

The benefits of gaming

How some serious gamers use English and other languages while playing the online video game Apex Legends

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Apex Legends*

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Abstract

In 1977, Michael Moon, an executive at the top toy Milton Bradley Company stated that “video entertainment is just a passing fad” (Tampa Times, 1977) At the time, video games were new and exciting, but many people believed it would be another passing trend in the toy industry.

Today, people of all ages are enjoying video games on their free time, and some even make careers out of playing them. Videogames are here to stay, and they are becoming more and more of a household activity. Kids and teenagers are spending an increasing amount of time playing videogames, and more are starting at a younger age.

In this master’s thesis, I aim to find out what impact playing videogames regularly can have on a Norwegian teenager’s use of English while gaming at home. Norwegian teenagers are being taught English in school, but it is safe to assume that serious gamers spend more time playing video games in English outside school than participating in activities in English class at school. In this thesis, I am studying how serious gamers use languages while playing the online video game Apex Legends in their spare time.

To do so, I obtained screen recordings (video and voice) of a Norwegian teenager Balder (pseudonym) while playing Apex Legends with his fellow gamers in a natural setting at home. I transcribed and analyzed the screen recordings to get an understanding of how they communicated in the game.

The findings showed that Balder used English a lot. He spoke English with his fellow gamers effortlessly, and even mixed gaming terminology (gamerspeak) with Norwegian and English in a seamless way.

Implications of this master’s thesis is the indication that online gaming is beneficial for language development and awareness. This study further suggests that it might be beneficial for serious gamer to be aware of how they use English and Norwegian, in addition to Gamerspeak, how gaming influences their use of languages and how they in turn can use this awareness when using languages also in other contexts, such as in school.

Sammendrag

I 1977, uttalte Michal Moon, en toppsjef i leketøyselskapet Milton Bradley Company at «videospill er bare en forbigående trend» (Tampa Times, 1977, min oversettelse)“ På den tiden var videospill nytt og spennende, men mange trodde det ville bli nok en glemt trend i leketøysindustrien.

I dag spiller folk i alle aldre videospill på fritiden, og noen skaper til og med en karriere av å spille. Videospill er her for å bli, og de blir mer og mer en hverdagsaktivitet i de fleste hjem. Barn og tenåringer bruker stadig mer tid på å spille videospill, og de er stadig yngre når de starter å spille.

I denne masteroppgaven vil jeg forsøke å finne ut hva slags påvirkning det har på en norsk tenårings bruk av engelsk å spille videospill regelmessig hjemme. Norske tenåringer lærer engelsk på skolen, men det er rimelig å anta at seriøse spillere bruker mer tid på å spille videospill på engelsk utenfor skolen enn det de gjør i ulike aktiviteter i engelsk-timer på skolen. I denne masteroppgaven ser jeg på hvordan seriøse gamere bruker språk mens de spiller onlinespillet Apex Legends på fritiden.

For å gjøre dette har jeg fremskaffet skjermopptak (video og lydopptak) av den norske tenårings Balder (pseudonym) mens han spilte Apex Legends med to medspillere i en naturlig setting hjemme. Jeg transkriberte og analyserte opptakene for å få et innblikk i hvordan de kommuniserte seg imellom i spillet.

Funnene viste at Balder snakket mye engelsk. Han snakket engelsk med sine medspillere uten problemer, og blandet spill-terminologi (gamerspeak) med både norsk og engelsk mer eller mindre sømløst.

Implikasjoner av denne masteroppgaven indikerer at online spilling er fordelaktig for språkutvikling og språkbevissthet ved å bli klar over hvordan de bruker engelsk og norsk i tillegg til spill-terminologi, hvordan spilling kan påvirke deres bruk av språk og hvordan en slik språkbevissthet kan brukes i andre situasjoner, ikke minst på skolen.

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Thank you, mom and dad for being wonderful teachers both in and out of school. My most valuable lessons I have learned from you.

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Thank you to the school that participated in the VOGUE study and allowed me to spend time with its students, and thank you Balder (pseudonym) especially, for allowing me a sneak peek into your gaming world.

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1.0 Introduction

As a teenager, I spent quite some time helping my younger brother with his homework. He has a generalized learning disability, and had a hard time with reading and writing. Often times he would get frustrated and upset because he felt hopeless and stupid. On one occasion I had to leave the table and go cry where he could not see me, because I felt his despair so deeply. Years passed, and I moved out of the household and could no longer help with his homework or keep close track of his progress at school. One day while visiting my family, I suddenly heard him speaking near perfect English in his room. He had found a British friend online, and they played video games together while communicating through voice chat. I could hardly believe it was the same boy, speaking English at such a high level, despite still having issues with reading and writing. It turns out he had picked up video games and was playing a lot of games that required communication in English with teammates. It was then that I reflected on both his and my own positive experiences from playing video games. I too credit a lot of my language skills to video games. My father bought me games in French so I would learn when I was a child. As I grew up I started playing online video games in English in my early teens. Some of those games were online, playing with other gamers, and over time I would communicate more fluently and effortlessly in English.

Since the day I heard my brother speak English so well, I have been fascinated by how much English one can learn from simply playing video games and enjoying it as a hobby. Online video games are a great passion of mine, and they have been ever since I was a child. In this master's thesis, I aim to show the benefits of gaming, in terms of using the English language at a high level to communicate in the game.

1.1 Context and relevance

In 1997, Michael Moon, an executive at the top toy Milton Bradley Company stated that “video entertainment is just a passing fad” (Tampa Times, 1977). At the time, video games were new and exciting, but many people believed it would be another passing trend in the toy industry. However, not only in my own family, but also in research, online gaming is increasingly recognized as a source for learning languages and to offer the opportunity to use languages actively in an out-of-school environment (e.g. Brevik, 2016, 2019; Gee, 2017; Sundqvist, 2019). It has become clear that despite Moon’s predictions, gaming is here to stay, and an increasing number of people participate in online gaming communities. Today, people of all ages are enjoying video games on their spare time, and some even make careers out of playing them. Videogames are increasingly used by teenager, who are spending an increasing amount of time gaming. As more teenagers play videogames for a significant amount of time in their spare time, it is important to look at how this affects their language.

There are conflicting opinions on whether gaming is affecting Norwegian teenagers in a positive or negative way, specifically related to their use of English compared to their use of Norwegian. Research presented in 2016 by NOVA states that teenagers who play videogames more than three hours each day perform poorer in Norwegian and mathematics, but better in English, compared to non-gamers (Sletten et al., 2016). Research at the University of Oslo confirmed these findings, and suggested that teenagers who play videogames between three and eight hours each day read significantly better in English compared to Norwegian (Brevik, 2016, 2019; Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018).

1.2 Research questions

This master’s (MA) study investigates the use of languages while playing the video game Apex Legends, which relies on communication with fellow gamers, and how the game can be beneficial to the use of English. In order to do so, I will look at how a Norwegian teenager used English while playing the videogame with two fellow gamers. His use of English, Norwegian and gaming terminology (gamerspeak) will be analyzed and discussed to shed light on how he is

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actively using his language skills to in order to communicate in the game and have a successful game.

My research subject is called Balder (pseudonym). He is a 17-year old Norwegian gamer and he is playing with other Norwegians, but they are all actively using English words and sentences throughout their conversations. To answer the overarching research aim I have formulated three sub-questions (RQs):

RQ1: How much English is being spoken compared to Norwegian, during three and a half hours of playing Apex Legends among the gamer Balder and two of his fellow gamers?

RQ2: What kind of patterns can be identified during gameplay, concerning their use of languages?

RQ3: How is English used during gameplay among Norwegian gamers?

The data I have used to answer these questions are screen recordings. I have used quantitative analysis of their interaction to answer RQ1 and RQ2, and qualitative analysis of the same interactions to answer RQ3.

1.3 Thesis outline

Following this introductory chapter, I present my theoretical framework and relevant research in chapter 2, to shed light on theoretical and empirical perspectives on language use in online gaming. In chapter 3 I describe the methods used to collect and analyze the data, including sampling and research credibility. In chapter 4, I present my findings. In chapter 5, I discuss the findings in light of theory and prior research. In chapter 6, I conclude with implications of my MA study, as well as some suggestions for further research.

2.0 Theory and prior research

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework for my MA study and some relevant prior research. Due to my focus on the use of English and other languages during online gaming, translanguaging is applicable to my study. Thus, discussing translanguaging theory comprises my first section (2.1). Next, I present Gee's (2017) concept of affinity space, in which he argues that learning in a high-tech world takes place (section 2.2). To link this theoretical conceptualization to the gaming community of my participants, I then connect Gee's (2017) affinity space to the online game Apex Legends (section 2.3) and the gaming platform Twitch (section 2.4). Finally, I present relevant research on online gaming among teenagers in Norway (section 2.5).

2.1 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential" (Otheguy, Garcia, Reid 2016, p 140).

