Non-Native English Speakers' Multiliteracy Learning in Beyond-Game Culture: A Sociocultural Study

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Abstract

The popularity of video games carries implications in game players' first (L1) and second language (L2) literacy. Based on the sociocultural theory and the New London Group's multiliteracies, non-native English speakers' asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) in beyond-game culture was analyzed to identify their traditional and new literacy learning moments. Discourse analysis of their CMC interactions presented multimodal, multilingual, multicultural as well as traditional literacy learning from participation in beyond-game affinity space, which had educational implications for L1 and L2 literacy learning. Teachers as well as researchers need to consider how to bridge these emerging literacy practices to an existing literacy curriculum.

Keywords: gaming, game play, beyond-game culture, affinity space, participatory culture, multiliteracies, computer-mediated communication

Introduction

Today's students present less interest in learning in school while immersing themselves in participatory culture out of school (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). They have grown up with digital technologies such as Nintendo or iPhone from an exceedingly young age, and the lack of attention by teachers to their different learning experiences has increased dissonance between formal and informal literacy practices (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Larson & Marsh, 2005). Despite disputes over the effectiveness of technologies for literacy (Kirriemuir & McFarlane, 2004; Uhlmann & Swanson, 2004), computer or video gaming represents a key example of students' informal literacy practices (Gee, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2008; Throne & Black, 2007).

Games often go beyond "in-game" game play to participation in "beyond-game" culture, in which game players teach and learn from each other about gaming (Gee, 2007, 2008; Steinkuehler, 2006a). After playing games, many people go online to form a community for successful and meaningful play. This beyond-game culture is comprised of literacy practices such as discussion and debate of game-related issues on threaded discussion boards, creation and distribution of fan fiction and artifacts, or annotated game screenshots. Researchers have focused on learning or literacy practices while playing games and tried to introduce game play itself into classrooms (Nardi, Ly, & Harris, 2007; Prensky, 2001a; Purushotma, Thorne, & Wheatley, 2008; Squire, Devane, & Durga, 2008; Steinkuehler & William, 2006; Thorne, 2008) whereas less attention has been paid to beyond-game culture and its pedagogical implications (Gee & Hayes, 2010; Steinkuehler, 2007).

This study investigates traditional and new literacy learning practices in beyond-game affinity space, which has attracted little interest academically but which can afford possibilities to serve as a bridge to connect students' informal to formal literacy learning. The approach suggested will help to hold students' attention in a literacy class, and allow literacy learning in school to be 'relevant' to their everyday life out of school. By tying learning in school to gaming culture that many students enjoy out of school, teachers can also promote students' motivation and engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study drew on a new concept of literacy or learning from a sociocultural perspective. Beyond a traditional definition of literacy as "the ability to read and write," a sociocultural theory helped to conceive of literacy practices as a tool that was socially and culturally shaped as individuals participated in the practices or interactions across a variety of contexts and tasks (Heath, 1983; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Luke, 2003; Street, 1984, 1985). Literacy practices were so considered to be less

exclusively related to alphabetical texts and more to multimodal texts including images, symbols, pictures, sounds or all these elements at the same time (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2008; 2010).

To address the fundamental change in the modes and media of literacy practices, the New London Group (1996) suggested a new notion of 'multiliteracies' that developed two arguments. The first involved the multiplicity and integration of communication channels and media. With the help of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as laptops, smartphones, or social networking services, the use of multiple modes has become easier on screen and, in fact, the norm of ICTs. Meanwhile, the second argument reflected the growing diversity of language and cultural modes as well as social, cultural, economic global connectedness. English has, for example, evolved into a world language *lingua franca* while fragmenting into multiple and differentiated forms of English, *Englishes*, used by different cultural, regional, economic, professional, or technological communities.

To support sociocultural features of learning, Vygotsky (1978) proposed the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which was traditionally defined as the gap between a learner's actual level of development and the learner's potential level of development with the help of an expert or more capable peers. The definition has developed to include interaction between peers without an expert's help (van Lier, 1996; Wertch, 1985) and recently online peer interaction (Hussin, 2008) in that learning could take place in the everyday interaction between common people (Hennessy, Deaney, & Ruthven, 2005; Miller & Benz, 2008). Particularly, the advanced definition of ZPD had an appropriate applicability to learning in the "participatory culture" or "affinity space" (Gee, 2007; Jenkins et al., 2006). Participants in the online community were also more cooperatively inclined, and mutually taught and learned based on their common interests (Black, 2005; Gee, 2010; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009). Those theories of learning or literacy helped to understand traditional or new literacy learning through peer interaction in beyond-game culture.

