorite one is from genre Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games and it is called Star Wars : The Old Republic. This game follows the story of Star Wars movies, which represents different galaxy and different lives with supernatural powers. It is probably a good place for Jakub where to hide from reality of ordinary lives.

As far as the influence of playing digital games on Jakub's English is concerned, he agrees that playing games helped him significantly. He also mentioned that not only actually playing the games helped him, but also reading about them, as was mentioned above. Jakub stated that playing games was mostly beneficial to his vocabulary, pronunciation and also reading skills. Playing games at school was labeled by Jakub as his dream, he could definitely imagine playing games in English lessons and not only in them. He can imagine playing digital games in each class of the day.

Interview 9

Name: Žaneta

Age: 16

Gender: Female

According to my next interviewee, whose name is Žaneta, English is the most important language in the world and it is important for each person nowadays to know this language. The main reason is that everybody is exposed to English at certain level and it is important to know at least the basic vocabulary. Žaneta mentioned her parents, who do not speak English at all and she labeled it as a great disadvantage for them. Žaneta herself has very good relationship towards English and as mentioned above, she can see the importance of this language in modern world. She also labeled English as universal language, same as some of her classmates did. Her grades are very good from both languages she studies, which are English and Spanish, she has studied them for eight and four years, respectively.

Žaneta likes to play digital games, she plays usually three times a week. Her favorite game is The Sims, which could be placed to genre of simulation, it is a simulation of everyday life. This game was completely translated to the Czech language, but Žaneta plays it in English. She stated that it was mainly because she was not able to add the Czech language to the game when she first installed it and she had to use English instead. But nowadays she is used to it and even though she could play in Czech, she sticks to English. She stated that playing a game completely in English is possible for her, although sometimes she has to find some word in a dictionary. Žaneta was also asked if the word she has to find in a dictionary repeats often in the game, and she concurred. The repetition is certainly beneficial for remembering the word.

The main reason why Žaneta plays games is for fun. She likes to control the characters in the game and she considers some of their reactions very funny. The idea of playing games in English lessons at school was considered by Žaneta as very good, but she stated that it might get boring, if games were played in each English class. She could imagine playing games at English lessons approximately once a week.

Interview 10

Name: Kateřina

Age: 15

Gender: Female

The next interviewee is fifteen year old girl named Kateřina. As most of the participant of these interviews, Kateřina has very positive relation toward English and she has studied it for nine years. She considers the English language as a necessity nowadays, mostly for international communication and future possibility for better job. Kateřina stated that it is better to know more languages, therefore she has also studied German for four years and Spanish for two years. Kateřina was also asked which language she considers the most important and she thought that both English and Spanish are very important, but in Europe it is mostly English.

Kateřina likes to play digital games, she thinks that modern age, filled with technology, gives people a lot of opportunities how to spent their free time and she considers playing games one of the most enjoyable ones. She plays digital games approximately four times a week, usually on computer. Although Kateřina stated English is a necessity nowadays, she mostly plays games in the Czech language. She thinks that playing games completely in English is not possible for her and because she plays in her free time, she does not want to look into dictionary to find out what her task is. She just wants to play and relax. If she would play at school, she thinks she would play the game in English, because it would not be her free time, but part of the education. She also thinks that it would not get boring to play digital games at school, if the game's genres changed sometimes.

Kateřina was also asked what helped her English outside of school and she thought that nothing. She was asked if she, for example, watches some television series or movies in English, but Kateřina replied that she doesn't, only in the Czech language.

This interview was quite interesting, because Kateřina started with her positive relation towards English and its importance nowadays, but further in the interview it was found out that she learns English only at school. Most of the preceding students were exposed to English somewhere outside of school, they voluntarily played games or watched movies in the English language. Therefore Kateřina was asked if she considers the amount of English lessons in one week as sufficient for her language skills and she agreed.

Interview 11

Name: Zuzana

Age: 16

Gender: Female

Zuzana, same as Markéta, the second interviewee, does not have positive relation towards English. She described her opinion on learning English as very negative, she does not like learning this language and languages at all. Her grades follows her statements about learning languages, she has average grades from both languages she studies - English and German. She has studied English for eight years and German for four years. Overall, Zuzana does not consider English as important for her, not even for her future job. Yet she still does not know which job she wants to do in her future.

Zuzana doesn't play digital games, because she considers it a waste of time. She could not imagine playing games at school during English lessons. When Zuzana was asked if there could be some potential for learning from digital games, for example in vocabulary, she stated that it is possible, but she doesn't know for sure.

Zuzana usually likes to read books, but exclusively in the Czech language.

Interview 12

Name: Torsten

Age: 16

Gender: Male

This interview was conducted with sixteen years old boy named Torsten. He, similarly to his classmates, has a good relation towards English and very good grades. He considers English as very important and tries to improve his level of English outside of school. He visits language courses twice a week, once for the English language and once

for the Spanish language. He also likes to travel and he usually speaks English when he is abroad. Torsten have spent six months in the USA as an exchange student and he considers it the greatest benefit to his English language skills.

Torsten likes to play games, usually Massive Multiple Online Role-Playing Games or action games. The communication in games with his teammates is not a problem for Torsten, he usually uses headset with microphone to communicate. He plays approximately four times a week and he uses exclusively the English language, because some of his teammates are his friends from America. He considers playing games as beneficial for his language skills, mostly to his vocabulary. Torsten stated that sometimes there is a word he does not understand, but he doesn't look it up in a dictionary, he tries to understand the word from context.