Translanguaging focuses on the speaker and their language practices of combining different languages, both in and outside the classroom. Brevik and Rindal (2020) argue that combining languages when communicating is an asset because it allows the speaker more flexibility in their communication. Building on prior language knowledge allows the learner to attach new knowledge on a basis of already understood language concepts. Teachers can employ translanguaging strategies in the classroom to build upon students existing language knowledge without depriving them of exposure to the target language, thus supporting better understanding of the target language (Brevik and Rindal, 2020).

Translanguaging is a helpful tool for pedagogical aspects as it can help the learner to scaffold their existing knowledge in a new language by using it for metalinguistic explanations and task instructions, as well as for conveying practical information. When explaining

terminology in a second language to a learner the use of translanguaging is imperative so that the learner can attach new knowledge to already existing knowledge. As I aim to find out how a Norwegian group of gamers use both English and Norwegian to communicate while playing online video games translanguaging becomes relevant to this thesis. Hornberger and Link (2012) defined translanguaging as “how bilingual students communicate and make meaning by drawing on and intermingling linguistic features from different languages” (p 240). While the Norwegian group of gamers discussed in this thesis are not bilinguals by birthright, they have been instructed and taught in English during their primary education at school, and they are immersed in English affinity spaces (see Chapter 2.2) and it can therefore be argued that they are bilingual in the extent they use English as a second language.

2.2 Affinity space

Affinity space is a term coined by James Paul Gee (2004, 2017). He is an American researcher who has worked mostly with research on literacy, video games, and learning. An affinity space is primarily defined as a space for anyone interested in solving certain sorts of problems (Gee, 2017, p 150).

“For many gamers, their gaming room at home is connected not only to the virtual spaces of the games themselves but also to other interest-driven Internet sites where they discuss, learn about, and teach about the games they play.” (Gee, 2017, p 150).

An affinity space can therefore be a space, virtual or physical, for anyone interested in video games. Many video games revolve around solving problems, and many games are played online with and against other players. There are also a wide arrange of games that are played in teams fighting other teams, or teams fighting an adversary within the game. In such cases, communication among other participants in the same affinity space is crucial to achieve the goal of a collective team. Popular online games such as Overwatch, Apex Legends, Valorant and Fortnite all rely on communication between players of the same team. These games all have built in voice communication within the game that the players can choose to participate in.

Information about the enemy teams' whereabouts and strategies are shared in such voice communication, as well as information about the players' teammates. The gamer can choose to participate in communication with teammates through voice chat; either by talking and listening, by only listening, or by typing in the chat box that all same-team players can see. This allows the gamer to pick their preferred mode of communication, or opt out altogether if they so choose. However, it is much easier to win team-based games when the players communicate with their teammates.

In addition to simply playing the game itself it is not at all uncommon for a gamer to consume several forms of media about their favorite games. The affinity space the gamer belongs to therefore extends far beyond the actual game itself.

2.3 Apex Legends

In addition to simply playing a game, it is not at all uncommon for a gamer to consume several forms of media about their favorite games. The affinity space the gamer belongs to therefore extends far beyond the actual game itself. The game Balder and his fellow gamers played in the recordings obtained through the VOGUE study, is called *Apex Legends*. It is a high intensity battle-royal style game that is fought in teams of three players against all the other teams in the game. Communication between the team members is crucial because *Apex Legends* is a fast paced game. *Apex Legends* has a built in chat box where players on the same team can communicate, as well as a microphone-option if the players wish to communicate with each other that way. There is also an option to mute players if they should not want to communicate. The only communication in the game happens between the teammates on the three-player teams. At the beginning of each round, the players drop out of an aircraft and they land on a large island. The players then need to gather resources, referred to as "loot" in gaming terminology. Loot may be different types of armor, guns, ammunition, medicine and bandages. The players use English terms mostly to refer to these loots or items. Communicating to each other where items can be found and reporting on enemy locations is done throughout the game as there is always better loot to be found, and enemy players are a danger to the team.

In order to be good at playing Apex Legends, the gamers might be said to participate in an Apex Legends affinity space. Figure 2.1 is an example of what an affinity space centered on the game *Apex Legends* might look like.

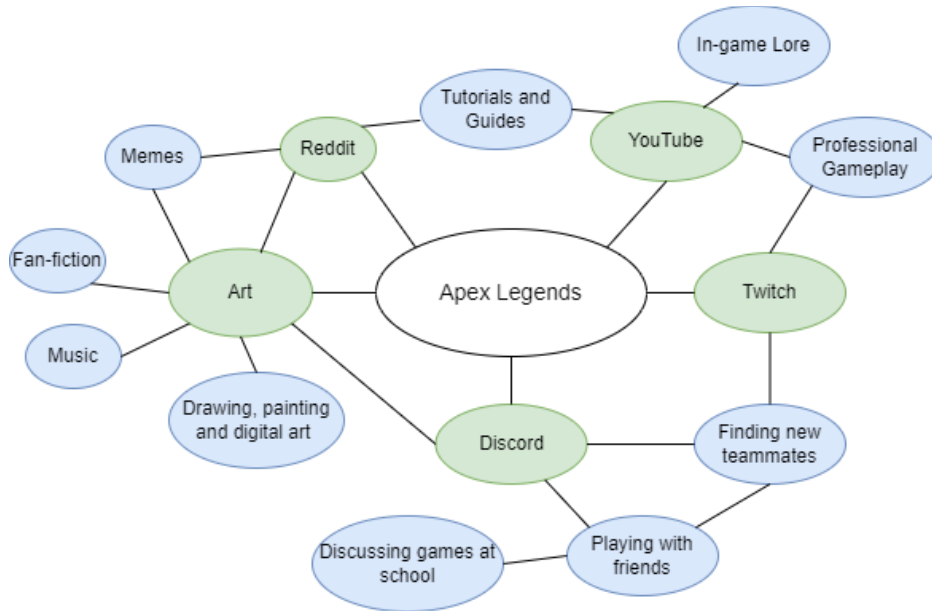


Figure 2.1: Example of an affinity space chart for gamers who are interested in the game Apex Legends.

YouTube: Gamers who enjoy one game in particular, such as Apex Legends, will often spend time in surrounding affinity spaces depending on what they are looking for. Should they want to improve their skills within the game they are likely to look up guides and *tutorials* online, in the form of a YouTube video. On *YouTube* they can find instructional videos on professional gameplay for practically any video game, and in all categories. If they want to learn how to aim better, there is a video for that. If they want to know what the best weapons are at the moment there is another video for that. In figure 2.1 the example of in-game lore is provided, which refers to the background story of different aspects of the game. Apex Legends on surface level is just a first person shooter game, but the game also contains a lot of background information on various characters and locations. YouTube is a good source to find such content,

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as official game-lore is public there, as well as fan-made speculation videos about characters and locations within the game.

Reddit and Twitch: If the gamer prefers written text that is also readily available, for example on the forum-giant *Reddit*. In addition to guides and tutorials on *Reddit* and *YouTube* it is also very helpful to watch a talented gamer, for example on *Twitch* where gamers livestream themselves and their chosen game where they demonstrate their professional gameplay. More often than not they will also provide commentary and analysis of the gameplay as it is happening live. *Twitch* also represents a virtual space where gamers can find new teammates by communicating with like-minded gamers in open chatrooms.

Discord and Art: *Discord* is a site and application made for communication. You can speak to and chat with your friends, or even find new communities and new teammates to play games with. There is a server for almost any game, and users can enter said servers and chat and make friends and connections, not only outside school, but also at school. The creative gamer might enjoy looking at and making *art* centered on a game and its universe. Whether it be memes, paintings, digital art, *Photoshop* drawings, music or fan-fiction, they can be sure to find room for it in the *Apex Legends* affinity space.

These affinity spaces align with what *Gee (2017)* refers to as an activity ecology: “Any one activity has a place in the whole set of related activities. Let’s call the whole set an *activity ecology*” (*Gee, 2017, p. 63*)

2.4. Twitch

In *Figure 2.1*, *Twitch* is mentioned as one of the core sub-spaces of the *Apex Legends* affinity space. *Twitch* is a streaming platform that was originally meant for streaming gameplay to viewers in real time. It has similarities to *YouTube*, with the biggest difference being that *Twitch* relies heavily on the interaction between the viewer and the streamer, as it is all happening live. The streamer broadcasts their gameplay to viewers, who in turn interact with the streamer in real time, using a chat box. The streamer also sees the chat box and interacts with their audience by responding orally to the audiences’ written messages. These days, *Twitch* has evolved to

incorporate more categories than just gaming, but gaming is still the most popular category. Two common ways of communicating on Twitch are “gamerspeak” and emotes:

“Gamerspeak – The odd collection of sub-languages of English that define the worlds and mechanics of various tabletop, console and computer roleplaying games. Most of these sub-languages are indecipherable by someone who has never hear of or has not played the game.” (Urban Dictionary, 2013¹).

While the term *Gamerspeak* has not yet been officially recognized by the likes of Oxford dictionaries, it is a term that has been around for years and was submitted to Urban Dictionary in 2013. Urban Dictionary is an online dictionary where users can submit new words and definitions. It is a reliable source for looking up definitions of new and obscure words, often born on various corners of the internet.