Literature Review

New literacy studies

Drawing on the New London Group's (1996) arguments on multiliteracies, Kress (2001) made a decisive break with linguistic theories that have been dominant through the twentieth century. The study employed a social semiotic multimodal approach to data analysis which focused on the multiple semiotic modes in the different meaning-making processes. Within an ongoing research project, "Gains and Losses: Changes in Representation, Knowledge and Pedagogy in Learning Resources" (2007-2009), Bezemer and Kress (2008) investigated a social semiotic account that aimed to elucidate the principles underlying the design of multimodal combinations and allowed a consideration of their epistemological as well as pedagogical effects of multimodal designs.

The phenomenon of multimodality was also a challenge for traditional discourse analysts who were familiar with alphabetical texts. To describe the more complicated discourse, researchers have investigated the relationship among various modes, drawing on *analysis of images* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; O'Halloran, 2004); *layout* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006); and *sound, music and voice* (van Leeuwen, 1999). In other words, language is not a unique or even central mode of communication anymore; now, contemporary communication comprises a wider range of semiotic systems that cut across watching as well as reading and writing.

Gaming culture

As one of the emerging literacy practices, gaming has been discussed by many researchers (Gee & Hayes, 2010; Johnson, 2008; Sanford & Madill, 2007; Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009). Learning has mainly been explored within the massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) because of the social implications of its game play. Steinkuehler (2007) examined various participation practices in the context of one popular MMOG, *Lineage*. Based on the data from online cognitive ethnography, she claimed that gaming was a new literacy practice that adolescents enjoyed. In a preliminary analysis of the issue, Thorne (2008) investigated intercultural communication occurring in the *World of Warcraft*. An analysis of interactions between a speaker of English and a Russian speaker presented possibilities for language learning in the MMOG. Despite the limited work, the inherent characteristics of MMOGs as open virtual spaces offered potential benefits for the development of communicative skills.

Many researchers interested in the beyond-game culture have explored 'guilds' (Ducheneaut, Yee, Nickell, & Moore, 2006; Williams, Ducheneaut, Xiong, Yee, & Nickell, 2006). Guilds are long-term social organizations for coordinated game play in MMOGs, and beginners can develop their expertise through co-play with experienced members. Nardi, Ly, and Harris (2007) investigated gaming culture for *World of*

Warcraft. Playing with others for over 25 months, they observed the games as participants. They conducted 30 in-depth interviews and reviewed many online forums, FAQs, walkthroughs, and other materials devoted to the game. Focusing on in-depth analysis of several conversations from the corpus collected, the study concluded that learning while gaming was erratic, spontaneous, contextual, and driven by small events in the game.

Literacy Learning in the Online Community

The online communities have provided opportunities to learn literacy through interactions with native speakers or more capable peers (Black, 2006, 2008; Lam, 2000, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, 2007). Participants used English as a *lingua franca*, a world language to communicate with those who use different languages, and their participation could lead to language development in the context (Canagarajah, 2007; Warschauer, 2002). Lam (2009) presented a case study that L2 students learned their writing from their participation in the online space. He employed ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and discourse analysis to examine how English on screen appeared in the identity formation and literacy development of immigrant students.

Understanding a usefulness of computer-mediated communication (CMC) has provided L2 literacy teachers and researchers with a new web-based writing pedagogy (Meskill, 1999; Meskill & Anthony, 2005, 2007). Ware (2004) discussed the variance in how three different ESL students participated in web-based discussion boards and chat rooms in the first year of a university writing course. Using students' writing experiences in technology-enhanced contexts, she described linguistic characteristics of their CMC, pedagogical applications of CMC for the teaching of writing, and social interaction patterns in CMC.

