Degree Thesis
Bachelor's level
Level up

Language proficiency and gamification in upper secondary school

Author: Emilia Malmberg
Supervisor: Katarina Lindahl
Examiner: Christine Cox Eriksson
Subject/main field of study: English
Course code: EN2046
Credits: 15hp
Date of examination: 28/8-2017

At Dalarna University it is possible to publish the student thesis in full text in DiVA. The publishing is open access, which means the work will be freely accessible to read and download on the internet. This will significantly increase the dissemination and visibility of the student thesis.

Open access is becoming the standard route for spreading scientific and academic information on the internet. Dalarna University recommends that both researchers as well as students publish their work open access.

I give my/we give our consent for full text publishing (freely accessible on the internet, open access):

Yes☒ No☐
Abstract

Gamification is a new but upcoming feature in classrooms that has grown with the digitalisation in Swedish homes and schools. The aim of this literature review is to research how gamification can influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency in English as a foreign language. Five sources were analysed, four journals and one conference paper, and the results show that gamification could increase language proficiency if it is used in a moderate amount and that the summative assessment with instant feedback could be beneficial for students when moderating their own language development. Motivation seems to be the key word in the results and the main subject that all the authors agree can be created and beneficial to the students’ language proficiency. The results also showed that gamification is a new feature that has to be researched more in order to give a valid answer to the question of whether or not gamification is appropriate to use in school.

Keywords:

Gamification, EFL, Upper Secondary, Behaviourism, Language proficiency, Motivation
# Table of contents:

1. Introduction ................................................................................................. 2  
   1.1. Aim ........................................................................................................ 2  

2. Background .................................................................................................. 2  
   2.1. Learning English as a foreign language in a Swedish context .................... 3  
   2.2. Language proficiency in the Swedish syllabus ......................................... 3  
   2.3. Feedback ................................................................................................. 4  
   2.4. Digital competence and learning in the Swedish curriculum .................... 4  

3. Theoretical perspective ............................................................................... 5  
   3.1. Gamification .......................................................................................... 5  
   3.2. Behaviourism ........................................................................................ 5  

4. Methodology ................................................................................................ 6  
   4.1. Selection strategies ................................................................................ 6  
   4.2. Analysis .................................................................................................. 6  
   4.3. Validity and reliability ............................................................................ 7  
   4.4. Ethical aspects ......................................................................................... 7  

5. Results .......................................................................................................... 7  
   5.1. Presentation of the articles ..................................................................... 7  
   5.2. Results .................................................................................................... 8  
   5.2.1. Positive aspects of gamification ......................................................... 8  
   5.2.2. Negative aspects of gamification ....................................................... 9  
   5.2.3. The use of gamification in real life ..................................................... 9  

6. Discussion ..................................................................................................... 10  
   6.1. Main findings .......................................................................................... 10  
   6.2. Methods discussion ............................................................................... 12  

7. Conclusion .................................................................................................... 12  
   7.1. Further research ...................................................................................... 13
1. Introduction
People around the world play games, from Solitaire to Battlefield, which could be a clue that something in the games motivates us to move forward and continue playing them. According to Nordicom (2017) 43% of adolescents in the age group 15 to 24, both female and male, play video games daily on a computer, console or cell phone. Based on this, it could be argued that almost half of the students one can meet in upper secondary school have some experience when it comes to playing games.

In the Swedish school system, students study English as a foreign language from an early age. It could be argued that the goal for the students is to be fluent in the English language to a certain degree when they attend upper secondary school. The studies at this level are mostly aimed to perfect students’ language proficiency and to create a deeper understanding of the culture and language so they can use it in communication and therefore excel in their future adult life. Furthermore, the government in Sweden have added new directions for digital competence and learning that will be applied during 2017 and 2018. With the new directions, the students should be taught how to work with digital tools, media and texts and how to use them, how to be critical of digital sources, how to solve problems with the help of digital media and products and to create a deeper understanding of how digitalisation can affect us (Regeringen, 2017).