Except for the two things that were already mentioned, Torsten's English was also improved by watching television series in English and communicating over Skype with some of his friends from America. Torsten also considers the spread of technology as beneficial but he thinks that it depends how the technology is used, for example in education, it has to gain his attention.

Interview 13

Name: Jiří

Age: 15

Gender: Male

Second to last interviewee is Jiří. Jiří is fifteen years old and he studies English and German, eight and four years, respectively. His relationship towards English is better than towards German, he thinks that English is more valuable in modern times. Despite Jiří's opinion on English, his grades are rather average, usually 'good'.

Jiří likes to play digital games, especially action games. Same as many of his classmates, he is able to play a game completely in English and communicate with other players using in game chat. Jiří usually does not use microphone, he prefers to write a text into chat.

As the biggest benefit Jiří considers enlargement of his vocabulary and also improvement of his listening skills. Other things that helped his English are again foreign television series and movies.

Interview 14

Name: Anna

Age: 16

Gender: Female

The last respondent from the interviews is a young girl named Anna. She, as a majority of her classmates, has very good relationship towards learning languages, especially English, which she has studied for nine years. Anna has also studied the Spanish language, for four years. She considers English language as the most important, she stated that it is 'the language of the future'. Anna also thinks that she could communicate in English in almost every country in the world.

As far as digital games are concerned, Anna likes to play quite often, approximately three times a week. She likes to play for fun, but also because of the fact that in games you are allowed to do things, which you cannot do in a real life. Her favorite genre are action games and also simulations, she like to play The Sims, same as Žaneta. From action games she likes to play Assassin's Creed, which she usually plays in multiplayer mode. She plays this game completely in the English language and she also communicates with other players in English for the same reasons that were mentioned above - mostly because not all the players speak the Czech language.

Anna considers playing digital games as beneficial to her language skills, mostly in vocabulary and listening skills. She can imagine playing digital games in English classes, but she stated that they should change from time to time, so the playing would not get boring. Anna also likes to watch movies in the English language, all of these activities probably helped her grades from the English language, which are excellent.

Interview Evaluation

After completing the interviews it was visible that students have some things in common. Most of the students like to play digital games and the most common reason, why they play them, is fun. It is one of the main factors, why digital games are so entertaining for students - the fun factor. It could be discussed if students would play digital games as often as they do now, if the main target of playing would be learning.

From the interviews it can be anticipated that learning from playing games is kind of a side-effect for students, which is very beneficial for them.

Most of the students were able to evaluate some contribution of digital games to their language skills and most of the also named other possibilities how to improve their language. The most common ones were foreign television series and movies, which is again caused by the spread of the internet and technology. Students are able to watch a television series that was aired only a few hours ago in the USA.

Vocabulary acquisition was mentioned as the biggest contribution to student's language skills. Almost every student mentioned it; the second area was listening. It could be argued that digital games could help more areas of language, but the vocabulary part is the most obvious one. It is certain that while reading some tasks in English, the person is also exposed to written language.

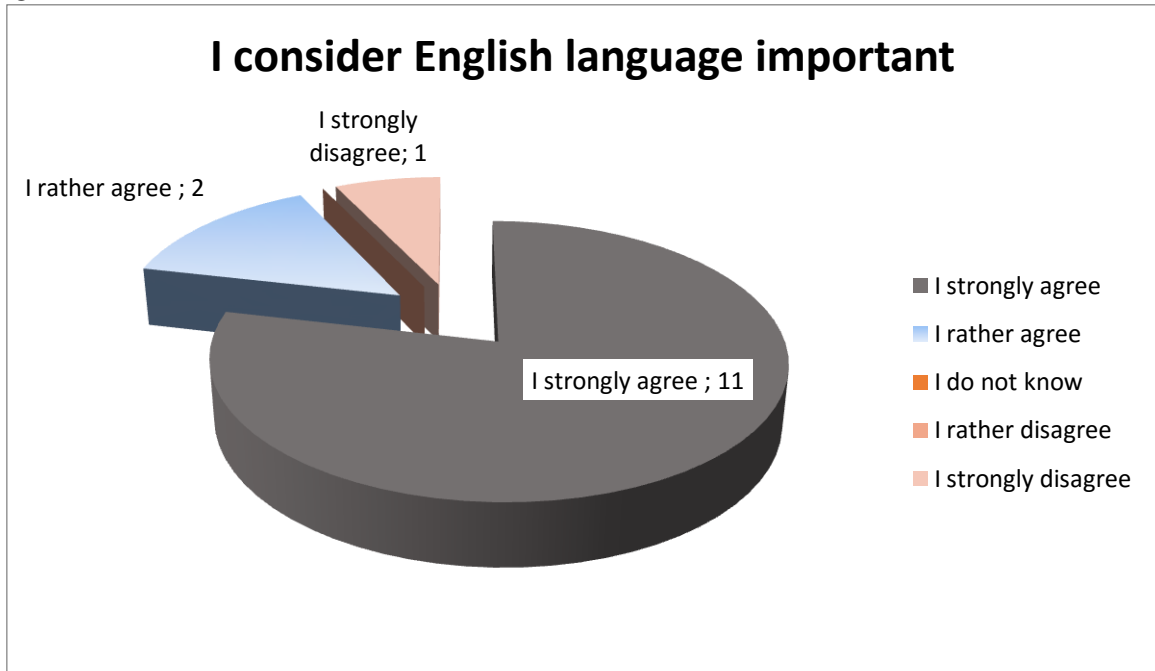
The relationship of students towards the English language was mostly positive, students are aware of the fact that the English language is important in modern times and it is also important for their future. It is a positive finding that students are exposed to English somewhere else than just at school. It is also a positive thing that students can imagine playing digital games at school, they are probably aware of its benefits. It would probably change some stereotype and bring a new element to classes.