In addition, there are several emotes that are used uniquely on Twitch. The emotes are used by the viewers to quickly and effectively express their emotion and reaction to what is taking place on the stream. The emotes are typed out, but transform into images when you send it in the chat box. The emotes are heavily associated with the meaning they convey, and every emote has a specific meaning and a time for when they are most useful. Figure 2.2 illustrates some of the emotes used on Twitch.



Figure 2.2 Twitch emotes

From the left in Figure 2.2 is *4Head*, which is an emote depicting a smiling man, it is used when expressing a self-evident fact, typically introduced by the word *just*. *Comonbruh* is another emote from Twitch, and is typically used to signify that a possible racist statement or

¹ <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Gamerspeak>

occurrence has taken place, and the emote is questioning the situation. *FeelsBadMan* is used to express the feeling of sadness or discomfort, and is one of the many faces of Pepe the frog. *LuL* is another emote from Twitch that depicts a laughing man, and is used to signify that something is amusing. Another example is *Pog*, which is typically used to convey excitement and positivity. *Pog* is an emote that looks like an exited mouth. It is a zoomed-in version of *PogChamp*, which is an emote that shows a full sized face with an exited facial expression. *WeirdChamp* is an emote depicting the same man as in the *PogChamp*-emote, except in this one he is looking straight into the camera and judging the onlooker. It is typically used to signal that someone is doing something weird and/or questionable.

The main use for emotes in a Twitch chat box is to express a feeling, an action, a mood, or a facial expression. There is also a third party browser extension called BTTV, short for Better Twitch TV which enables the streamer to add more emotes to their chat boxes, thus giving their audience more ways of expressing themselves using these emotes.

Twitch and emotes are of relevance to my MA thesis, as throughout the recordings of Balder and his fellow gamers, there were various mentions and references to what I would categorize as “Twitch-language”. They are regularly sounding out words that would transform into emoji’s that are only found to on Twitch, where they are referred to as the “emotes” mentioned above.

Although emotes used on Twitch are usually only used there actively, but I have found in my transcriptions that Balder and his fellow gamers are actively sounding out what is a written emote (Figure 2.2). Balder and his teammates sometime sound out the emotes at appropriate times. This demonstrates that they are active users of Twitch as they are familiar with the emotes used there. In other words, it is fair to assume that Balder and his teammates are well acquainted with these emotes and what they mean. When they sound them out loud rather than typing the actual emote, they convey meaning and context quickly and effectively without actually saying a lot. They most likely do this because it is understood between them that they all know and understand the meaning of for example “pog” (Figure 2.2), thus demonstrating that they all belong to the same affinity space which is Twitch.

As shown in Figure 2.1, Twitch can be considered a sub-space in the Apex Legends affinity space. Within the Twitch sub-space there are other affinity spaces associated with

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individual streamers, indicating in line with Gee (2017) that an affinity space comprises several sub-spaces, and where one affinity space (e.g. Twitch) can be a sub-space in another affinity space (e.g. Apex Legends). Because the Twitch streamer is in control of the game streamed, content created and emotes used in their individual chat, this results in a unique culture associated with each stream. Balder and his fellow gamers made a few impersonations of popular streamers while they played, as illustrated in the extract below:

Balder: Men da fikk du bare femten

Friend1: Ja. What is this trash! Fix the game! [DrDisrespect imitation]

Balder: It sucks playing this shit! Heh.

Friend1: But I'm addicted, aren't I.

Balder: Love him or hate him.

Friend2: T1.

This example demonstrates that they are acquainted with at least two streamers from Twitch: DrDisrespect and Tyler1. By sharing inside jokes from the respective communities, they also demonstrate that they are under a mutual understanding that they are all a part of the same affinity sub space within the larger Twitch affinity space.

2.4 Review of prior research

In this section, I present prior research that has inspired this MA study. The following studies are relevant for the use and learning of English while playing video games, and pertain to Norwegian learners both in and outside of school.

2.4.1 English use outside the classroom

Brevik (2019) published a study on how serious gamers learned English through video games and how it benefited the serious gamers in the classroom. It was discovered that amongst the around 10 000 students in Norway there was a group of around 500 students that stood out in their English reading skills compared to their Norwegian reading skills (Brevik, Olsen, and

Hellekjær, 2016). These students had a higher reading comprehension in English than in Norwegian. The 500 students were mainly students in vocational subjects, and the majority were boys. This led to questioning why these students had a higher reading comprehension in their second language compared to their first language. A study was thus conducted where these students were interviewed, and questioned on their use of English outside of school. It was found that the students in question spent a lot of their free time playing online videogames, as well as consuming popular media in English such as movies, series, music and comic books.

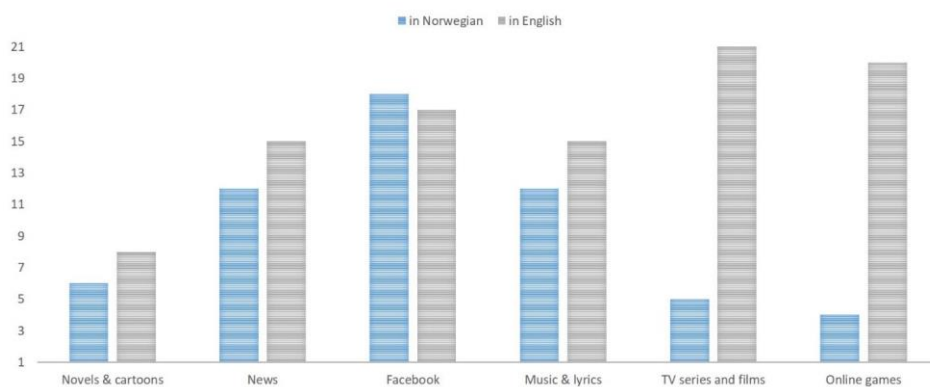


Figure 2.3 Upper secondary students' interaction with English text outside of school (Brevik, 2019, p. 6)

Figure 2.3 illustrates the amount of hours spent in one week at the respective activities. The blue is an estimate of hours spent reading Norwegian text compared to the hours spent reading English text in blue. It became clear from the study that the students who used English in their free time did so because they enjoyed doing so, and not because of an academic plan to learn English. Three groups were identified; those who spent most time consuming social media, those who spent most time surfing the internet, and those who played video games between three to eight hours per day. These gamers often work in teams to solve problems together, which means they have to employ reading, speaking and listening to English in order to achieve their goals. It is this category of gamer this MA study focuses on.

A study on how serious gamers applied their English skills in the classroom was published by Pia Sundqvist (2019). The aim of the study was to examine the relation between

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playing video games and English learning, by comparing serious gamers' vocabulary with non-gamers' vocabulary. The project ran over three years, with data collected from 16 different classes from nine different schools in total. The data acquired included vocabulary tests, questionnaires, productive and vocabulary level tests, national test essay, national test scoring profiles, and student interviews. It was concluded that the types of games played by the research subjects were tied to their time spent playing video games. The examination of data acquired revealed that gamer' average solution rates were significantly higher at all tested vocabulary levels, in addition to excelling at words that were notably difficult (Sundqvist, 2019).

3 Methodology

In this chapter, I will present the methodology that I used to gain information about a particular student's English usage when playing a video game online with friends. The information I collected was made possible by the VOGUE project, which I will present first (3.1). I then describe the sample used for my research (3.2), including the Covid19 influence (3.2.1), and the focus student chosen for my thesis (3.2.2). Further, I describe the data material (3.3), including the data collection procedure (3.3.1), followed by data material processing and analysis (3.3.2). Finally, I discuss research credibility (3.4), including validity and reliability (3.4.1) and ethical considerations (3.4.2).

3.1 The VOGUE project

I was invited to be part of the research project VOGUE (*VOccational and General students' Use of English in and out of school*) by the project leader, Lisbeth M Brevik. During the school year 2019–20, the VOGUE research team conducted a case study at an upper secondary school, and collected qualitative data (videos, screen recordings, texts and interviews) and quantitative data (surveys, logs, test scores and grades) among teachers and students in and outside of school. The study received approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), and teachers and students provided written informed consent. My role as part of the VOGUE research team has been as responsible for the collection of student screen recordings at home during online gaming in the autumn of 2019 (see Beiler et. Al., 2021). Drawing on prior studies (Brevik, 2016, 2019; Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018), Brevik sampled a large vocational school with a wide range of study programs for this study.

My purpose for participating in the VOGUE project was to collect data for my master's (MA) thesis. The VOGUE project was introduced to MA students who participated in the EDID4102 course *English in and out of school*, and because we were few students on the course, we were all invited to be co-researchers in the study in all its stages (see Brevik & Holm, in press). My responsibility was to collect data about students' online gaming at home, among vg2 students

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who identified themselves as serious gamers, and to my knowledge, this is the first time a project like this has been approved among adolescents at this age in Norway.