Based on all of this a new way of teaching has been discussed which is called Gamification. According to Cambridge dictionary, Gamification is "The practice of making activities more like games in order to make them more interesting and enjoyable" (2017) which can be used to motivate the students when learning a new subject. It would, therefore, be interesting to see how and if gamification, the use of patterns in video games being applied to lessons, can be applied during lessons in English and if the gamification could improve the students’ language proficiency.

1.1. Aim
The aim of this essay is to research how gamification based teaching can influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency in English. To do this I will look at previous research and other literature reviews on gamification and its possible influence on students in upper secondary school.

- In what ways can gamification based learning influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency when learning English as a foreign language?

2. Background
In this section, learning English in a Swedish context, feedback, and digital competence will be discussed, as well as how language proficiency is defined.

English as a foreign language is mandatory in Swedish upper secondary school. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2017) English as a foreign language is defined as "English as taught to people whose main language is not English". Furthermore, the definition also states that the students "live in a country where English is not the official or main language". Therefore, English as a foreign language (EFL) will be used in this text to identify the language being taught to the Swedish students.
Furthermore, the term *language proficiency* will also be used in this thesis and the definition is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 2009). According to the European Council the student’s ability to communicate is seen as most important in language proficiency. There are three different competencies that the European Council discusses which are important in order to increase the students’ ability to communicate and therefore improve their language proficiency. The first is the *linguistic competence* where the student has developed proficiency in the language system, and the second is *sociolinguistic competence* where the student has developed proficiency in how to speak to different people in different situations. Finally, there is the *pragmatic competence* which is how the student can use the language in their own production of written and oral material (p.13-14). Furthermore, the European Council has decided to use a global scale to show language proficiency, where A1 is the lowest level and C2 the highest. This scale is used for comparing students’ language proficiency regardless of their education system in different countries.

### 2.1. Learning English as a foreign language in a Swedish context

In 2011, the Swedish curriculum and the syllabus for English were revised. The thing that changed the most was the change in the grading scale where we went from a pass, pass with distinction and pass with special distinction to letter grades, E to A. In compulsory school, year one to nine, the main purpose of the teaching in English is to teach the students the language. The main focus is that they can, after the studies, understand and interpret spoken and written content, communicate and formulate content both orally and in writing, learn how to use strategies to understand and make themselves understood. Furthermore, they should be able to adjust their language depending on the situation they are communicating in and reflect on living conditions, the society and cultural phenomena that can be found in parts of the world where English is used (Skolverket, 2011b).

When compulsory school is over, students can choose whether or not they want to continue to study in upper secondary school. In the English subject, there are three courses that the students can study in upper secondary school: English 5, English 6 and English 7. All students have to take the first course, English 5, and depending on the choices the student has made he or she may attend first English 6 and then English 7 (Skolverket, 2012).

The purpose of the English subject in upper secondary school is to create a deeper understanding of the language and to create correctness in students’ language use so they can communicate in different situations in both text and speech. In upper secondary school, the lessons are supposed to be taught in English for most of the time but some, or parts of the lessons can be taught in Swedish. Furthermore, the students should be given the chance to produce material that can be assessed and graded (Skolverket, 2012).

### 2.2. Language proficiency in the Swedish syllabus

The students’ level of proficiency is expected to increase with each course in upper secondary school and therefore all three courses in upper secondary school build on each other. In English courses, the student should be able to show some kind of fluency in both oral and written interaction and to a certain extent be clear in their communication. He or she should also be able to make improvements based on comments from teachers or classmates but also by working on their texts by themselves (Skolverket, 2012).
In upper secondary school students should develop and "acquire good knowledge in the courses they have studied, and ... use this knowledge for further studies, and in societal life, working life and everyday life" (Skolverket, 2012). Furthermore, the students should be able to use their knowledge in a proper way, which means that their language proficiency in the subject English should be well elaborated after the courses read in upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2012).

