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# Code-switching among young learners while playing videogames in the EFL classroom

## Background

### EFL/ESL classroom instruction in Norway

- Communicative approach
- L2-based instruction is common, but translanguaging is encouraged
- High English proficiency in society
- Strong influence of extramural English (gaming, social media, pop culture)

### Codeswitching and translanguaging

- **Codeswitching:** use of several languages in the same conversation or sentence by bilinguals (Gardner-Cloros, 2009, p.4)
- **Translanguaging:** active engagement of all learner's linguistic resources in L2 learning (Cummins, 2019, p.21)
- Young Norwegian vernacular contains many morphologically mixed words (join-e, bing-e), and mixed phraseological units (English syntax with Norwegian lexemes) (cf. Sunde, 2018; Sunde & Kristoffersen, 2018; Hasund & Drange, 2014)

## Research questions

**RQ1:** Does gameplay in the EFL/ESL classroom facilitate authentic L2 communication among peers?

**RQ2:** To what degree do L2 learners utilize their shared L1 (translanguaging)?

**RQ3:** What characterizes the L2-L1 switches?

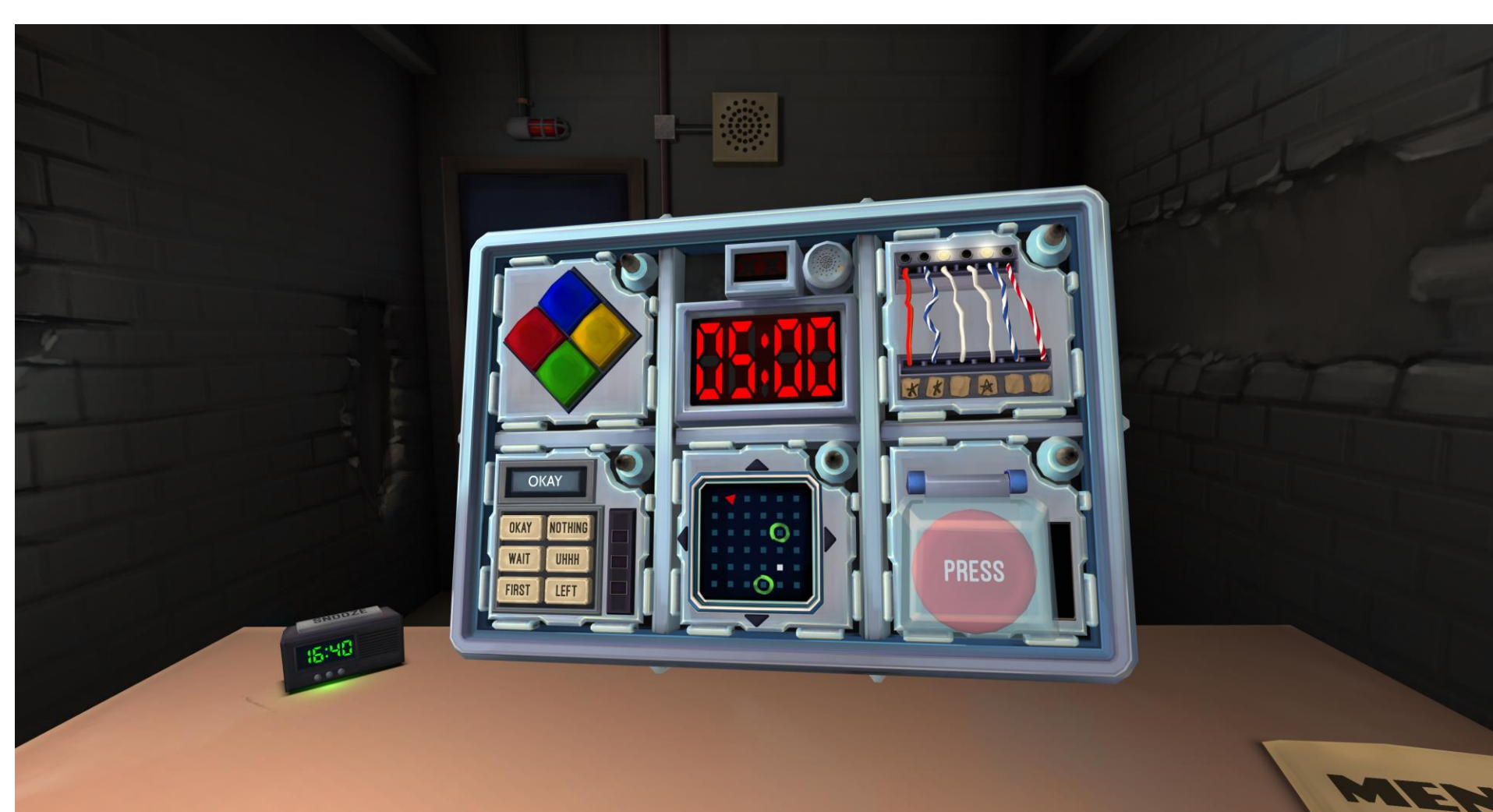
## Method

- Learners in 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade (11-15-year-olds) recorded during EFL/ESL class playing videogames in pairs/triads
- **Scribblenauts Unlimited** (Wissler, 2012); creative problem-solving, including naming of various items required
- **Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes** (Pestaluky, Kane & Fetter, 2015); information gap puzzle game, negotiation for meaning required
- 12 classes, 82 recordings (30-45 min.)
- Transcribed by Whisper AI, manually corrected and coded (qualitative analysis)
- Hesitations not considered due to the nature of the games
- **Codes:**
  - Switch to L1
  - English-influenced morphology/syntax
  - Own/peer repair



## Main findings

- Learners maintain monolingual communication
- Switches mainly have practical or emphatic function
- Lexical borrowings when lacking lexical items (often repaired)
- L1-based syntactic units (ungrammatical in L2) not repaired
