LSLP Micro-Paper 74: Gamer

Carlos Andrés Sánchez | Jeferson Sanmartín-Arango
BA Candidates in English-Spanish Education Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Sede Central Medellín | LSLP Novice Researchers
carlos.sanchezr@upb.edu.co | jeferson.sanmartin@upb.edu.co

Defining the Term

When it comes to defining about what a gamer is, there is no clear consensus to construct a comprehensive meaning. Commonly, the word gamer is used in gaming environments or its described in some social conceptions, but the truth is that, a real understanding of who a gamer really is and what they look like is missing. Therefore, it is important to understand that the concept of "gamer" goes beyond merely playing videogames. When we refer to the word gamer, it is in fact a much larger and complex concept.

We can say that a gamer is a person who has moved from just playing to developing *commitment* to the game and *extended participation* in gaming communities. Commitment relates to expending a specific amount of time trying to learn more about a game. Such interest leads the gamer to gather information both from inside and outside the game and develop extended networks for learning. Expanded participation, as a follow-up to commitment, entails joining gaming communities outside the game itself such as forums, chat channels, fan and fanfic groups, or competitive teams, just to name a few. This notion of participation creates a sense of identity where gamers engage in social interaction to enhance their gaming experiences and become acquainted with game knowledge.

Connecting it to LSLP

Part of our research at LSLP explores and analyzes gamer identity, starting from our position as gamers who are language learners and teachers. In our team meetings, we have long discussed what being a gamer means for us, including what characteristics we consider essential when calling ourselves gamers. From qualitative studies carried through virtual and online spaces, #TeamLaV has identified that a gamer is indeed bound to these concepts of commitment and extended participation. This way, we acknowledge that committed gamers are those who learn and train consciously using resources from the game such as isotypes, lore, equipment; and from participating in social environments with other gamers in diverse contexts both in virtual and in physical spaces.

With that said, language interaction becomes essential in the performance gamers have now to set strategies with other gamers and to achieve different goals to win the game. Therefore, our research explores how gamers engage in social interaction inside these communities, guilds or clans to use a second language (especially English) to surpass the possible adversities the game has, learn language commands, and finally improve their skills as a L2 user who is conscious of the importance of adoption of the language to finally be victorious in the games.

Expanding Second Language Research

Gamers engage with second languages when playing games in very diverse ways. Understanding these interactions opens possibilities to think how we can improve language instruction. There are things that gamers do in their practices that teachers can implement in their classroom, an issue that becomes even more pressing as there are gamers becoming language teachers.

In addition, learning how gamers approach social interactions to be more aware of in-game situations can benefit language learning and teaching. We need to help our learners navigate physical and virtual spaces through their second languages. Thanks to the organic relationship between gamers and language use, assessing how they can improve their proficiency level and what practices can benefit language learning in schools and other non-academic contexts.

References

De Grove, F., Courtois C., & Van Looy, J. (2015). How to be a gamer! Exploring personal and social indicators of gamer identity, Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20(3), 346–361. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12114

Shaw, A. (2012). Do you identify as a gamer? Gender, race, sexuality, and gamer identity. new media & society, 14(1), 28-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410394

Williams, D., Yee, N., & Caplan, S. E. (2008). Who plays, how much, and why? Debunking the stereotypical gamer profile. Journal of computer-mediated communication, 13(4), 993-1018. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2008.00428.x