2.3. Feedback

Formative assessment has influenced the Swedish school system and therefore also the English teaching. The main focus of formative assessment is to identify problem areas in the pupil's development and give instant feedback on it whilst the student is working on their assignment. When the teacher does this he or she can help the student to correct and learn from mistakes that the student makes when producing, for example, a text of a certain type. Formative assessment will also help the pupil to realise what they have not developed yet and teach him or her errors he or she usually makes. By doing this the pupil will learn to correct these errors in the material he or she produces in school and also help other students with their language development. The purpose of formative assessment is to inspire a student to try new systems with for example grammar whilst writing and will help them to believe in themselves and therefore improve their English proficiency (Skolverket, 2017b).

Another form of feedback is summative assessment. With summative assessment grades or comments are used to show the student that they have accomplished something. It is a way to provide instant feedback to the student which will show where they are heading in their knowledge development. In contrast to formative assessment, summative assessment shows how well the student is doing right now, but not how the student can improve (Newton, 2017).

Moreover, it is important to note that the teacher of an English course can choose if they want to grade or not grade material that the students produce during the semesters. If he or she wanted to it is accepted to only give the students feedback on their assignments and to let them process their texts instead of receiving grades on assignments before processing them (Skolverket, 2017a). However, at the end of the school year, all students must receive a grade for the course as a whole.

2.4. Digital competence and learning in the Swedish curriculum

Digital competence and learning has influenced the Swedish curriculum from 2011 to a certain degree and focuses on teaching the students to research and use their digital competence on the internet. In GY11 (Skolverket, 2011a) it is described that students "can use books, library resources and modern technology as a tool in the search for knowledge, communication, creativity and learning" (p.53; author's translation) by the end of the course. The main focus is to teach the students that the information found on the internet should be seen with a critical eye and that they can process the information that can be found to strengthen their own knowledge.

The digital competence in the syllabus refers to students’ ability to find and interpret information that they can find online, such as newspapers or digital encyclopaedias. They are also supposed to produce content in different media. Digital media is not mentioned specifically, but depending on the material available to the school this could refer to computer based media. Furthermore, the English subject should use the surrounding world as a resource for information (Skolverket, 2011a, p.53). The syllabus does not state that this information has to be found with the help of digital media, but in the society we live in today, it is most certainly easier to find this information with the help of, for example, the internet.
3. Theoretical perspective
In this section, the different theoretical perspectives, behaviourism and gamification, used in the thesis will be discussed.

3.1. Gamification
Gamification or game based learning, is a relatively new term in teaching and is born out of the culture of playing video games that have been around since the 1980s and is a big part of adolescents' life. According to Plass, Homer and Kinzer (2015) gamification has one defining quality which is that it "involves the use of game elements, such as incentive systems, to motivate players to engage in a task they otherwise would not find attractive" (Plass et al., 2015, p. 259). Games include different motivational features that are used to give the player a confirmation that they have achieved something. Depending on the game this differs, but motivational features are a characteristic that is applied when using gamification in education (Plass et al., 2015, p. 260). When someone is playing a game he or she is also engaging in the outcome, the player decides where the avatar should go, and what it should do. Furthermore, the player can decide how much time he or she wants to spend on different tasks which all affect how and what the player learns from the game (Plass et al., 2015, p. 260-261). The last characteristic of gamification is "the graceful failure" (Plass et al., 2015, p. 261) where it is acceptable to fail when learning something new. Failing is necessary in order to learn and develop knowledge (Plass et al., 2015, p. 261).

Plass et al. have created a model of gamification based learning where the basic structure starts with a challenge which the player has to give a response to and then receive feedback on their response which will lead to a new challenge. Whilst doing this the player has full control on how his or her knowledge can develop and decides with the help of playful challenges, responses and feedback how to increase his or her knowledge development throughout the game (Plass et al., 2015, p.262).