The literature reviewed suggests affluent possibilities of beyond-game culture for traditional or new literacy learning. Participation in beyond-game affinity space can also encourage students to surpass the confined boundaries of brisk-and-mortar classrooms. However, the previous research lacks an empirical exploration of literacy learning in beyond-game culture, particularly from non-native English speakers' perspectives.

Research Question

To fill the gap of the literature, this study investigates how non-native English speakers learn multiliteracies from interactions with native speakers or more fluent peers of English in beyond-game culture. To understand their multiliteracy learning from comprehensive perspectives, the examination develops into their multimodal, multilingual and multicultural literacy as well as their traditional literacy learning.

Methodology

Participants

Twenty non-native English speakers were chosen from those who registered in *Civfanatics.com* by purposeful sampling given their various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, current availability, and active participation (Patton, 2002). Their first languages were disparate - for example, Spanish, German, French, Portuguese, Chinese or Japanese - but all the participants were intermediate or advanced speakers of English, who had no difficulty communicating in English. Their offline information such as age, gender, or ethnicity remained principally irrelevant because participants themselves cared little about others' offline standards and instead focused on their common interest in gaming (Gee, 2007, 2008). In addition, it was appropriate for a qualitative researcher to understand beyond-game culture from an insider's perspectives within the same conditions (Creswell, 2007).

Research Design

From sociocultural perspectives, the distinction between *use* and *knowledge* of second languages becomes blurred (Ellis, 2003) and the boundary between language *learning* and *using* also vanishes (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Language learning thus becomes synonymous with language using in specific contexts. In line with such a point of view, multiliteracy learning was described and identified from asynchronous CMC interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers of English; instead of psychometrically demonstrating how much their literacy improved using a pre- and post-test design in experimental or quasi-experimental studies. In other words, this study focused more on the description, identification, and analysis of asynchronous CMC data than on the exact measurement of improvement in terms of multiliteracy learning.

Virtual ethnography was employed as the principal methodology (Hine, 2008). In the context of new digital technologies, assuming the nature and meaning of countable variables and categories as priori -

such as scores or frequencies - runs the risk of obscuring rather than illuminating the nuances of meaning-making practices (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Researchers interested in the online space should thus begin research by elucidating the sense that participants make from the semiotic resources available (Steinkuehler, Black, & Clinton. 2005). This study also served as a case study to investigate multiliteracy learning in *Civfanatics.com*, one of the unofficial beyond-game affinity spaces for *Civilization,* one of the most popular massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs); however, it aimed to suggest alternative visions of new literacy learning out of school.

Data Collection

To generate an in-depth understanding of multiliteracy learning in beyond-game culture, qualitative methods such as participant observation or interview were adopted. As an essential ethnographic research method, participant observation was conducted from an insider's point of view (Patton, 2002). The author observed participants' asynchronous CMCs and artifacts which were stored in the archives, and sometimes directly participated in the interactions with others from December 2008 to January 2010. Particularly, participant observation was useful in disciplines like game studies where the object of study was emergent, incompletely understood, and thus innately unpredictable (Boellstorff, 2006).

Moreover, there were some practical advantages of participant observation in the online setting. In contrast to the offline world, the online space lent itself to hanging around in a situation where a person's presence was normally brief or transient (Foster, 1996). Although there were some issues on identity change or covert observation, the potential to move beyond the limitations of face-to-face contexts became a central advantage in online ethnographic research, particularly in participant observation (Mann & Stewart, 2000). All the CMC data of the study were published and available to anybody; so, few ethical issues arose, at least in terms of participant observation.

Based on the participant observation, qualitative email interviews were conducted to understand participants' in-depth detailed experiences in terms of multiliteracy learning in beyond-game culture (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). From November 2009 to March 2010, five interviews were conducted with each participant, and additional email was sent when extra information was needed. Since email interview began with scanty information on and shallow understanding of interviewees, it was particularly important to establish a rapport with them and to provide sufficient time to let them tell what they thought and felt about their literacy learning. It was originally thought that all the interview should be done face to face, but it proved difficult to arrange a mutually convenient time and place. The use of email interview set free an interviewer and an interviewee from those two fundamental limitations (Bampton & Cowton, 2002).