It is also a positive fact that students are aware of the benefits of the spread of technology in the last decades. The relationship of today's teenagers towards technology is entirely positive and it is a positive thing that they are able to use this development to their benefit.

Questionnaire Analysis

In this part there are statistical data presented and commented on. The statistical data come from the short questionnaire that was given to students after the interview. The questionnaire was given to students in the Czech language and afterwards translated for purposes of this thesis. The Czech questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

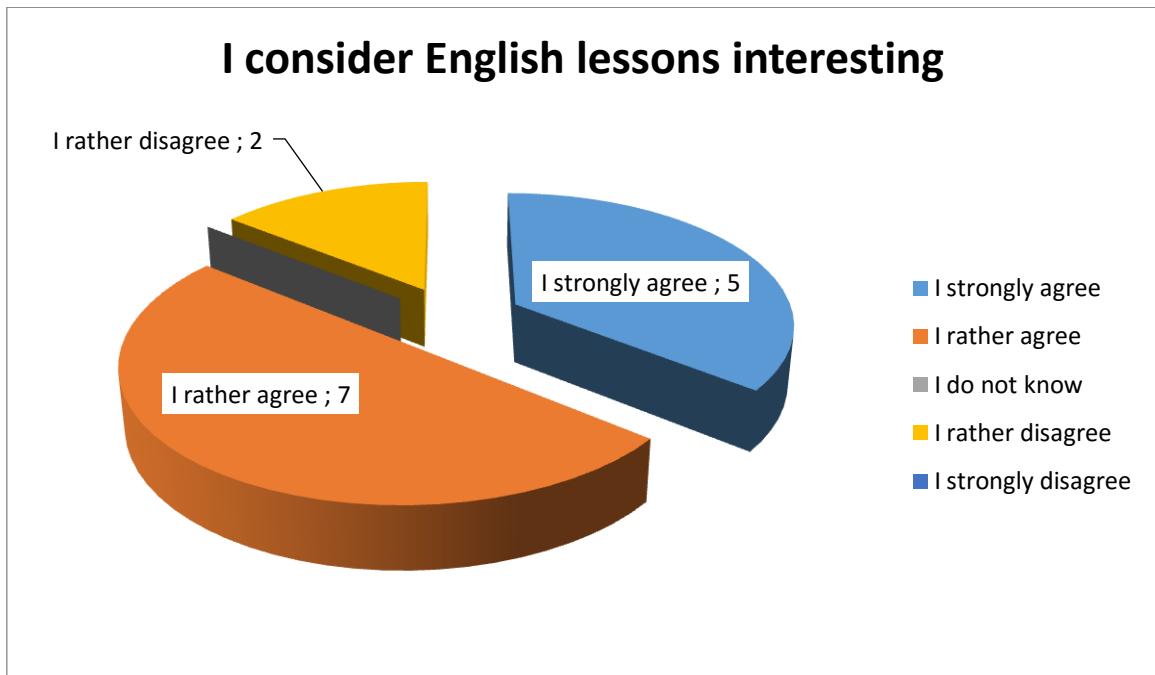
Question 1



Graph 1. I consider the English language important

The English language was considered important by the majority of the students. Eleven out of the fourteen students strongly agreed with this statement. As described in the previous section of the practical part, students are aware of the importance of the English language nowadays and they think that English will be beneficial in their future. Two students labeled their attitude towards this statement as "I rather agree", which could be caused by their interest in a different widespread language, such as Spanish. One student, respondent number 11 - Zuzana, does not consider the English language important at all. In this case, it is not caused by attributing greater importance to any other language, Zuzana does not like foreign languages in general.