3.2 The VOGUE Sample

This VOGUE study followed four vocational classes in two school years (vg1 and vg2, ages 16-17). Among these classes, my goal was to obtain recordings of gamers playing with voice communication in order to study how they used language while gaming (Beiler et al., 2021). Many teenagers are serious gamers, so we decided to recruit some of the participants in the VOGUE study to provide screen recordings from gameplay at home. Recruiting the gamers for the overall VOGUE study to provide these additional data was perhaps the most difficult stage of this study, because it can be hard to recruit teenagers to participate in a project where they have to do extra work at home for seemingly no reward. I sat down with about 20 potential participants and managed to recruit four of them in the end. There was originally a fifth gamer who wanted to participate, but he unfortunately fell ill right before the study began, so I did not obtain any recordings from him. My own knowledge of games is what I believe made this possible, as it was hard to connect with the teenagers at first. It wasn't until they picked up on the fact that I am genuinely interested and love gaming myself, that they opened up and welcomed the idea of providing screen recordings from gaming. My interaction with the gamers at school was always pleasant, they were all polite, funny and nice teenagers. It became clear to me that my own knowledge of the activities they enjoyed, particularly online gaming, made this part of the study possible. I believe it would have been a lot more difficult to recruit more gamers or any at all if I was considered an outsider to them.

3.2.1 The Covid19 influence

Regrettably, I will only be analyzing recordings from one of the gamers that participated in this study. As I was transcribing the recordings from the first gamer, the Covid19 pandemic caused the university to shut down as a safety measure. At the time, I only had access to one of the four

sets of recordings. This situation enabled me to study the data from this gamer in more detail, instead of waiting for access to the remaining data when the university opened up again. Although the three other gamers took time out of their day to accommodate me and this study. However, as the recordings are still part of the VOGUE project, the VOGUE researchers will use them in their research. I did review all the footage at the university before the lockdown, and I know that there are very interesting data in those recordings.

3.2.2 Focus student: Balder

For my MA study, I selected data from one of the serious gamers, Balder (pseudonym), at the vg2 level. Balder is Norwegian with Norwegian parents. He was a student in one of the participating vg2 classes, a vocational class consisting of boys only. Balder and his classmates all played games during breaks at school, which I was able to observe in the classroom during the VOGUE data collection.

At a time when I thought I would transcribe footage from all four gamers, I chose to transcribe and analyze Balder's recordings first, after viewing all the footage, because Balder was one of the more vocal gamers. I could deduct from the reviewing of all the recordings that Balder's recordings might be the most interesting ones to analyze with regard to my thesis. He played a high-intensity game, *Apex Legends*. As mentioned, *Apex Legends* is played in teams of three, with everybody against everybody, and the last team standing are the winners. Because this game is very competitive and intense, it is critical that the gamers communicate with each other in order to perform well and possibly win the game.

Balder played with the same group of friends in every recording, which also made it easy for me to relate the screen recordings from consecutive evenings. His fellow gamers, who he played with both verbally and in written chats, agreed to be a part of the project, they consented to their gaming being recorded, and that these recordings would be viewed by me and other VOGUE members (see Beiler et al., 2021). It became apparent from the recordings that Balder had briefed his teammates about the study and that they were always aware of being recorded and consented to participation (NESH, 2019). While the gamers in Balder's screen recordings are all Norwegian, they frequently spoke English. They also frequently used terms and words

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heavily connected to gaming culture, which was another reason why I thought it would be most interesting to start with these recordings. Fortunately, there is a lot of good data and interesting findings in Balder's recordings, so despite working with less data than planned, I felt confident that there was more than enough interesting information to be found in these recordings.

3.3. Data material

The gamers were instructed how to record the gameplay from home using OBS Studio, which is a software that allows you to video record your computer screen as well as your voice, and the voice of those you play with (Beiler et al., 2021). The software also allows the gamers to mute and unmute whenever they like, as well as pausing and restarting the recordings. In line with the VOGUE procedures, I recorded a video tutorial to instruct them in how to install the OBS Studio software on their computers at home, including written instructions of how to conduct the recordings in line with privacy regulations (Beiler et al., 2021). See Figure 3.1.

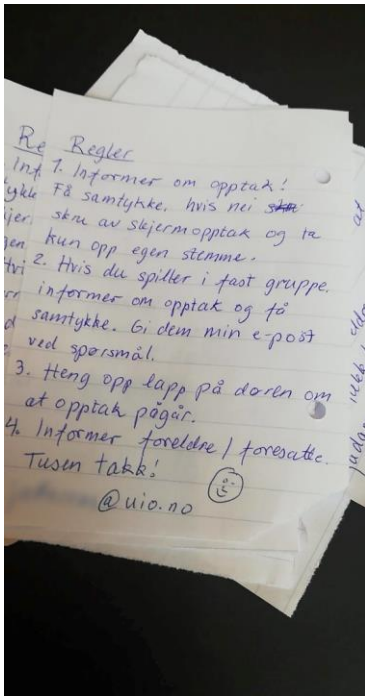


Figure 3.1 Written procedures to the participating gamers recording sessions to secure the privacy of the fellow gamers (Beiler et. Al., 2021, p.252)

As shown in Figure 3.1, the participating gamers were instructed in writing to follow four procedures: (1) to inform their fellow gamers that they intended to record the gaming session, and if they declined the session being recorded, the participant was instructed to turn off the video recording and record own voice in the headset instead, (2) to inform their fellow gamers of the recording, similar to the first procedure, and also to offer an e-mail address to the VOGUE team, if a fellow gamer had any questions, (3) to place a note on the outside of the door to their room to remind their family members that they were recording their gaming session, to make sure family members were not recorded, and (4) to inform their parents/guardians about their participation in the VOGUE study.

3.3.1 Data collection procedure

At school, the gamers were given encrypted USB-flash drives to take home, and they would return them to school the next day with whatever recordings they had made the previous day, if any at all (Beiler et al., 2021). I would then collect the USB-flash drive and give them a blank one. In order to protect the gamers' identities and ensure that their personal data could not be accessed by anyone outside of the VOGUE study, I travelled to their school every day for two weeks to collect their files in person. This continued for the duration of the study, and at the end I had collected 23hours and 6 minutes of raw footage from the four gamers. The four students who ended up participating in the study all played different games on the recordings they submitted.

To guarantee the privacy of the gamers involved in the study I went straight to the university with the USB-flash drives after collecting them. The USB flash drives were encrypted and password protected. The recordings were transferred to the *Teaching Learning Video Lab* (TLVlab) at the university. Only the participants in the VOGUE study had access to the recordings. The recordings were then stored on the VOGUE project area on a secure server at the TLVlab.

Because I had such a large amount of data to transcribe originally, I was granted special privileges in the form of a secure university laptop. The laptop was password protected, it could not be connected to the Internet and no one but me had access to it. This was to ensure that any and all personal information about the gamers was not released to anyone.

3.3.2 Data processing

The recordings I had access to on the university laptop were all from Balder, and it consisted of 3 hours and 21 minutes of primarily Apex Legends footage. I used the software InqScribe to transcribe the recordings from Balder's gameplay in order to analyze what was being said in the recordings. InqScribe is a software that allows you to view whatever recording you are transcribing, and you can make shortcuts called "snippets" to organize and make the process more time efficient (Beiler et. al., 2021). I used the snippets to mark who was speaking (i.e.

Balder or his fellow gamers) and inserted timestamps. InqScribe also makes it easy to pause and play, and I made a few personalized snippets to rewind by 5 or 3 seconds at a time in order for me to re-listen to what was being said. Because there was a lot of background noise coming from the game, it was difficult at times to hear every word the gamers uttered. Varying volume levels on the gamer’s microphones also made it challenging to hear everything that was said. Balder in particular, had a rather low audio level on his microphone. However, most of the utterings that were unintelligible to me seemed to be him mostly mumbling to himself, and therefore I do not think I missed out on any deciding findings in those utterances.

3.3.3 Data analysis

I used the transcriptions to conduct my analysis. I used deductive code (REFERENCE) to identify patterns of language use according to six categories (Table 3.1)

Table 3.1 Categories for data analysis

Category	Explanation	Example from transcription
1. English words and phrases	Words and phrases in English in Norwegian utterances. Each word has a Norwegian counterpart outside the gaming world.	Men, jeg kom meg fra, eh, 60 til 70 ganske fort uten å egentlig fokusere på <i>challenges</i> .
2. Gamerspeak	Gaming words primarily associated with the game Apex Legends or the gaming culture in general	Det er en <i>pathfinder</i>
3. Suffix	A collection of English words with Norwegian suffixes.	Du jeg hadde sånn fem skudd, i slutten av den <i>fighten</i>
4. Norwegian verb tenses	English verbs with norwegian verb tense used.	For da <i>dropper</i> jeg <i>shotgunen</i> .

5. English only	Whole utterances in English	<i>What are you doing in my swamp?</i>
6. Full exchanges in English	Exchanges between the gamers in full English utterances.	<i>I got the pathfinder emote. Pog. So do I. I'm not proud. Oh yeah, you do? What level are you.</i>

3.4 Research credibility

In line with the VOGUE procedures (Beiler et al., 2021), the footage I obtained through Balder and his fellow gamers was entirely recorded at his discretion, and he had the option to pause the recording at any moment. He also had the opportunity to cut any unwanted footage from the recordings if he so wished. However, the footage obtained from Balder is without cuts and pauses, so the footage is unaltered and authentic. The conversations between Balder and his fellow gamers is natural and does not seem very affected by the recordings. They comment on the recordings at times, so they are aware that they are being recorded and that someone will review the footage later, but it does not seem to impact them in any major way. Balder and his friends curse freely and talk about somewhat private matters unaffected by the recordings.