Data Analysis

To appropriately interpret CMC data and email scripts collected, discourse analysis was employed (Fairclough, 2007; Gee, 2006). The computer-mediated discourse analysis helped to understand participants' multiliteracy learning through data-driven basis of texts and interaction between participants. Emerging patterns were categorized using open coding and axial coding strategies, allowing the categories to emerge from the data (Creswell, 2007). Based on the categories, emerging data were checked again; those existing categories were fortified or new categories were formed. The process was repeated to articulate participants' multiliteracy learning patterns. The patterns or features were subsequently coded based on the New London Group's (1996) multiliteracies. A typology of information exchange and social interaction based on such analysis offered a potential to provide a great deal of insight into the relationships between literacy, identity, and learning in the virtual world (Steinkuehler, 2006b).

In addition, Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) instructional conversation, which was affected by Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, was used to identify multiliteracy learning moments. The instructional conversation was defined as a productive, interactive verbal strategy to engage learners in active thinking, negotiation of meaning and, consequently, learning. Learning took place through the assisting performance using instructional conversation. Specifically, Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) seven means of assistance using instructional conversation - Modeling, Feeding back, Contingency managing, Directing, Questioning, or Explaining (p. 193 -194) were adopted as standards with which to find multiliteracy learning moments from participants' CMC interactions. The computer-mediated discourse to include one of those means was assumed to embody teaching and learning between two participants.

Result and Discussion

Participants' asynchronous CMC interactions with native speakers of English (NEs) or other non-native speakers of English (NNEs) demonstrated traditional or new literacy learning in beyond-game culture. Based on the New London Group's (1996) multiliteracy argument, their literacy learning practices were categorized into four types: 1) traditional literacy, 2) multimodal literacy, 3) multilingual literacy, and 4) multicultural literacy.

Traditional Literacy

Participants basically produced their intended meaning using traditional or alphabetical texts. The purpose of beyond-game culture was originally to contribute to the successful game play or to the meta-cognitive approach to gaming. Thus, participants used language as a text to express or to understand a meaning within the social construct of gaming (Gee, 2007).

<u>*Descriptive*</u>

A descriptive text was a basic form of literacy to describe participants' experiences or their methods to make new gaming features. This type of text was used in almost every section of the space, so that participants could develop the essential framework of communication and literacy. In addition, this descriptive text was likely to lead to the other argumentative and persuasive type.

> A.   *I started a game playing with the Romans on a huge map, and I am now in 1500 Ad. I conquered a great part of the world and expanded a lot with my settlers. My problem is: usually I win 2-4 cities from the enemy every war, but even after 15 turns, the other countries refuse to talk with me and I can't make peace.*
>
> B.   *What government are you playing? Do you have many buildings to keep your people happy? Do you have any screen shots you could post they might help.*
>
> A.   *I play in Despotism, but I think I will try to change to Monarchy, I heard it is the best (together with Comunism) for war. I hope I will soon have time to post some screenshots.*

In the first posting, *A* described his experiences in the game play and looked for advice from others. *B* used *Questioning* as an instructional conversation to help *A* to understand his own situation and to plan a better future strategy. *A* responded to *B*'s questions, clarifying his plan and promising to post screenshots. Finally, *A* learned a strategy from his interactions with an NE participant, *B*. Through such practices, he was provided with opportunities to develop his descriptive literacy although his learning was not guaranteed.

<u>*Argumentative*</u>

An argumentative type was employed to persuade readers toward a writer's new strategy to play games or to give them a suggestion to address their problems. Since participants had different experiences and knowledge on gaming, they argued for their own strategies and methods using argumentative texts. The argument and persuasion processes often continued until a participant got a satisfactory answer, or two participants reached a mutual agreement.

> A: *The Netherlands would be a good choice instead of Aztecs or Vikings.*
>
> B: *The Netherlands are a great choice. I think that the arabic countries should be*
>
>   *divided though. The Israelites and Iraqis should be their own nations IMO*
>
> A: *Well as an arab I tell you my friend, Arabs without The "Islamic Civilization" are nothing, so we better keep them into one at least in the game.*
>
> B: *The Netherlands is actually a good choice. Arabia is the Arabic empire during the 600s to 1500s, it's not the modern day Arab people. Israel is a borderline civ. ☺ Seriously, what's next, Kuwait deserves to be represented.*
>
> A: *by the way I am from Kuwait, thanks for the remark.*