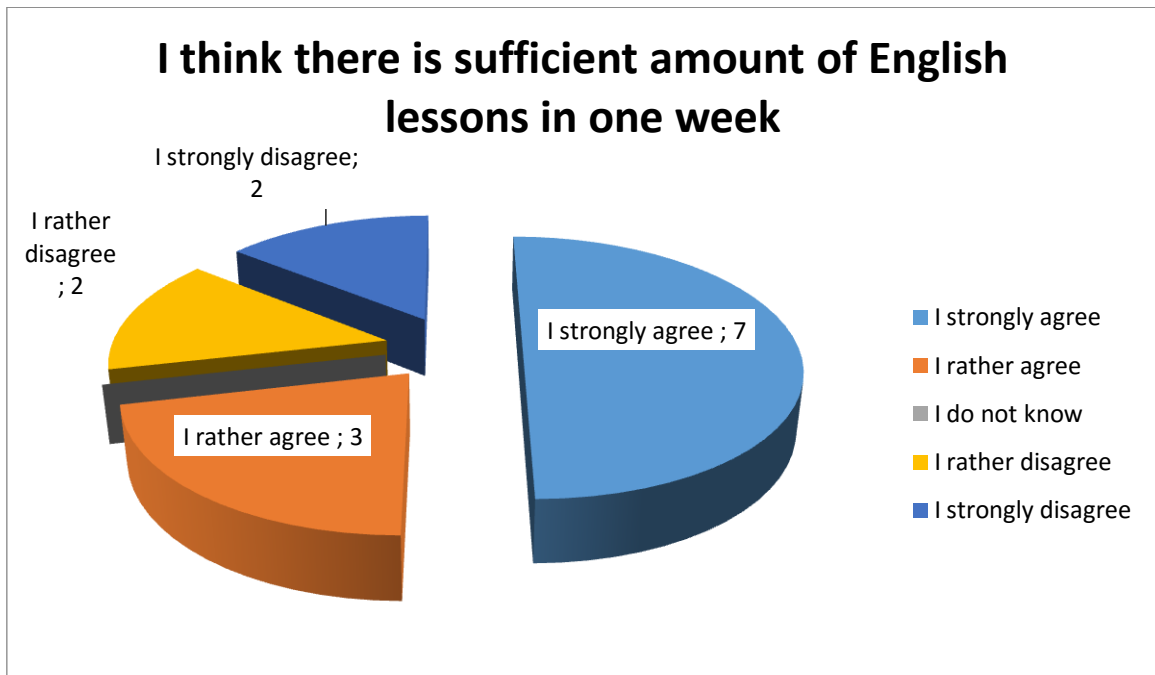
Question 2



Graph 2. I consider English lessons interesting

Answers to this statement were more diverse than to the first one. Considering that respondents were classmates, therefore the English lessons were the same for all of them, there is a significant difference in their perception. Most of the respondents marked answer "I rather agree", which indicates that they could imagine the lessons could be more interesting. Almost half of the students responded that they "Strongly agree" with this statement, which is a very good result. Only two people "Rather disagreed", but this diversity could be seen in all the classes. This answers could be caused by student's disinterest in the English language in general.

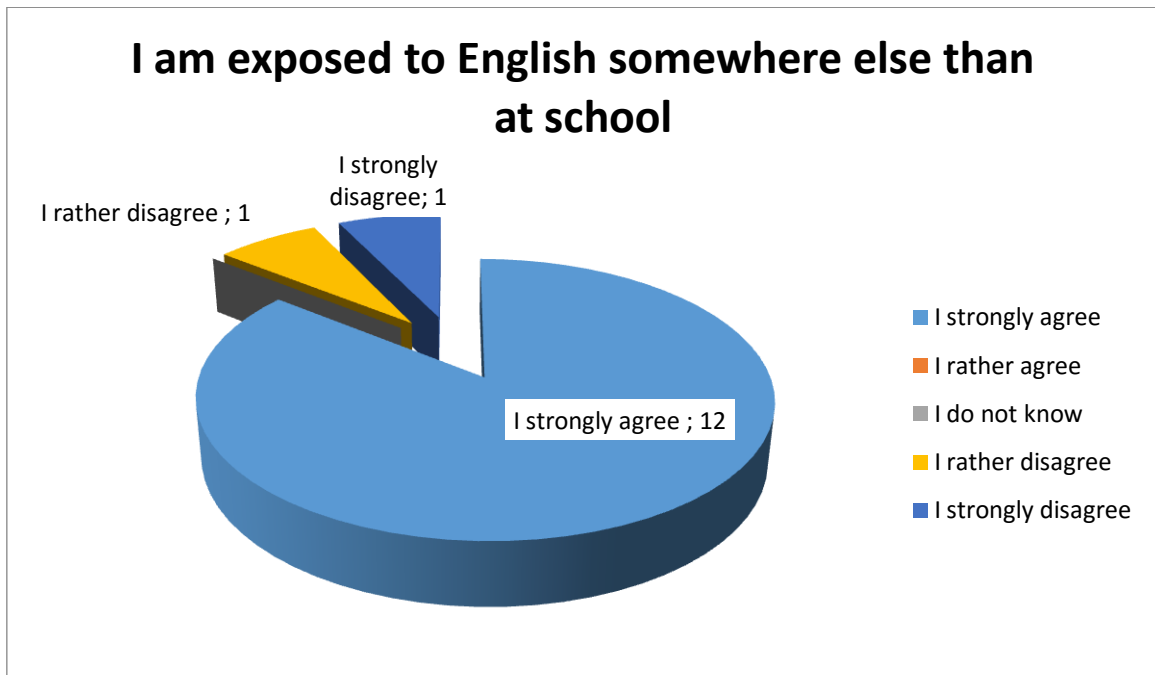
Question 3



Graph 3. I think there is sufficient amount of English lessons in one week

The results from third statement indicates that half of the respondents are satisfied with the amount of English classes in one week. Together with the answer "I rather agree" it creates majority of students, who agree with this statement. This could be caused by the fact that most of the students from this research are exposed to English even somewhere else than at school. Therefore they consider the amount of lessons sufficient, because they can deepen their knowledge of English by doing different and maybe even more fun things, such as playing digital games.