3.2. Behaviourism
According to Säljö (2014), behaviourism is a theory based on a person’s reaction to stimulation from the outside. Based on B. F. Skinner’s research on behaviourism, Säljö explains that behaviour that is seen as good can be rewarded and therefore also stimulate a person to recreate this behaviour because he or she knows that there will be a reward if he or she does the same thing again. Skinner created an educational tool that would separate the material into shorter segments for the student to process and give an answer. If the answer was correct the student could proceed with the next section, but if the answer was incorrect the student had to go back and repeat the segment to get the answer right. The education tool was seen as effective because the student could reflect on their answers and be active to move forward and develop more. The fact that the student could do it at their own pace was also seen as good because everyone is on different cognitive levels and the teaching could be more individualised compared to traditional whole-class teaching (2014, p. 262-263).

Motivation and the sense of satisfaction create a drive in humans, according to the behaviourist theory, and it is easy to follow known behaviours to receive the reward that we want. With gamification, the short segments and instant feedback will motivate us to move forward in order to feel this satisfaction. The language proficiency will, therefore, be increased because the student will be replaying different sections to get the reward. However, it is important to
remember that this type of reward and satisfaction cannot be overused and should, therefore, be used with moderation (Hanson-Smith, 2016).

Even though the theory of behaviourism was developed during the early 1900's it can be applied in educational environments today. The educational tool that Skinner created is outdated today, but there are similarities with gamification and behaviourism can easily be applied to it. The use of short segments with instant feedback gives the student a chance to repeat information that the student does not know and the positive reinforcement creates motivation with the student to continue forward. Furthermore, gamification and behaviourism both give the student the opportunity to work on their own level and move forward at their own pace.

4. Methodology
In this section, the selection of articles will be presented as well as what method for analysis was used for this systematic literature review.

4.1. Selection strategies
Based on the research question of this systematic literature review, “In what ways can gamification based learning influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency when learning English as a foreign language?”, the starting point for the search was to create appropriate search terms as well as to find journals that were relevant for the study. In this particular case, the terms 'Gamification', 'English as a second language', 'EFL' and 'Upper secondary' were used from the beginning and combined in different ways to create more narrow searches.

After the establishment of the different terms, the search words were used to search peer reviewed studies in two different data bases online, ERIC (Ebsco) and Google Scholar. Because gamification is a rather new subject, there are not a great number of peer reviewed journals out there that discuss this topic, on both ERIC and Google Scholar there were only around sixty to one hundred journals published, which made the selection process quite easy. The problematic thing with a narrow result like this is that it can be hard to find both empirical and literature based studies, which also lead to the lack of empirical studies in this degree thesis. The thesaurus on ERIC was also used to find new search terms but the term 'Gamification' does not have any other search terms connected to it, which led to a dead end.

In the selection process, the abstracts of the studies were read first to see whether or not they would be relevant. In order to create the finished selection of the journals they were read more thoroughly to be sure that they all were relevant and could bring something to the study. After this, the studies, for example studies done in different fields or subjects that were deemed irrelevant for the study were removed.

4.2. Analysis
This is a systematic literature review which means that the researcher strives "[...] to identify all available evidence that is relevant to a given theme" (Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg & Wengström, 2013, p. 28, author’s translation) the analysis should, therefore, identify the evidence and see what the core in the studies are and help answer the research questions. To do this a content analysis will be used to find the evidence relevant to the theme. With a content analysis, the researcher will in a systematic way use categories to identify different themes and ideas in the text (Eriksson Barajas et al., 2013, p.147-148).
When analysing the studies chosen, a template was used to create an overview of the different studies. In the template (Appendix 1), the journals were categorised using the different categories 'theory used', 'main concepts', 'methods of data collection', 'main findings', 'limitations', 'quality', 'strengths' and 'weaknesses'. Whilst doing this it was not important to consider that the result had to answer the research question, it was merely done in order to create an overview and make it easier to dig deeper into the studies to answer the research question in the discussion of this thesis.