A started to write his opinion about the choice of a country, using a modal verb *would* with a slight confidence as an instructional conversation of *Modeling*. On the other hand, *B* supported his own idea more strongly with a present tense and an existence verb *are*, and added his argument about the relationship between Arabs and Israelites using a modal verb *should*. Responding to such a comment, *A* disclosed his identity as an Arab and used a pronoun *we* to firmly support his argument. In addition, *A* detailed his cultural identity more specifically (from Arabs to Kuwait) to support his argument and to agree

with *B*'s argument. As a consequence, two non-native speakers of English negotiated their arguments using an argumentative discourse, which could foster their traditional literacy development.

Narrative

Because this beyond-game affinity space *Civfanatics.com* was for one of MMOGs *Civilization*, which was open-ended and had an attractive narrative structure, participants often created their own stories based on the game play. The embedded narratives in the game supplied a good context in which participants could make their own stories as in the other fan-fictions (see, Black, 2008). After posting a narrative text, participants got feedback on, discussed, and developed its content, styles, and characters.

> *A: Thought it could be interesting to ask your view of the general idea of*
> *something i just finished. It is a story about someone who has just invited a girl*
> *to his dorm room at night.*
> *Looking forward to reading your thoughts though* 🙂
>
> *B: Sounds...trippy, I have to give you that! But I think I would enjoy to read the*
> *whole, unfold story.*
> *A: I take it that by trippy you mean something good* 😁*In which case, what part*
> *made an impression on you?* 🙂
>
> *B: You got that right! I like the resemblence to the movie "Fight Club" which is*
> *my favourite movie in all time. Your story has that "weirdo-psychopath"-flavour*
> *find interesting.*
>
> *A:* 😄*It is about a weirdo i guess. The guy is forced to see a double with a horrible*
> *fafce and is trying to learn something about that double, by luring a girl to his*
> *room.*

In the opening lines, *A* presented his general idea on the story that he had just finished, and asked for others' feedback or interesting ideas. Responding to *A*'s request, *B* gave *A* feedback using the word "trippy." *B* followed with an instructional conversation s *Modeling* to illustrate his example *Fight Club* and to explain why he liked *A*'s idea. Finally, *A* developed his own detailed storyline and its meaning through interactions with others. Through the meta-cognitive understanding of his own writing and the negotiation of meaning, *A* could improve his creative writing in English.

Multimodal Literacy

The "text" as understood in traditional print terms has become a hybrid concept given the enormous array of expressive media and technological development (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). As media has changed from paper to screen, all the modes could also be digitalized and integrated into screens (New London Group, 2000). In beyond-game culture, emerging literacy practices using multimodal features clearly articulated such a change in modes and media.

Hybrid of Texts and Images

Participants basically communicated with others in traditional texts, but they often employed multiple modes such as image, symbol, screenshot, picture or video. They also changed font, size, or color of the texts to imbue them with the effect of image (Kress, 2003, 2005). The production of meaning in beyond-game culture did not so much depend on multimodalities as in game play itself, but it still integrated traditional text and multimodalities in balance according to the intended meaning.

> *A This story was written by me in german more than a year ago and now I try to*
> *translate it into english….. Due to the fact there are no Austrians I had to take the*
> *Germans, cause they are not so different from Austria.* 🙂
> *Maybe I will make grammatical or spelling errors, so correct me, if this happens.* 🙂
> *Chapter I: The early German people (840-1120 AD)*
> *It's 840 AD, the various tribes of Europe start to settle down and try to succeed*
> *the old Roman Empire…..*
>
> *B: It's a good story. Your grammar and spelling is sometimes off but its not that*
> *noticable. Please continue this story. I am enjoying it.*
>
> *C: Why did you settle there? I would've put Berlin either 1N or 1S*

A: Thanks, point out the failures in grammar and spelling so I can fix them. 😊
    settled in this spot cause then it's Berlin and not something else and this is the
    translation of a story I wrote more than a year ago in the german forums so I
    cannot change anything in gameplay terms. 😊

A started to write a novel with an introduction of its origin; it was originally written in German and translated into English. *A* confessed his identity as a German speaker and asked others to correct errors if he made grammatical or vocabulary mistakes. After *Chapter I*, *B* used *Feedback* as an instructional conversation to encourage *A* to continue his writing in spite of minor mistakes. *C* used *Questioning* and *Modeling* to respond to *A*'s request Finally, *A* appreciated others' help and expressed his disadvantages as a translator of a German story. *A* developed his narrative with a screenshot together; those two modes were harmonized to produce *A*'s intended meaning. The places of various tribes and their natural environment were vividly represented in a screenshot while the temporal development order of each civilization was specifically explained in a traditional text.