One limitation of the recordings is that the audio is sometimes hard to transcribe. At times there is heavy gun-fire sounds from within the game that overpowers the sound of the voices of Balder and his fellow gamers. As mentioned, Balder sometimes mumbles to the point where his voice is impossible to hear, but this is typically in very short segments and does not severely impact the integrity of the transcriptions. The goal of the data collection was fulfilled, namely to obtain authentic recordings of upper secondary school students as they were playing games at home.

To anonymize the gamers in the recordings, I chose to use a student code provided by the VOGUE study throughout the transcriptions, to avoid confusion in later stages. I decided to use the pseudonym Balder in this thesis. The pseudonym was also provided in the study, so that any MA student or researcher using data concerning this participant would use the same pseudonym

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for transparency reasons. Because Balder played with two friends primarily, they were labelled Friend1 and Friend2.

The footage I obtained from Balder was authentic because he was casually playing with his friends like he normally would. Balder and the friends he was playing with were all aware they were being recorded and sometimes discussed participating in the study, but it never seemed to influence the way they spoke or behaved in the games. They made jokes and quips at each other and there was no point where it seemed like the project interfered with their normal behavior. I therefore consider the footage to be authentic with regards to how well it captures voice communication between fellow gamers who play games outside school.

3.4.2 Ethical considerations

Recording screen-footage and voice communication in a Norwegian student's home of this age has to my knowledge not been done before in this capacity. The VOGUE project obtained permission to do so by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) because of the ethical considerations taken within the project (Beiler et al., 2021). Participation in the study was voluntary. The participating gamers all signed written consent forms that ensured their privacy, as well as ensuring them that no one outside of the VOGUE study would have access to the data files (Beiler et al., 2021). In addition to this, I talked to the gamers about my MA thesis and that I would transcribe what they said, but maintain their anonymity. The gamers expressed interest in my thesis and were happy to be a part of it.

The game footage was viewed by me before officially submitting it to the study to ensure there was no unnecessary personal information about any of the participants that made it into the VOGUE database. All names were coded with individual student IDs and pseudonyms, and the fellow gamers in particular all knew they were being recorded for the project and all verbally agreed within the recordings to be recorded. Any time Balder started a recording he would state it to his teammates, and they would verbally agree in the beginning of each recording. Personal information that was discussed was cut out of the recordings and the transcriptions. With these measures I am confident that all ethical considerations have been made (NESH, 2019).

4.0 Findings

In this chapter I will present my findings from the transcriptions of the gameplay recorded by Balder. The screen recordings clearly indicates that Balder and his fellow gamers have played *Apex Legends* together before and are comfortable communicating to each other about where to loot (find items) and where to look out for enemies. Balder and his two teammates are speaking over Discord instead of using the built in voice communications in the game, as this allows them to keep talking to each other both in the game and in-between rounds while they are waiting to find a new game. I have included findings from the two fellow games because they gave permission to be a part of this study, and because it is important to study the back-and-forth interaction between Balder and his teammates to get a full picture of the communication between them.

After transcribing all the gameplay-footage, I arranged my findings into the six categories presented in the methods chapter (Table 3.1). The first category is “English words and phrases”, and it contains what Balder and his teammates said in English within a Norwegian utterance (4.1). The second category is “Gamerspeak”, and it contains words primarily associated with the game they were playing or gamer culture in general (4.2). The third category is a collection of English words that Balder and his teammates gave Norwegian suffixes (4.3). The fourth category is the use of verb tenses on English verbs (4.5) The fifth category is whole utterances in English only (4.4). The fifth category is mixed sentences, where Balder and his friends used Norwegian and English words and terms to create a mixed sentence (4.5). The sixth category is back-and-forth English between Balder and his teammates (4.6). A final finding relates to the affinity space that the gamers participated in (4.7).

4.1 English words and phrases

Balder and his teammates mixed English words into their Norwegian utterances. These words are separate from the Gamerspeak words (see 4.2) because they all have a Norwegian counterpart outside of the affinity space of online gaming and gaming culture, that could have been used. Instead they chose to use these English words and phrases, and they did so repeatedly during the online gaming recordings in *Apex Legends* (table 4.1)

Table 4.1 Single English words (or phrases) in Norwegian utterances and their frequency (number of times they occur in the transcriptions)

Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Advanced	3	Funny	4	Racial slurs	1
All right	12	Good content	1	Rant	1
Anyway	1	Hacker	5	Recoil	2
Attacked	1	Heals	2	RIP	8
Attachments	1	Health	3	Rude	2
Average	2	Healthbar	1	server connection mistake	1
Backpack	12	Highground	3	Shadowplay	1
Badges	1	Holy	15	Shield	66
Banter-like	1	Insanely fast	1	Shotgun	8
Basically	5	Instantly	2	Shotgun bolts	1
Big boy	1	Kid	2	Silence	2
Bitrate	3	Kills	10	Skins	1
Broken	6	Lag	37	So good	2
Buddy	3	Launchpad	1	Squad	31
Casual	1	Legend	2	Stats	2
Challenges	3	Loader	1	Super smooth	1
Close	4	Loot	23	Tactical abilities	1
Complete silence	1	Low	13	Team	10
Damage	17	Maybe	3	Tier	1
Decent	2	Mid-air	2	Timing	2
Disgusting	1	Motherfucker	1	True	3
Early start	1	Movement	3	Underrated	1
Easy	9	Never mind	3	Unplayable	1
Enemy	1	No	18	Useless	4
Facts	1	Of course	2	Voice chat	1
Fair	1	On default	1	Whack	4
Fight	20	On point	1	Yeah	1
Fighting	2	Ouch	1	Yes	45
Finish	9	Perhaps	2	Yolo	3
Fishy	1	Quantum performance	1		

(Please note that the “racial slurs” category represents the actual term “racial slurs”)

As shown in table 4.1, some of these words and phrases were used quite frequently, such as *sield* (66), *lag* (37) and *squad* (31). Other words and phrases were used more seldom. The following extract illustrates a typical interaction between Balder and his two teammates, where they used English words or phrases (in *italics*) in otherwise Norwegian utterances:

Example 4.1 – English words and phrases

Friend 2: Jeg så på sånn *pathfinder advanced movement guide*, skal se om jeg får til noen fete ting.

Balder: På en skala fra 1 til 10, hvor *advanced* var det her da? Var den *guiden*?

Friend 2: Hvor-

Balder: Hvor *advanced* var den *guiden*.

Friend 2: Det var sånn, forklare teknikkene bak *movement* med *grapplinghooken*.

In this interaction, they used both infrequent words (e.g. *advanced*, *movement*), Gamerspeak (see table 4.2) and English words with Norwegian suffix (see table 4.3).

4.2 Gamerspeak

In the transcriptions there were 109 different words used that I categorized as Gamerspeak (see chapter 2). Some of these words would be recognizable outside of a gaming context, but they are included in this list because they are directly linked to the game Balder and his teammates were playing.

Table 4.2 Gamerspeak found in the transcriptions:

Words	Frequency	Words	Frequency	Word	Frequency
4Head	2	<u>Flyern</u>	1	Pog	17
AFK	3	Flex	6	PogU	1
<u>Ammo</u>	26	Fragga	1	Push	31
<u>Arcstar</u>	1	Gg (good game)	4	Pro	6
<u>AVP</u>	1	<u>Hackerman</u>	1	<u>Ranked</u>	14
<u>Bangalore</u>	5	<u>Hammer point</u>	7	Salt	1
Big brain	6	Hardcore flex	1	<u>Scope</u>	4

<u>Bigshield</u>	7	<u>Havoc</u>	6	<u>Select fire</u>	4
<u>Bloodhound</u>	7	<u>Hit-reg</u>	1	<u>Skin</u>	7
Broken	6	<u>Kill leader</u>	1	<u>Skullpiercer</u>	5
Carepackage	1	<u>Krager</u>	3	<u>SMG</u>	1
<u>Caustic</u>	2	League	3	<u>Sniperscope</u>	1
Clapped	1	<u>Light ammo</u>	7	<u>Sniperstock</u>	1
comonBruh	2	<u>Lightmag</u>	2	<u>Spitfire</u>	1
Cover	1	<u>Longbow</u>	5	<u>Squad</u>	31
DansGame	1	<u>Loot</u>	23	Stardew Valley	3
<u>Death box</u>	2	Lul	5	TI (Tyler1)	1
<u>Devotion</u>	4	<u>Mastiff</u>	7	Tap	1
Dibs	6	<u>Medkits</u>	4	<u>Thunderdome</u>	1
<u>Digital</u>	2	Meds	4	Toxic	3
<u>Disruptor</u>	5	<u>Minimap</u>	1	<u>Tripplecharger</u>	1
Drop	30	<u>Minmaxing</u>	1	Tryhard	4
<u>Extended heavy mag</u>	1	<u>Mirage</u>	1	<u>Turbo charge</u>	1
<u>Energy mags</u>	1	<u>Nade</u>	9	Twitch	4
<u>Eventgame</u>	1	<u>Noscope</u>	1	<u>Ult (ultimate ability)</u>	6
<u>Extended heavy mag</u>	1	<u>Octane</u>	6	<u>Wattson</u>	2
<u>Extended light mag</u>	1	<u>Pathfinder</u>	30	WeirdChamp	1
<u>Extended mag</u>	1	<u>Peacekeeper</u>	3	<u>Wingman</u>	9
Ez clap	1	<u>Phoenix</u>	3	<u>Wraith</u>	17
<u>Fast heal</u>	2	Ping	20	Yeet	3
Feels bad (man)	6	<u>Pinkshield</u>	1	Yoink	13

Several of these words are emotes that originated and are being used on Twitch, but Balder and his teammates spoke them out loud. *Pog* was used regularly by Balder and his fellow gamers, a total of 17 times during the three and a half hours of footage. It is an abbreviation of the emote PogChamp which split into several different emotes (see chapter 2). They are all essentially used to express amazement, enthusiasm or excitement.