4.3. Validity and reliability
It is important whilst writing a thesis that it is valid and reliable. For the thesis to be valid it has to be able to research what is supposed to be researched with the chosen instrument, in this case a systematic literature review. If the thesis is researching something else than peer reviewed journals it can be discussed if it is valid or not because it differs from the purpose of the instrument (Eriksson Barajas et al., 2013 p. 105). To be reliable the results must show that the same conclusion has been made in several different journals to actually confirm that the research question could be seen as answered. If the results show that the studies have different results it is important that the researcher mentions this in the study to make sure that it is reliable (Eriksson Barajas et al., 2013, p.104).

4.4. Ethical aspects
There are a few ethical aspects that a researcher has to follow when writing a systematic literature study. According to the Swedish Research Codex (2017), it is important that research is reliable and that it brings something new to the field we study. It is therefore important not to plagiarise research that has been published and instead use correct citations if we want to copy something of value from another study. It is also important that the data can be trusted and true to the studies used in the literature review and that there will be no misrepresentation of the studies in the literature review (Codex.vr.se, 2017).

Furthermore, it is important that the studies used have been peer reviewed and approved based on these previously mentioned ethical aspects. It is also important that all the results of the studies are presented in a literature review, even if they do not support the hypothesis being researched in this systematic literature review. If the researcher does not include both supportive and non-supportive results from the studies the study is harder to find trustworthy unless the researcher explains why the result was only supportive. One example of this would be in a case where the researcher only was able to find data that supported his or her claims. The study will not be less trustworthy as long as the researcher discusses the lack of non-supportive data (Eriksson Barajas et al., 2013, p.69-70).

5. Results
In this section, the results of the systematic literature review will be presented based on the overview.

5.1. Presentation of the articles
Four different articles, published between 2013 and 2015, were chosen for this literature review. On top of this a conference paper from 2015 was also chosen even though it has a lower reliability than the articles. The presentation includes the chosen method for all the different studies based on what the researchers have presented.
The first journal article “Using gamification to enhance second language learning” was published in *Digital Education Review* (Flores, 2015). It is a study on how gamification can be used in second language education, how it can increase the students' motivation and what some of the complications of integrating gamification in the education are. The study was conducted through a literature review where the author analysed different articles to answer his research questions.

The second article is Garland’s (2015) “Gamification and implications for second language education: A Meta analysis” and was published in *Culminating Projects in English*. A study where the author determines what aspects of gamification can be used in the second language classroom through a meta-analysis of literature discussing gamification and second language education.

The third article is Dicheva, Dichev, Agre and Angelova’s (2014) “Gamification in education: A systematic mapping study”. This is a study on how gamification can be applied to education and some obstacles to doing so in classrooms. The method used was a systematic mapping study which means that the authors mapped out topics in different texts instead of analysing the content in each text.

The fourth and final article is “Gamifying learning experiences: Practical implications and outcomes” (2013) written by Domínguez, Saenz-de-Navarrete, de-Marcos, Fernández-Sanz, Pagés and Martínez-Herráiz. It is an empirical study done on 131 students at the university level where the authors created a gamification plug-in to a learning platform and researched whether or not gamification could be beneficial for teaching. The plug-in was created to challenge the student's cognitive, emotional and social area and was used as a complement to the teaching platform BlackBoard.

The fifth text is a conference paper by Osma-Ruiz et al. (2015) called “Past and future of Gamification in the learning of English as a foreign language”. It was included because it was relevant for the research question in this study, even though it is not a peer reviewed journal article. The conference paper describes and discusses research on gamification and education and how gamification can affect the students' motivation and therefore their results.

5.2. Results

In this section, the results will be discussed based on the research question:

- In what ways can gamification based learning influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency when learning English as a foreign language?