Gaming Literacy

Advanced participants made a new gaming feature or game itself. The stage indicated the most highly-developed literacy, and they assumed the role of an active producer beyond a passive consumer of games. Lave and Wenger (1991) called the process *legitimate peripheral participation*, drawing attention to the point that learners inevitably participated in communities of practice and that the mastery of knowledge and skill required newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community.

A: Only for users of german civ3-versions !!
With this tool you can play all english and german scenarios. 😊
The only limitation is when you're playing english scenarios the units "tank" and
  Start the tool in the original civ3-folder (i.e. \civilization iii\)
Attached Files

    civ3d2us.zip *(3.9 KB, 1209 views)*

B: Thanks for your great work which i adapted for my french version of CIV3.
  I translated all the units but i'vve got problems with accents... You replaced your
  ä and ü within the variables.

A: I'm glad you will adapt my work for your french civ. Feel free to use it. 😈
  You have to know batch files are pure DOS.

B: Thanks again for your program. 😊

but i am a bit confused 😕
How damn can i use the tables ?
How did you insert special character in place of ö for example ?

In this exchange, *A* created new gaming features based on *Civilization*, trying to share them with other participants. He commented on his troubles in making different games and talked about his limitations. *B* appreciated *A*'s work and asked for *A*'s help to address his own problem. Responding to the request, *A* was willing to help to address *B*'s issue, using *Explaining* and *Modeling* as an instructional conversation. However, *B* still had problems as an apprentice and asked more questions. Those two participants' instructional conversation to teach and learn gaming literacy articulated a typical characteristic of beyond-game culture, "apprenticeship" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.21). The expansion of knowledge from an expert or more capable peers to newcomers and the share of their works with others were common in beyond-game culture.

Multilingual Literacy

Participants speak different languages although they used English as *lingua franca*, a common language. The multilingualism in beyond-game culture thus provides good opportunities to understand how various languages work and to be exposed to multilingual features. The use of a second language or multiple languages to engage in meaningful communication served goals that enhance, and potentially extend beyond, the practice and standardized forms of language (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009).

A: Hi guys!
I need some help here, I foud this amazing song, I really love it but I'd like to
know what language it is. does anyone knows? and if you do, could you please
translate it for me? thanks! 😊

Win dain a lotica
En val tu ri
Si lo ta
Fin dein a loluca
En dragu a sei lain
Vi fa-ru les shutai am
En riga-lint

B: that's most likely Portughese...

C: I think it's Japanese.

D: I'm downloading it as a write, but is this correct song?   http://sma.blueeast.pl/voe.htm
  Apparently, its from a movie called Escaflowne - A Girl in Gaia
  I've read that the lyrics of that song come from various and no languages,
  including Italian.

A: no, its not japanese, Im perfectly sure about that (i studied Japanese 😊 *)*

D: amazing, that was exactly what I was looking for.

In the first few lines, *A* asked for others' help to translate a song into English. However, the imminent issue did not lie in the translation, but language of the song. The language used in the song was discussed from all the participants' metalinguistic perspectives. *B* and *C* suggested their respective guesses on the origin of the song, but neither was correct. Unlike *B* and *C, D* proposed his thought with more reliable evidence using an instructional conversation as *Modeling*. Finally, *A* agreed to *D*'s idea and expressed his appreciation. The correction and negotiation were made among various language speakers, which could give them a chance to understand the multiplicity of language.

Multicultural literacy

Since participants had different cultural backgrounds, they could learn various cultural literacies from participation in beyond-game culture. The participation could foster multicultural encounters and friendships, greater awareness of insider cultural perspectives, and openness towards various cultural viewpoints, developing multicultural literacy. Multicultural literacy emerged in beyond-game culture as a supportive social context that emphasized cooperation, and included participants of equal status who shared a similar level of competency (Heyward, 2002).