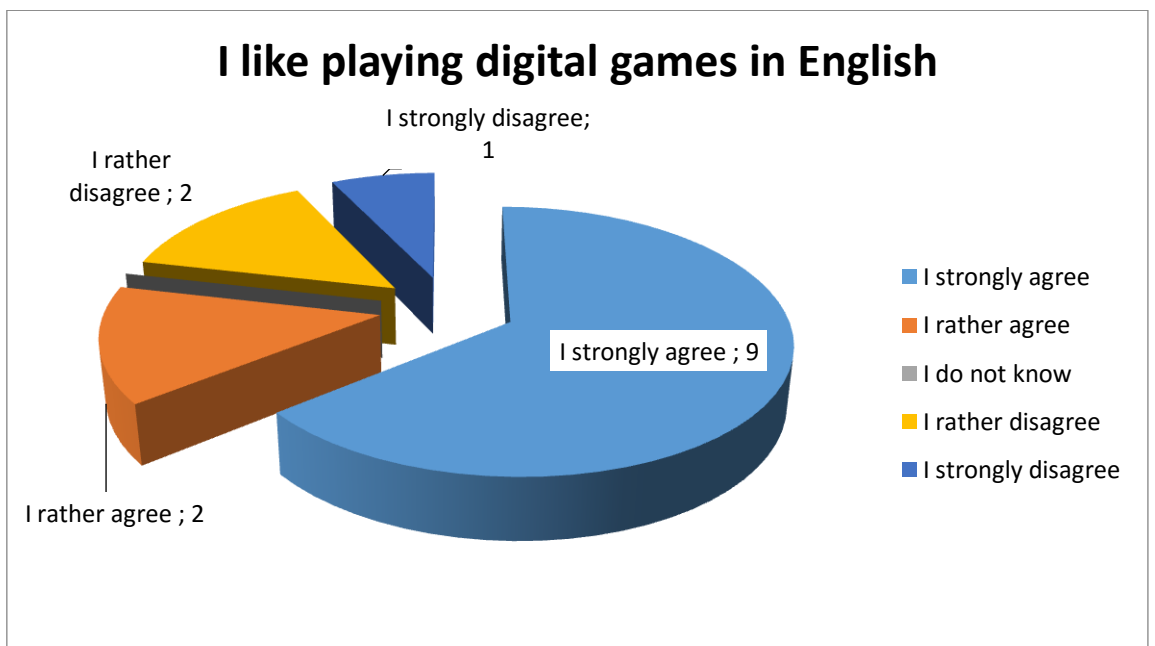
Question 4



Graph 4. I am exposed to English somewhere else than at school

This statement elaborates on the previous one; most of the students are exposed to English somewhere else than at school. It is basically their own decision to play digital games or watch English television series or movies, which are the three most common responses of how students improve their language in their free time.

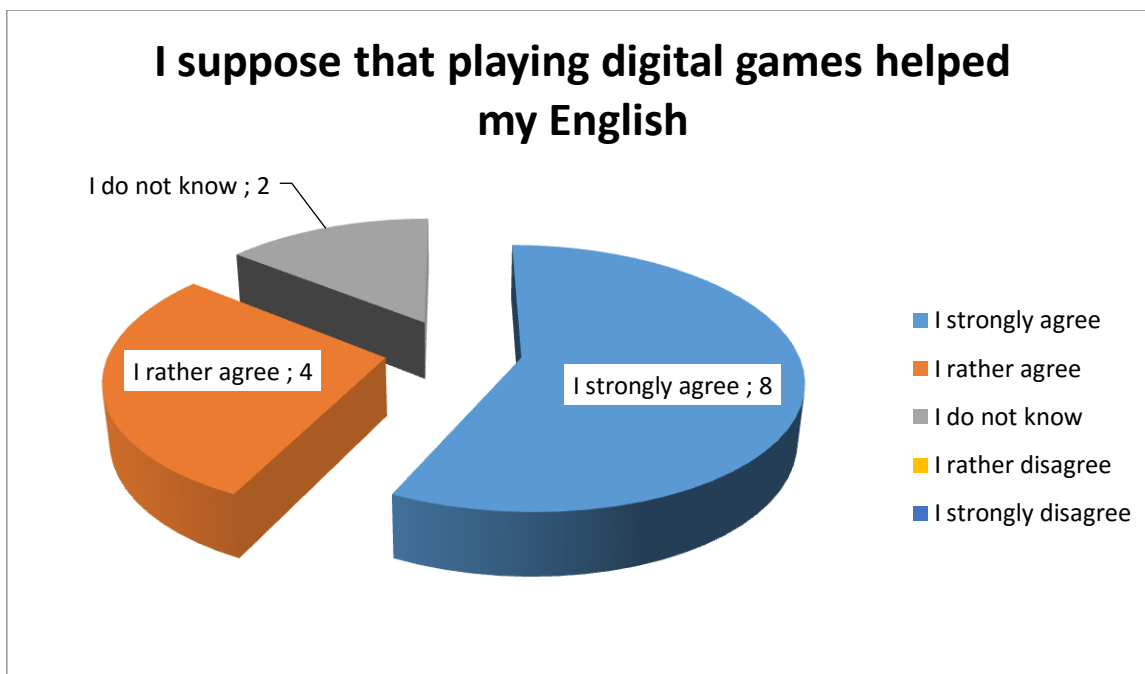
Question 5



Graph 5. I like playing digital games in English

Most of the students agreed with this statement; just three students were on the disagreeing side. These are three students who like to play digital games, but rather in the Czech language, or do not like to play at all. Most of the students strongly agreed, because playing games is fun for them and they usually play in English, which is mostly determined by the genre of the game and necessity to communicate with other players from different countries.