5.2.1. Positive aspects of gamification

According to some of the authors of the articles used in this thesis, gamification based learning could improve language proficiency in some way. Flores (2015) discusses how using gamification when teaching a second language could contribute in a positive way to the learning experience itself for the student. Flores bases this on gamification as a motivational theory that can be used to motivate students in the classroom. He further discusses that this use of gamification could enhance the classroom learning because it motivates the independent student, in addition to creating an environment where collaboration and interaction are encouraged. Moreover, Flores (2015) argues that the instant feedback is important in order to
create this motivation within the student, firstly because the student will be in charge of their own learning process when he or she knows what they need to improve, but also to motivate the student with the feeling of success. Finally, Flores claims that "gamifying" the classroom can enhance students’ language proficiency and motivate the interaction in the L2 language. To continue, Osma-Ruiz et al. (2015) argue that gamification could increase motivation and therefore also increase the students’ language proficiency because motivation can be seen as a key for better results when studying a second language. This is, according to the authors, created with gamification because of the instant feedback and the sense of achievement when succeeding in, for example, a new area of expertise. Garland (2015) does not say that students’ language proficiency will be better but he does say that gamification could have effects that could be beneficial for the students learning a foreign language. He argues specifically that the competitive elements could be beneficial for students because they create a sense of achievement and therefore motivate the students to further develop their proficiency. In addition, he discusses the importance of time management when using gamification as a concept in the classroom and that it is the key to engage the students with small doses of it to increase their motivation. If the student is exposed to large doses of gamification Garland discusses that he or she might get bored by the feeling of achievement and therefore, will not feel the motivation to further develop their knowledge. Additionally, Dicheva et al. (2014) discusses how gamification has a potential to improve learning and therefore the students’ language proficiency. The competition between the students is also mentioned as something beneficial that will increase their motivation and therefore also their proficiency. Moreover, they discuss that the option to choose what the student wants to work with could be an important factor when it comes to increasing language development.

5.2.2. Negative aspects of gamification

Some of the authors, Osma-Ruiz et al. (2015) and Dicheva et al. (2014), did not discuss if the patterns used in games could influence the teaching in a way that could provide an answer to if and how gamification could benefit language proficiency. Instead, they focused more on using already existing games and how the games could be used in the classroom. Dicheva et al. (2014), for example, discussed the lack of IT-support when it came to using games in the classroom. They discussed the great importance of having IT-support when using gamification, in order to make sure that the games chosen can be used properly. Furthermore, Osma-Ruiz et al. (2015) argue that the games that exist today cannot be used in the classroom because they are not created for that specific use. Flores (2015) mentions that the game elements that are used in gamified education are beneficial for the students’ motivation which could lead to increased language proficiency. However, both Flores (2015), and Garland (2015) all point out that this motivation could, if used in the wrong way, create boredom for the student and therefore not benefit their language proficiency. Some examples are: overusing the gamification concept, or giving the students positive feedback during a longer period of time which will lead to a bored student who is now unmotivated. Garland (2015) also discusses how different patterns used in games, like the competitive elements, are beneficial for the students’ language proficiency. At the same time, he argues that he does not think that gamification can be used for a long period of time, but instead should be used in smaller segments during a full year course.

5.2.3. The use of gamification in real life

The empirical study by Domínguez et al. (2013) shows that the students who participated in the gamification plug-in trial did improve in some areas in the course compared to the students who
did not use the plug-in (p. 13). They argue that the key to using gamification is to make use of the student’s social, emotional and cognitive skills. To do this it is important to apply rules that create a cycle of repetitive tasks that the student has to repeat in order to master and improve their cognitive knowledge. It is also important that the student’s emotional zone is rewarded with awards so he or she can feel both success and failure. Furthermore, it is important that these rewards are at the right level so the student will not stop developing because he or she fails all the time. Additionally, the student’s social arena is there to motivate the student to receive a better result than the other students, but also to help each other if they become stuck (2013, p. 4). However, the study shows that the students who used the plug-in increased their practical competence in the area being learned, but they developed inadequate understanding of theoretical concepts that were not obvious. This is in comparison to the students who did not use the plug-in, who instead created a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts that were not obvious. Domínguez et al. discuss that this could be because the teacher has explained or pointed out the theoretical perspectives (2013, p. 15). Domínguez et al. continue to discuss that even though the results show that the students had lower results in some parts of the course and higher in others, an increase in motivation could be seen with the students who chose to use the plug-in.