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A total of 53 out of the 93 words I identified as Gamerspeak (see underlined words) are directly tied to the game *Apex Legends*. Most are names of different types of weapons, ammunition, abilities and characters within the game. Other words that are directly tied to gaming but not necessarily to this specific game are *loot*, *meds*, *ammo*, and *headshot*. These are broader terms that will be found in most first person shooter (FPS)-games and are not exclusive to *Apex Legends*.

Example 4.2 – WeirdChamp (Twitch emote)

Balder: *All right, we launch solo.*

Friend 2: *That's, that's a WeirdChamp.*

Example 4.3 – Pog (Twitch emote)

Friend 2: Ei, det har jo ikke vært folk her da, **pog**.

Friend 1: *Very nice.*

The two examples show that the gamers use Gamerspeak effortlessly in their utterances alongside English and Norwegian.

4.3 Norwegian suffix

Balder and his fellow gamers used a lot of English words and terms during the screen recordings, but they also added Norwegian suffixes to some the English words they used. The English words they added Norwegian suffixes are verbs or nouns and often times words I categorized as gamerspeak.

Table 4.3 English nouns with Norwegian Suffix in cursive

Singular		Plural	
Indefinite	Definite form	Indefinite form	Definite form
	<i>Accounten</i>		
	<i>Appen</i>		
	<i>Badgen</i>		
	<i>Banneren</i>		
	<i>Bitraten</i>		
	<i>Challengen</i>		
	<i>Chatten</i>		
			<i>Deathboxene</i>
	<i>Displayet</i>		
	<i>Fighten</i>		
	<i>Gameplayet</i>		
	<i>Gamet</i>		
	<i>Grapplinghooken</i>		
	<i>Guiden</i>		
	<i>Hackeren</i>		
	<i>Kill-leaderen</i>		
	<i>Kill-statsen</i>		
	<i>Lifeline-droppet</i>		
	<i>Lifelinen</i>		
		<i>Medkitsa</i>	
	<i>Octane-skinnet</i>		
	<i>Pathfindern</i>		
	<i>Pingen</i>		
	<i>Popupen</i>		
	<i>Prowleren</i>		
	<i>Recoiln</i>		
	<i>Reddit-linken</i>		

	<i>Shotgunen</i>		
		<i>Squadsa</i>	
		<i>Streamere</i>	
	<i>Wraithen</i>		
		<i>YouTubere</i>	

Table 4.3 shows how the Balder and his teammates correctly added Norwegian suffix to the respective English nouns. This allowed them to incorporate English nouns and gamerspeak into Norwegian utterances and still use correct Norwegian grammar to accommodate the utterances to make complete Norwegian sentences.

4.4 Norwegian verb tense

Balder and his teammates used English verbs within Norwegian sentences, and they used the Norwegian verb tenses while doing so (see table 4.4). One such word is the verb -drop – to drop something.

Table 4.4 English verbs with Norwegian verb tense.

Infinitive	Present	Preterite	Perfec
		Aimet	
Baile			
	Blamer		
			Blæsta
			Calla
	Camper		
			Charga
Choke			
			Clappa
			Cracka

	Dibser		
Droppe	Dropper	Droppet	Droppa
	Fighter		
	Finisher		Finisha
Flame	Flamer		
			Fragga
			Fucka
			Grappla
			Heada
Heale	Healer		
	Hipfirer		
Hitte	Hitter		Hitta
Hotswappe			
	Inspector		
			Instakilla
Kitte			Kitta
	Knocker		Knocka
	Lagger		Lagga
Leave	Leaver		Leava
			Locka
Loot	Looter	Lootet	
Noscope			
Pinge			
Pushe	Pusher		Pusha
	Resser		
	Revealer		
	Reviver		
Shielde			Shielda
		Snipet	Snipa
Spectate	Spectater		Spectata

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Surfe			
Switche	Switcher		
Turne			
Yoinke			
Zipline	Zipliner		
Trenche			

Example 4.4 – Norwegian verb tenses for the English verb *drop*.

Balder: Bare, vi må holde inne den greia for å droppe solo. Du veit det ikke sant?

Friend 2: For da dropper jeg shotgunen.

Balder: Det verste airdroppet jeg har sett på lenge.

Balder: Han droppa, ja der.

The above examples are not one full exchange, but single sentences where they used the verb *drop*. Within *Apex Legends*, *drop* refers to the act of jumping out of the aircraft that all players begin the match in, before they *drop* out of the aircraft onto the map where the fight begins. It also refers to removing items from the inventory, thus *dropping* it on the ground.

4.5 Whole utterances in English only

Despite their mixing of English, Norwegian and Gamerspeak, Balder and his fellow gamers sometimes spoke English in full utterances while playing *Apex Legends*.

Example 4.5

Balder: Dem er så jævla ræv I dag, ass.

Friend 2: *Hammer point. Lul.*

Balder: *Ah yes, let me just shield mid air. And get rewarded for it. 4Head.*

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Example 4.6

Friend 2: *I need it.*

Balder: Jeg *dibser* den der. *Fuck* deg. Heh. *And if you touch I kill you.*

Friend 2: Ok.

Example 4.7

Balder: *Are you not gonna use the shields at all?*

Friend 1: Åh faen, fikk *shield* ja, hehe. Jeg hadde *shield*, okei greit. *I guess.*

Friend 2: *Certified bro moment.*

Example 4.8

Balder: *Knocka bloodhound.*

Friend 2: *Pog*, jeg *healer*. *Pusher* du den siste og?

Balder: Jeg tar langt bak – jeg *pusher* langt bak.

Friend 2: *Pathfinder! Super low, super low.*

Balder: Jeg bruker *phoenix*, var såpass *low*.

Friend 2: Hvordan –

Balder: *GG easy.*

Friend 2: Jaja, *we take notes.*

Balder: *Take notes.*

The above examples from the transcriptions of the screen recordings illustrate how Balder and his fellow gamers used English sentences mid-conversation. The English words are in italics and full English utterances are underlined.

4.6 Full exchanges in English

At times Balder and his teammates would communicate in full English utterances for an entire interaction, as illustrated below.

Example 4.9

Friend 2: *You're too slow, fuck you!*

Balder: *Do you have heals, friend 2?*

Friend 2: *Yes I do.*

Balder: *Okay, buddy. Har du noen meds?*

Example 4.10

Friend 1: *All right ja? Did you call me a bitch?*

Balder: *Mhm.*

Friend 1: *Wow rude, all right, bye.*

Balder: *Haha. Får du quea du da bare.*

Friend 1: *I can leave.*

Balder: *I can kick you.*

Friend 1: *I can rename myself after you, oh wait, I did.*

Balder: *Haha. I'm hanging myself.*

Friend 1: *Nice. Time to buy fifty devils.*

Balder: *Heh*

Friend 1: *Totally worth.*

Example 4.11

Balder: *Wow, tempest is gay has entered the game.*

Friend 4: *Ah yes.*

Balder: *“Did you just call me gay, huh? Boy?”* (Doing an impression)

Friend 4: *Hehe.*

Balder: *Bitch, the fuck.*

Balder: *Ah yes look at that heirloom, I spent way too much money.*

Friend 4: *Hehe.*

Balder: *Dab dab dab* haha.

Friend 4: *Aah, life decisions. Yes.*

Balder: *Ah, worth. Jeg brukte ikke over ett tusen sju hundre kroner.*

Example 4.12

Friend 3: *So, no one actually planned on telling me we jumped? No?*

Balder: *No.*

Friend 2: *Eh, no.*

Friend 3: *Okay boys. Thanks for the heads up, yeah.*

Balder: *I hope that’s ok.*

Friend 3: *No, I planned on doing something you know, in the eyes of actually seeing where I landed, but, whatever.*

Balder: *Æh, imagine seeing where you’re landing.*

Example 4.13

Friend 3: *I got the pathfinder emote.*

Balder: *Pog. So do I.*

Friend 3: *I'm not proud, oh yeah, you do? What level are you.*

Balder: *Eh hva var det a, åttifire.*

The above examples illustrate how Balder and his fellow teammates switched over to using full English utterances effortlessly and without further comments on their sudden use of English only. The utterances were all directly linked to the game *Apex Legends* and whatever was taking place within the game or about the game.