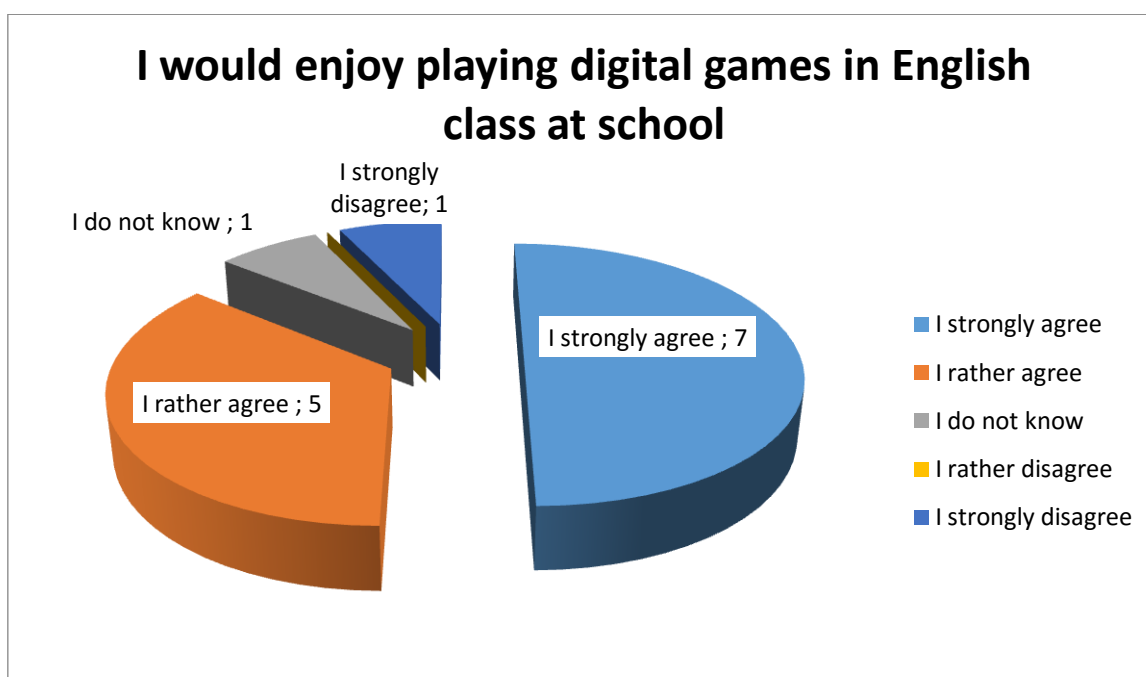
Question 6



Graph 6. I suppose that playing digital games helped my English

As also apparent in the interview section, most respondents who play digital games were able to evaluate some contribution of them. The two answers "I don't know" were from two students, who don't play digital games. Therefore overall could be stated that each of the respondents who plays games, sees a certain value of them for language learning. Mostly if the contribution was mentioned in vocabulary area, but also in improvement of their listening skills.

Question 7



Graph 7. I would enjoy playing digital games in English class at school

This was the last statement of the questionnaire. Most of the students agreed that playing games at school would be fun for them, but with some limitations. They responded that games should not be in each class and that games should change genres sometimes. This was an interesting response from the students; it could be said that students consider digital games as a complement to ordinary lessons.

Questionnaire Evaluation

The questionnaire followed the interviews to offer some statistical data. Most of the students agreed that English is nowadays important and it is a good sign that they also consider English lessons interesting, because interesting lessons certainly help their language acquisition. A majority of the students also agreed that there is a sufficient amount of English lessons in one week, which can be accounted to the fact that most of the students are also exposed to the English language somewhere else than at school. As far as digital games are concerned, most of the students like to play digital games and all of the players agree that playing games helped to improve their English skills. Majority of students also agreed that they would enjoy playing digital games at school.

The questionnaire proved the data which were acquired in interviews. Majority of students like playing games and they also agree that games helped their English skills; therefore it would be possible to use game based learning for teaching English.

V. IMPLICATIONS

As indicated in interviews as well as the questionnaire, the perception of digital games by students is very good. Their natural interest in playing games is a great motivator for students. This chapter further discusses data collected in the practical part of this thesis and describes the implications for teaching and also the limitations of this research. At the end there are also suggestions for further research.

Implications for Teaching

The results of this research demonstrate how English and playing digital games are perceived by the students. The overall perception is very good, students enjoy playing digital games. This data, collected in practical part of this thesis, can be used when designing an English lesson plan, which utilizes modern technology, such as game-based learning. Nowadays schools extend their technical and modern equipment, which is the basic premise for game-based learning at schools. Fully functioning computers and internet accessibility is one of the key issues, necessary for game-based learning.

The students are usually familiar with games and even if they do not play games for learning, which was the most common answer, this element is present. For teaching it is important to employ the element of learning as much as possible, so the learning with the help of digital games would be as useful as possible. It is also necessary for games to keep their factor of fun, which is again one of the reasons why digital games are so popular with teenagers.