Overall the results in all four articles and the conference paper showed some hints that gamification based learning could influence language proficiency. Flores (2015), Osma–Ruiz et al. (2015), Garland (2015), Domínguez etal. (2013), and Dicheva et al. (2014) all discuss how gamification could influence and increase language proficiency in different ways. The common factor among all these authors is motivation and how it helps the student to influence their language proficiency. However, Domínguez et al. (2013) also mentioned that even though the students excelled in some areas, they also got a lower result in some parts of the course.

6. Discussion
In this section the result from the studies will be discussed and the research question answered.

6.1. Main findings
According to all the authors, Flores (2015), Dicheva et al. (2015), Osma-Ruiz et al. (2015), Garland (2015), and Domínguez et al. (2013), gamification based learning could be beneficial to students’ motivation when studying English as a foreign language. All of the authors describe gamification as something that will create motivation for the student and it may develop some kind of progress in their language proficiency. This is because the gamification approach gives the student different tasks that they need to solve and receive quick feedback on so they can see if they have learned something new or if they have to go back and repeat to learn the new information. Hanson-Smith (2016) mentions that the sense of achievement will increase the motivation of the student because they want to beat the next level. Furthermore, the fast feedback that can be given directly to the student can, as Flores (2015) discusses, motivate the student because of the achievement they sense from the feedback. The immediate feedback the student achieves with the help of gamification could even be argued to increase language proficiency more than a teacher could. This is because each individual student can get instant feedback faster than if the teacher replied to all the students which could take hours if the class is big. It is also shown in the studies that the students can manage their own development through gamification and therefore
move forward at the pace that is suitable for the student. The fact that the student also can work on their own cognitive level could also be seen as positive since the student will improve based on their current proficiency level. Moreover, it could be argued that the students may create a behaviour when receiving the fast feedback, and just as Säljö described (2014), that can increase their language proficiency. This is because they can, with the help of the feedback, correct their own mistakes without the teacher and therefore succeed. Furthermore, this could also lead to the satisfaction that Hanson-Smith (2016) and Domínguez et al. (2013) described as being a form of motivation and therefore also increase their language proficiency.

Because of the motivation the students will receive from the gamification circle, consisting of challenge, response, and feedback (Plass et al., 2015), the knowledge of the language will improve. Therefore it is likely that language proficiency will increase because students can see a clear improvement in their language development. It is, as Flores (2015) mentions, important to note that the repetitiveness of doing this circle over and over can create boredom with the student which will not increase their motivation but instead stop it and therefore not improve their language proficiency. Garland (2015) also points this out and claims that gamification is a concept that can increase language proficiency if it is properly time managed and not done during a longer period of time. On top of this, it is also, according to Flores (2015), good for the students to be in charge of their learning instead of the teacher leading all the teaching. This is because they can see their own development and quickly get feedback on what they did wrong and what they did right. This could in the long run give them a deeper understanding of their language proficiency and therefore they will know what they need to do to improve their knowledge. Additionally, Hanson-Smith (2016) writes that gamification could be beneficial for the students because it increases their satisfaction of receiving new knowledge. Furthermore, she argues that some patterns in gamification could increase language learning, like replaying a game until the boss is defeated, and that will give the students better results. She also argues that games cannot fix any educational problems in the foreign language classroom, but it could be a variation from the ordinary lesson plan that could motivate the students.

It could further be argued that the instant feedback might bore the student and his or her development might stop because he or she is not interested anymore in receiving the reward of satisfaction. This is because, as Flores (2015) also explains, the instant feedback and reward are always at hand for the student and he or she may, therefore, be bored because it is repetitive. This can also be seen in Flores’ text (2015) where he also discusses that if instant feedback is used properly it could, in fact, increase the students’ language proficiency. The instant feedback used in gamification is summative assessment where the student receives an instant yes or no if they have passed the section (Newton 2017) in comparison to formative assessment which gives the student feedback on how to improve their work (Skolverket 2017b). It could be argued that this type of summative assessment should be used carefully and it might be the reason for the researchers warning against using gamification on a regular basis. If the student does not see any information on how he or she should improve and work on their mistakes might be hard for the student to increase their language knowledge. On the other hand, the results in this thesis show that the motivation of the students increases when they can receive satisfaction from the reward that is being presented with gamification.