4.7 Affinity space

Throughout Balder's gaming-session with his teammates several references to their gamer affinity spaces surrounding the game *Apex Legends* were made. I identified references to *YouTube*, *Twitch*, *Memes*, a movie, other video games than *Apex Legends*, and a song. There were also several direct references to me as Balder and his fellow gamers were aware I was going to view and analyze their screen recording.

The following example illustrates how Balder and his fellow teammates discussed a video that instructed the viewer on how to use the character *Pathfinder* in *Apex Legends*' movements, as he is a character unique in using special abilities to move around the battlefield.

Example 4.14 – YouTube guides (same as example 4.1)

Friend 2: Jeg så på sånn *pathfinder advanced movement guide*, skal se om jeg får til noen fete ting.

Balder: På en skala fra en til ti, hvor *advanced* var den her da? Var den *guiden*?

Friend 2: Hvor-

Balder: Hvor *advanced* var den *guiden*.

Friend 2: Det var sånn, forklare teknikkene bak *movement* med *grapplinghooken*.

Example 4.15 – YouTube, Twitch, and in-game knowledge

Friend 2: Det er sånn, *no joke*, hver gang jeg ser på sånn *YouTubere* og *streamere*, *hipfiren* dems er en jævla laser, og så er det min da som bare pffpff.

Balder: *I guess, you're gonna have to crouch*. Det pleier å funke. Når jeg tar og *hipfire*. Og så tror jeg du må ta sikte lengre ned, enn du tror. Fordi når, av en eller annen grunn, når jeg *hipfire*, så er *crosshair* plassert lengre opp enn det jeg trenger.

Example 4.16 is a reference to two separate Twitch personalities that Balder and his fellow teammates know about from watching Twitch, whereas examples 4.17 and 4.18 are more general references to Twitch.

Example 4.16 – Twitch streamers

Friend 1: Ja. *What is this trash. Fix the game!* (DrDisrespect [Twitch personality imitation])

Balder: *It sucks playing this shit!* Heh.

Friend 1: *But I'm addicted! Aren't I.*

Balder: *Love him or hate him.*

Friend 2: T1. (Tyler1, Twitch personality).

Example 4.17 – Twitch

Balder: Åh, *kill-leaderen* er en *Twitch-kid*.

Example 4.18 - Twitch

Balder: Åh, jævlig, jeg er *Twitch streamer*, åh jeg er kul, åh *fuck off*.

The following exchange is referencing a viral video of a shirtless man standing up and telling his video camera “*Hey Girl. I know we couldn’t skype tonight, but that’s all right*” before falling backwards and disappearing out of frame. Friend 2, Friend 1 and Balder are all referencing this same video in this exchange.

Example 4.19 – Meme reference

Friend 2: *Hey girl. I know we couldn’t skype tonight, but that’s all right.*

Balder: Hehe *fire kills*.

Friend 1: *See you tomorrow.*

Balder: Hehe. Og så bare faller han ned. *Hell yeah.*

Example. 4.20 – Movie reference

Balder: *What are you doing in my swamp?*

This is a reference to the animated movie *Shrek* (DreamWorks, 2001). It is famous for its comic moments and a lot of scenes and characters from the movie series have become separate memes on the internet. This specific example refers to when the main character *Shrek*, an ogre, steps out of his house and finds his swamp crowded with strangers. In the next examples, Balder and his teammates are referencing video games.

Example 4.21 – Stardew Valley

Friend 2: Lurer på hva hu dama hadde sagt hvis du bare, eh, sendte inn masse *footage* av *minmaxing* i *Stardew Valley*.

Example 4.22 - Overwatch

Balder: Du vet i Overwatch, sånn man kan endre, eh, farge på, hva heter det, i displayet, går det an her og?

Example 4.23 – World of Warcraft

Friend 3: Er dette WoW (World of Warcraft)? Er det derfor folk *finisher*?

Example 4.24 – Brawhalla

Friend 3: Ja, *I know*, 'cause *I've had, I tried Brawhalla and I know*.

Example 4.25 – Smash bros

Friend 3: *I'm gonna be fucking* klein, det kommer til å være Smash Bros bare verre.

Example 4.26 is referencing a song by *MAGIC!* named "*Rude*" (released in 2014).

Example 4.26 – Song reference

Friend 2: *Rude*.

Friend 1: (singing) *Why you gotta be so rude?*

Balder: Ikke minn meg på den a.

Example 4.27 – Awareness

Balder: *Pog*.

Friend 2: *Pog, pog*. Vi burde ha sånn dere eh, sende med sånn dere, hehe, sånn ark hvor det star sånn begrep, så hun [me as the MA student researcher] forstår hva som skjer.

Balder: Hehe.

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Friend 2: Så når vi sier *pog*, så

Balder: Håper hun finner ut det. Men hvis han ikke svarer, så,

Friend 2: *Pog pog pog, 5Head.*

Example 4.27 demonstrates that Balder and his teammates are aware that they were using terms and words that would not be understood by anyone who is not a part of the *Twitch* affinity space.

5.0 Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss my findings from Chapter 4 in light of theory presented in Chapter 2. I will then answer the initial questions presented in Chapter 1.

5.1 Translanguaging

The effortlessness in which Balder and his fellow gamers switched between English and Norwegian throughout their gaming sessions supports the theory that they are using translanguaging when communicating with each other. In table 4.1, I presented the findings of English words or phrases found while transcribing the screen recording. For example, the most frequently used word was *shield*, with 66 instances, which suggests that Balder and his fellow teammates preferred the English word over the Norwegian word “skjold”, which was used 19 times during the screen recordings.

In sum, the most frequently used English words and phrases following *shield* (66), were *yes* (45), *lag* (37), *squad* (31), *loot* (23), *fight* (20), *no* (18), *damage* (17) and *low* (13). With the exception of *yes* and *no* these words are all directly linked to the game they are playing. *Shield* is important within the game because the players need it to survive and win the game, and it is a valuable *loot* because it can dictate whether a player lives or dies in an encounter with enemy players. It is also an item that decays within the game when the player sustains damage from enemies, and thus needs to be replenished or exchanged for a new *shield*. The communication surrounding the word *shield* thus demonstrates the in-game knowledge of Balder and his fellow teammates and the importance of communicating to each other the status of their *shields* and where to find new ones or replenish their current one. Their language use therefore seems to be much more than simply selecting one language and not another.

Other examples further justify this interpretation, for example the words *lag*, *squad* and *loot*, which appear as relevant in-game terms. *Lag* is another term used frequently by Balder and his fellow teammates as they sometimes experience lag when they play *Apex Legends*. They would therefore typically comment on whether there was little or a lot of lag during their gameplay, and this word could not easily be exchanged by a Norwegian word, simply due to the

gaming context. Similarly, the word *squad*, which was used 31 times during the three and a half hours of screen recordings, is of special note as the Norwegian word for *squad*, “lag”, was not used a single time. While it is hard to conclude the exact reasoning behind this, a plausible answer is that the word *squad* is engrained within the game. *Apex Legends* is played in *squads* of three teammates versus the all the other *squads* of the game. Throughout the games Balder and his fellow teammates would report and communicate to each other about the enemy *squads* locations, health status and how many *squads* were remaining in the game.

Loot was used frequently as well, as Balder and his fellow teammates communicated to each other where *loot* could be found, and what *loot* they had obtained throughout the game. To have successful games and heightening the chances of winning a round, Balder and his fellow teammates regularly reported on their equipment and weapons, their *loot*. They also communicated where valuable *loot* that the other teammates might need was located.

Based on these findings, I would argue that although language awareness very much comes into play in these situations, these gamers also demonstrate context awareness, which is highly valuable in a global multilingual world. In addition, their use of Gamerspeak is highly relevant for any aspect of work life, where people are expected to use terminology relevant for the profession. I would argue that the gamers’ use of Gamerspeak can be compared to the use of terminology in work life, and to a certain extent prepare them both for future work and higher studies.

5.2 Affinity space

Balder and his fellow teammates’ use of Gamerspeak to communicate in the game, also demonstrates that they all belong to the same affinity spaces surrounding *Apex Legends*. Not only do they use Gamerspeak directly related to *Apex Legends*, such as *Pathfinder* (30), *Wrath* (17) and *ammo* (short for ammunition) (26), but also more generalized Gamerspeak that could apply to a variety of video games. *Ranked* (14), *push* (31), *drop* (30) and *squad* (31) are other terms that are used in a wide range of video games, but will most often be relevant in online video games where players fight each other.