The general rule that teachers should know their students applies here as well. Even if the majority of students like to play digital games, it is important to know that not all of them do. Students themselves proved in the interviews and questionnaire that learning only through games is not considered by them a good idea. They would like to play games, but only in certain amount of lessons. For teaching it would be good not to overuse this element. It would be necessary to have students looking forward to it; they should stay motivated for playing digital games. If this digital games would be used too often, students could lose interest in game-based learning.

While playing digital games, especially multiplayer ones, where the whole class could cooperate or play against each other, it is important to create safe environment. This

is an element that digital games can provide in certain different worlds and also by the electronic environment itself.

An important factor for teaching is also motivation. Because students like to play digital games, there is some possession of intrinsic motivation; they play them in their free time and voluntarily. For teaching it would be important to use this internal motivation for playing games and also add some extrinsic, external motivation. This could be in a form of contest, grade, or any other reward. Students would then enjoy one of their favorite activities and it would also have benefits for learning.

Limitations of the Research

The research that was conducted for purposes of this thesis has its limitations and some things that might have been done differently. If I did the research again and more widely, I would choose another group of respondents of a different age. Both groups could be compared together, because the group of teenagers, which I conducted the research with, were quite advanced in the English language. It would be interesting to compare their answer with younger and not as advanced students. The one thing that was surprising for me was the evaluation of games in English lessons. These students were mature enough to imply that learning only with games would get boring or it would not be sufficient. I presume that younger group would not have this kind of insight and their answers would differ.

Another limitation is the number of respondents. There is only fourteen respondents in the practical part of this thesis, which does not necessarily means that their opinion would be the same in a different group. The relatively small amount of respondents could distort the reality, although the answers were quite similar in majority of respondents.

The last limitation of the research are the questions themselves. They were prepared for semi-structured interview; therefore they are not as concrete as they probably could be, but it was to create a space for students answers, so they would not be just yes or no. Some more specific questions were added during the interview, based on previous responses of interviewed students.

Suggestions for Further Research

The suggestions for further research basically follows the limitations of the research. It would be valuable to conduct this research with a bigger group of students, to obtain more accurate insight into this matter. It would be also beneficial to conduct this research with several groups of different age categories.

Another suggestion would be to perform several lessons with the implementation of game-based learning and reevaluate the findings of this research. Students' perception of game-based learning could change if they would be in touch with it more often. Therefore the real experience would be valuable.

VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis deals with the topic of value of digital games in the English language teaching. Modern technologies can be beneficial for development of language skills, therefore their contribution was examined in this thesis.

The first part of this thesis is mainly focused on the value of digital games in language teaching. The potential of digital games for language learning was discovered quite recently and it is gaining attention of researchers. Digital games are entertaining for students and therefore they are motivated to play them. The evolution of technology can be used for educational purposes.

The practical part further explored the topic. By carrying out interviews and questionnaires among secondary school students and investigating students' perception of digital games and their potential for learning. The practical part was dealing with several hypothesis, which were connected to students' perception of digital games.

The results were optimistic, most of the students like to play digital games and they think that games are beneficial to their English skills. Students mostly saw the greatest benefit in extension of their vocabulary and listening skills. Most of the students can imagine playing games at school, but they mostly agreed that it should not be in all classes.

A majority of the students also considers the English language as very important nowadays and they like to study this foreign language. Most of the students also mentioned other beneficial things for their English language, mostly English movies and television series.

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APPENDIX A

Polostrukturovaný rozhovor

Věk:

Pohlaví:

Křestní jméno:

- 1) Jaký je váš postoj k anglickému jazyku?
- 2) Jaký je váš prospěch z anglického jazyka za poslední 2 roky?
- 3) Hrajete digitální hry?
 - a. Za digitální hru se považuje interaktivní program pro jednoho nebo více hráčů, který slouží k zábavě. Je zde ale potenciál, aby sloužil i k něčemu dalšímu.
- 4) Jak často hrajete digitální hry?
- 5) Proč hrajete digitální hry?
- 6) Hrajete hry pro více hráčů (tzv. multiplayerové hry), kde musíte komunikovat s ostatními hráči?
- 7) Jaké jazyky používáte, když hrajete digitální hry?
- 8) Je pro vás hraní hry kompletně v anglickém jazyce možné?
- 9) Když hrajete digitální hru v anglickém jazyce, stane se vám někdy, že si musíte najít nějaké slovíčko ve slovníku?
 - a. Pokud ano, vyskytuje se to slovíčko ve hře často?
- 10) Jaké cizí jazyky se učíte ve škole?
- 11) Jak dlouho se je učíte?
- 12) Považujete anglický jazyk za důležitý? Proč?
- 13) Myslíte si, že hraní digitálních her pomohlo zvýšit úroveň vaší angličtiny?
 - a. Pokud ano, v jakých oblastech nejvíce? (např. slovní zásoba, mluvení, poslech, čtení, gramatika)
- 14) Co ještě pomohlo zvýšit úroveň vaší angličtiny, kromě digitálních her?
- 15) Umíte si představit, že byste hrál/a digitální hry ve škole? V hodinách anglického jazyka?
 - a. Bylo by to pro vás zábavné?
 - b. Nemyslíte si, že po dvou měsících hraní by to začalo být nudné?
- 16) Jaké digitální hry jsou vaše nejoblíbenější?
- 17) Na jakých zařízeních se dají hrát hry v angličtině?
- 18) Považujete rozvoj technologií za prospěšný v rámci vašich jazykových schopností?