- Good communication practice but fossilized L1-based errors persist



## Results

- Learners mostly **switch for practical** (communication about the game) or **emphatic reasons** (swearing, celebration)
  - *Du må finne disse [probably showing in the manual] Alle er i same: The smiley face, the B. (You need to find these... All are in the same)*
  - *S2: Red flashed, then green. Okay, yellow. [explosion] What? S1: Det er jævla vanskelig! (it's f\*cking difficult) Okay. Retry. Vi prøver en gang til (We try one more time). S2: Alright/åleit.*
- **Own or peer repair** is common for missing lexical items (Zimmerman, 2020)
  - *I see some eeeh, I see some eeeh, tråder, du vet de derre ledningene... wires on top, wires, wires. (...eeeh threads, you know, the those wires)*
  - *S2: A half a circle with a... a... a black... a like... a prikk. Prikk inni. (a dot. Dot inside.) S1: What? Yeah, I found it. Like a C with a square inside, yeah.*
- Frequent **L1-based grammar errors**, calques (Sunde, 2018), or non-target-like pronunciation do not hinder understanding

Pupil expression	Norwegian translation	Corrected English
<i>It is a red button.</i>	<i>Det er en rød knapp.</i>	There is a red button.
<i>Does it stand 'abort'?</i>	<i>Står det 'abort'?</i>	Does it say/read 'abort'?
<i>On the bottom is two blue wires</i>	<i>På bunnen er to blå ledninger.</i>	At the bottom there are two blue wires.
<i>And then it's like, you know, the candle stand.</i>	<i>Og så er det, du vet, en lysestake.</i>	And then it's like, you know, a candle holder/lampstand

- **Morphologically mixed words** not common (only used by pairs who spoke mostly Norwegian)
  - *Vi har unlock-a nye steder i byen. (We have unlock-ed new places in the city.)*

## Didactic implications

- Gameplay in the classroom facilitates authentic communication
- Negotiation for meaning as a communicative strategy if the game requires English to win
- Learners/players help each other with lacking lexical items
- Faulty grammar (shared L1-based errors) or incorrect pronunciation (shared accent) are not corrected, cf. the more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978)