According to the syllabus in English that is used in the Swedish upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2012), the students should be able to develop their knowledge in the English language. It could be argued that gamification is something that could be used to do this, but according to the studies analysed in this study, it should be used as a complement to regular teaching with formative assessment in order to create motivation to learn the foreign language.
It could also be further discussed if the new plans on digitalising the Swedish school (Regeringen 2017) will leave more room for gamification and for summative assessment to increase the speed of the feedback to the students.

6.2. Methods discussion
From this review, it is not possible to prove anything, but it is still an indication of some positive effects of using gamification, even though this has to be researched further. The chosen topic Gamification has been a challenge to research because the term is so new in the educational world which has made it difficult to find adequate sources. If more research had been written around the topic it would have been easier to gather and sort the material to find journals that could have given a clearer answer to the research question. It was also hard to find material that would be appropriate to use when doing a literature review since most of the material on gamification is not connected to education but instead focuses on gamification in, for example, an office environment. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical studies regarding gamification in the educational environment, and there are even fewer that are about learning a second language. Because of this, the study had to use mostly reviews because the empirical studies found were not appropriate for a study on the influence of Gamification on language proficiency. One could also argue that because of the time limit of this thesis, the choice of reading literature reviews was a good one because the different studies were already summarised and covered relevant information. If the studies used in the literature reviews had been read individually it would have been impossible to read and summarise a result from all of them that would be relevant for this study. Furthermore, the literature reviews used already combined studies on education and also on gamification which made the process easier to finish within the time limit. The final effect of this was that plenty of material could be analysed in this study which in turn increased its validity.

The choice to use four articles and one conference paper had to be made because of the lack of relevant articles to use in the study. It is therefore important to mention that the conference paper is not peer reviewed and therefore not as reliable as the different articles. It was still chosen to be a part of the analysis because several authors worked on it and the content was relevant when trying to answer the research question. Furthermore, it could be argued that the use of a Meta analysis could be seen as a way to include several articles in one and therefore also be a reason to use a conference paper instead of another article discussing the wrong age group. On top of this, Domínguez et al. (2013) did their study on university students, but it was still chosen because of the content and the fact that it was an empirical study that discussed how gamification could improve the students’ learning.

7. Conclusion
The aim of this essay was to research how gamification based teaching could influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency in English as a foreign language. This was done by researching previous research to find how gamification can influence upper secondary students'.

- In what ways can gamification based learning influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency when learning English as a foreign language?

Based on the results of this thesis, one could discuss that gamification can influence upper secondary students’ language proficiency to a certain degree. The summative assessment and the behaviouristic reward system could give the student instant feedback and let the student control their own language development. However, the thesis has also shown that there are some concerns that the student will stop developing their language proficiency if gamification
is used too much. This is because of the repetitiveness of using the circle of “question, answer, feedback, repeat” which easily can make the students bored.

7.1. Further research
Information regarding gamification and the influence on education is still sparse which means that further research needs to be done in several different areas. Research is needed on how to use it, if it should be used and if it is an option to create new teaching possibilities. It would be interesting to see more empirical studies on students attending upper secondary school and more focus on how to use the actual patterns that are the core of gamification instead of focusing on video games. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see how and if it is possible to plan a lesson where the English subject can be taught with the help of gamification in today's classroom and if it is possible to use the lesson plan in the classroom with the students.
References


### Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles (list them below)</th>
<th>theory used</th>
<th>main concepts (how are they defined?)</th>
<th>methods of data collection</th>
<th>analysis methods</th>
<th>main findings</th>
<th>limitations</th>
<th>quality? (think of validity, reliability, transparency, etc)</th>
<th>strengths</th>
<th>weaknesses</th>
<th>anything else?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>