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured interview

Age:

Gender:

First name:

- 1) What is your relation towards the English language?
- 2) What are your grades from the English language from last two years?
- 3) Do you play digital games?
 - a. an interactive program for one or more players, meant to provide entertainment at the least, and quite possibly more.
- 4) How often do you play digital games?
- 5) What is the reason, why you play digital games?
- 6) Do you play multiplayer games, where you need to communicate with your teammates?
- 7) Which languages do you use, when you are playing a digital game?
- 8) Is playing game completely in the English language possible for you?
- 9) If you play a digital game in English, did it ever happen to you, that you had to find some word in a dictionary?
 - a. If so, was the word used often in the game?
- 10) Which foreign languages do you study at school?
- 11) How long do you study them?
- 12) Do you consider English language important nowadays? Why?
- 13) Do you think that digital games helped your English?
 - a. If so, in which areas mainly? (vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading, general understanding)
- 14) What else helped your English? Except digital games.
- 15) Could you imagine playing digital games at school? In English classes?
 - a. Would it be more fun for you?
 - b. Don't you think that after two months of playing games, it would get boring?
- 16) What are your favorite games?
- 17) On which devices can you play games in English?
- 18) Do you consider the spread of technology beneficial to your language skills?

APPENDIX C

Dotazník

Instrukce: Vaši odpověď zaznamenávejte vždy pod danou otázku zakroužkováním čísla na stupnici 1-5 na základě následující legendy:

1 - souhlasím

2 - spíše souhlasím

3 - nevím

4 - spíše nesouhlasím

5 - nesouhlasím

Stanoviska

1) Považuji anglický jazyk za užitečný

1 2 3 4 5

2) Považuji hodiny anglického jazyka za zajímavé

1 2 3 4 5

3) Myslím si, že v průběhu týdne máme dostatečný počet hodin anglického jazyka

1 2 3 4 5

4) Anglickému jazyku jsem vystaven i jinde, než ve škole

1 2 3 4 5

5) Rád hraji digitální hry v anglickém jazyce

1 2 3 4 5

6) Myslím si, že hraní digitálních her pomohlo zvýšit úroveň mé angličtiny

1 2 3 4 5

7) Bavilo by mě ve škole hrát digitální hry v angličtině

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire

Instructions:

Please note your answer on provided scales below given questions by circling the most appropriate number, according to following legend:

1 = I strongly agree

2 = I rather agree

3 = I do not know

4 = I rather disagree

5 = I strongly disagree

Statements:

1) I consider English language important

1 2 3 4 5

2) I consider English lessons interesting

1 2 3 4 5

3) I think there is sufficient amount of English lessons in one week

1 2 3 4 5

4) I am exposed to English somewhere else than at school

1 2 3 4 5

5) I like playing digital games in English

1 2 3 4 5

6) I suppose that playing digital games helped my English

1 2 3 4 5

7) I would enjoy playing digital games in English class at school

1 2 3 4 5

SHRNUTÍ

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem význam digitálních her ve výuce anglického jazyka. V této práci je prozkoumán přínos moderních technologií k výuce jazyka.

První část práce je převážně zaměřena na význam digitálních her ve výuce jazyka. Potenciál digitálních her pro výuku byl objeven poměrně nedávno a postupně začíná být cílem výzkumů. Digitální hry jsou pro studenty zábavné a proto jsou studenti motivováni k jejich hraní. Díky hrám může proběhnout posun motivace z vnější do vnitřní, který může být velmi prospěšný pro výuku.

Rozvoj digitálních her do škol je podmíněn nákupem moderní technologie, která by takové hraní umožnila. V práci je rovněž popsán současný stav tohoto vybavení na českých školách.

Digitální hry mohou mít několik žánrů, které jsou v práci popsány společně s jejich potenciálem pro využití ve školách. V práci je také uvedeno několik výzkumů, které se snažily prokázat účinnost hraní digitálních her pro rozvoj jazyka. Tyto průzkumy byly úspěšné. Žáci, kteří se učili pomocí digitálních her, měli větší znalost jazyka než ti, kteří se učili pomocí klasických metod.

Praktická část této diplomové práce byla vytvořena pomocí dotazníků a rozhovorů se studenty středních škol. Jejím cílem bylo zjistit vnímání digitálních her a jejich potenciálu pro výuku středoškoláků. Praktická část se zaměřila na několik hypotéz, které byly spojeny s vnímáním digitálních her u mladší generace.

Jak je z výsledků patrné, většina dotázaných studentů ráda hraje digitální hry a také je považuje za prospěšné v rámci zdokonalování se v cizím jazyce. Studenti viděli jejich největší význam v rozšiřování slovní zásoby. Většina studentů si také uměla představit hraní digitálních her přímo ve výuce, nicméně dále uvedli, že by to nemělo být v každé hodině.

Většina dotázaných studentů považuje anglický jazyk v dnešní době za velmi důležitý, proto si také jazyk sami zdokonalují. Kromě digitálních her byly další nejčastější formy zdokonalování jazyka sledování filmů a seriálů v originálním znění.