While the above mentioned Gamerspeak terms tie Balder and his teammates directly to the affinity space surrounding *Apex Legends*, there are also various examples found in the transcriptions that tie them to the surrounding affinity spaces of *Apex Legends* as well (see figure 2.1). There for example are direct mentions of consuming content on YouTube and Twitch. One time, Friend 2 tells Balder and his other teammates that he has watched a *pathfinder advanced movement guide* (see example 4.14) and that he wants to find out whether he can apply the knowledge obtained from watching the instructional video on YouTube to the game in order to improve as a gamer. Friend 2 also mentions watching YouTubers and Twitch streamers and observing their *hipfire* (discharging the gun within the game without lifting the weapon and taking aim) and commenting on how they make it look easier than it is (see example 4.15). Interactions such as this one demonstrate that the gameplay is not an isolated space, but a sub-space connected to other sub-spaces.

In addition to a clear indication that Balder and his teammates belong to a YouTube affinity space, there are also several direct mentions of Twitch in their interactions, through impersonating and mentioning Twitch streamers (see example 4.16), which again testifies to the relevance of considering language use during gameplay as related to other spaces in their immediate social context. In addition to the direct mentions of Twitch, Balder and his teammates frequently use Twitch emotes within utterances, which could be seen as another language resource within a translanguaging lens. *Pog* (17), *FeelsBadMan* (6), *LuL* (5), *4Head* (2), *cmonBruh* (2) *PogU* (1), *DansGame* (1), *Ez Clap* (1) and *WeirdChamp* (1) are all emotes that originated on Twitch (see figure 2.2). Balder and his teammates used these terms within their utterances effortlessly, demonstrating that they all belong to the Twitch affinity space. The only time the use of these words was explicitly commented on by Balder and his teammates was when they realized that the use of these words might mean nothing to someone who did not belong to the Twitch affinity space (see example 4.27). In example 4.27 the gamers directly mentioned me as the MA student researcher and said that they should provide me with a list of words so that I could understand the meaning behind saying the word *pog*. This demonstrates that they are aware of their use of words that belong to a certain affinity space, and is in itself evidence of the language and context awareness the gamers concerning their language use

In addition to the game *Apex Legends* Balder and his fellow gamers reference five other video games during the screen recordings. *Overwatch*, *World of Warcraft*, *Brawhalla* and *Smash Bros* are all games that are played online versus other players. *Stardew Valley* is the only video game mentioned where the player primarily plays alone, as a multiplayer feature was only recently added.

The use of Twitch emotes in speech is also an example of how to interpret the language use among Balder and his fellow teammates within a translanguaging lens to identify how they communicate effectively by drawing on various languages within the same affinity space. Since the Twitch emotes all have specific meaning and situational or contextual use, it is an effective and quick way for them to convey what they are feeling. The most frequently used term, *pog*, is a term of excitement and happiness, and Balder and his fellow teammates use it whenever something good occurred within the game or as a response to something that was said (see example 4.3). Together, these interactions are further evidence of the ever expanding gaming world that these gamers participate in, and the way their participation and communication in such spaces helps develop language awareness and possibly also their language repertoire or resources.

5.3 English use outside the classroom

Interestingly, Balder and his fellow gamers do not discuss their use of English at school within the classroom, and neither do they comment on their use of English outside the classroom. There was however an exchange taking place at the beginning of their first screen recording about the recordings where they discussed whether they had to speak English during the screen recordings as they knew it was to be used in an English study. Friend 1 said he hoped that they would not have to speak English only, and Balder confirmed that I had not instructed them to specifically speak English. However, an English utterance from Friend 2 happened four seconds later, and it was not commented on by Balder or the other teammates that he had indeed spoken English. This could be an indication that Balder and his fellow teammates did not like the idea of being *forced* to speak English as part of a research assignment, but that as soon as they started playing

the game together they used both Norwegian and English, and also Gamerspeak, in their conversation effortlessly.

There were also several instances of Balder and his teammates using full English exchanges (see examples 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13) before using mainly Norwegian utterances with English words and terms and Gamerspeak intermingled. All the examples of using full English exchanges were directly tied to the game *Apex Legends* and what was taking place within the game. This might indicate that Balder and his fellow teammates are so comfortable with the game and its mechanics that they instinctively use English to communicate certain aspects of it as it is the language used within *Apex Legends*. In addition to the players of the same team communicating verbally with each other, there are also numerous voice lines within the game that communicate the status of the game avatars and their surrounding environment. This means that Balder and his fellow teammates are constantly receiving information in English about their performance in the game. These examples are indications that choice comes into the situation when English is used outside the classroom, specifically for online gaming. These findings could be relevant for researchers and teachers alike, being reminded of the importance of choice when languages are involved.

5.4 The use of Norwegian suffix and verb tense

A final contribution of this MA thesis, concerns the identification of how Balder and his fellow teammates used Norwegian suffixes and verb tenses correctly from a Norwegian linguistic perspective, even when speaking English. In the data that I have analyzed, the gamers mainly used Norwegian when communicating, intermingled with English words and terms and Gamerspeak. In order to seamlessly integrate English and Gamerspeak into their Norwegian utterances, Balder and his fellow teammates added Norwegian suffixes onto English nouns (see table 4.3). This way, their sentences upheld the structure and grammatical rules of a Norwegian utterance. This was done throughout the screen recordings, and it was never commented upon by Balder or his teammates. Their use of correct Norwegian noun suffixes implemented onto English nouns thus demonstrates their intuitive and comprehensive knowledge about Norwegian

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grammar, and that they are able to apply this knowledge to new words and still form grammatically correct utterances.

This language knowledge extends to the use of English verbs within Norwegian utterances in their communication during gameplay. Balder and his teammates used English verbs regularly, and attached Norwegian verb tenses to the English verbs in order to integrate the verbs into a Norwegian utterance.

The use of Norwegian suffix and verb tenses on English verbs is a further demonstration of how Balder and his teammates used their various language resources to effectively communicate during the game.

Seeing all of these combinations and variations of language during the 3.5 hours of screen recordings from *Apex Legends* gameplay among a group of gamers, to a certain extent justify the relevance of using a translanguaging lens to make sense of teenage gamers' language use. In this affinity space that they have selected to participate in outside school, I would argue that though studying how some serious gamers use English and other languages while playing the online game *Apex Legends*, the benefits of gaming are clear at least to me.

6.0 Conclusion

In this final chapter I summarize my findings and answer my three questions (RQs) presented in Chapter 1.

RQ1: How much English is being spoken compared to Norwegian, during three and a half hours of playing *Apex Legends* among the gamer Balder and two of his fellow gamers?

While it is hard to quantify the use of English versus the use of Norwegian during the three and a half hours of screen recording footage obtained from Balder I can say with certainty that even though Norwegian was being used the most, there was seldom a minute that passed without any English being spoken in the online game *Apex Legends*. This finding perhaps indicate that their language use during gaming can be framed within a translanguaging lens, where the gamers come across as bilinguals that draw on both languages as resources in naturally situated communication.

RQ2: What kind of patterns can be identified during gameplay, concerning their use of languages?

In this study, Balder and his teammates most often used English and Gamerspeak when talking about the game *Apex Legends* and the many affinity spaces surrounding *Apex Legends* as identified in Chapter 4. There is a clear pattern of English being used for specific game mechanics and situations happening within the game *Apex Legends*. This finding further supports a translanguaging perspective on language use, as the gamer combine Gamerspeak with the other languages, and they seem to be aware of which languages to use in which situations within the game.

RQ3: How is English used during gameplay among Norwegian gamers?

The findings suggest that English is being used to effectively and quickly communicate between the gamers during gameplay. The gamers in my study typically use English update each other on their status within the game, as well as enemy players' movements and status.

By answering these research questions I can conclude that Balder and his fellow teammates all demonstrate usage of translanguaging. This is most likely a foreign concept to them, yet they utilize it throughout their gaming sessions when they communicate with each other. They are able to effectively use translanguaging to incorporate English and gamerspeak into their Norwegian utterances, while still maintaining correct grammar and sentence structure.

Balder and his teammates also showed strong indications of belonging to several affinity spaces surrounding the online game *Apex Legends*. By immersing themselves in an English online game they consume text and audio in English, and use English when communicating amongst themselves as they play the game. The desire to become better at *Apex Legends* also brings them to watch instructional videos in English and discuss its contents with each other.

6.1 Suggestions for further research

My MA study only provides a deep dive into the use of languages during online gaming of a few selected individuals. It is therefore impossible to make generalized statements about Norwegian teenage gamers like Balder and his teammates. Further research of several Norwegian students' language use during gaming with a focus on communication between teammates would provide a more general and broader understanding of the subject.

Another suggestion for further research is to conduct a large scale investigation including screen recordings alongside interviews, vocabulary and reading comprehension tests in both English and Norwegian, as this might offer valuable insight into how teachers can incorporate video games to some extent in the English classroom. If teachers acknowledged the value of engaging the students in language learning based on the affinity spaces where they enjoy spending their spare time, I believe a greater learning outcome could be achieved in school as well.

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Kommentert [LMB1]: Jeg har fikset denne. Kopier den inn i oppgaven din som den er her nå.