< Korean 3 kingdoms >

 A: *Does anyone have a break down of provinces durring this time period, and who controlled them? Or am I better off just using cities*

 B: *I'd say you should stick to city names. I can't find specific province names.* 🙂
What's interesting about Koguryo is that actually extends further into what is now China (though some Chinese would argue against this 😝*), occupying Jilin area and later became Parhae (Bohai).*

 A: *I thought the Chinese agree that Koguryo controlled northern China, but they say that Koguryo was Chinese country or a colony of China. I dont know about Kaya.*

 B: *There's a bit of a controversy over Koguryo. If you visit some Chinese sites (such as the "People's Daily"), you'd notice that they refer to Koguryo as a part of Chinese culture.*

Interestingly, neither of the participants *A* or *B* was from East Asian countries, but they developed their understanding of Korean culture and history while comparing those of Japan and China. *A* asked for help to make a Korean civilization scenario. *B* used *Explaining* as an instructional conversation to suggest an option to use city names instead of province names, and he supported his argument with a detailed description of actual Korean history in lines 3 to 6. Although *A* basically knew more about Korean history than *B*, *B* suggested another insight on *A*'s perspective on Korean history in lines 10 to 12. Through such negotiation of different cultural understandings, participants could develop multicultural literacy although the above example focused purely on historical discussion.

Educational Implications

Language Learning from Gaming

English is used as *lingua franca* in beyond-game culture for communication between participants, so that they can develop and learn English as well as their knowledge for gaming. Gaming culture encourages language learners to informally practice their traditional and new literacy while and after playing games. Many participants argue that their game play and participation in beyond-game culture help to develop their second or foreign language.

Playing computer games can be a very good way to learn english, yes! I myself took my first steps towards understanding english by playing "Kings Quest". Although there's not as much text to be read in Civ, it still will help your progress I guess.

I learned a lot of Spanish from Civ III 🙂
I knew the game in and out and I swapped it to Spanish when I moved to Spain 2004-2005. It's probably good to learn languages, because you know the words in your own language and you have interest in it. 📺👣

Furthermore, participants learn their target language through direct instruction from native speakers or metalinguistic discussion of the target language's features. The recent increase of production and consumption of traditional and multimodal texts in the online community thus provides language learners with practice-based opportunities to develop their second or foreign language while enjoying strong affiliation based on the common interests. However, not every participant believes that participation in beyond-game culture helps to learn language.

> *Although written English could be learned from a forum or game, there is no way that the spoken language could be learned in that way. Why don't the words cough, plough, through, and trough rhyme with each other, for example ?*

They do not think that to learn language from participation in beyond-game culture is a good idea although they accept the possibilities to learn written language. Particularly, many of them point out the limitation of beyond-game affinity space as a literacy learning place because spoken language cannot be taught or learned.

New Literacy Learning Out of School

Today's youth, often called *Net Generation* (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005) or *Digital Natives* (Prensky, 2001b), tend to think of games as a channel for communicating with their peers. They often discuss games with others and are accustomed to meeting or making friends while or after playing games. Many of them develop how to teach and learn from each other because many games require them to collaborate with others to perform assigned tasks or to play successful games.

> *English classes in school beginning in third grade all the way to college. But I learned a lot more from discussing with people, watching tv, magazines, music, etc... Posting at CFC was a big help when it comes to grammar and syntax.*

> *When I was 14 and started playing Civ1 on my Amiga it had a major influence on my history and English lessons at school. I am terrible at learning languages, but thanks to video gaming (and in particular Civ) my English is relatively good.*

Given young people's informal learning online, teachers should pay particular attention to students' new literacy culture out of school and consider how to use their 'expanded' learning in school. Beyond-game culture can provide teachers with more tangible tools for teaching new literacy than games per se. It includes various types of literacy practices from traditional to multimodal literacy, which can more easily be harmonized with the existing literacy curriculum.

Conclusion

Many people blame computer or video games for such negative influences as violence or sexuality on game players, many of whom are young people or students. However, most of them teach and learn traditional or new literacy from each other while and after playing games. The co-existence of various types of literacy in beyond-game culture also presents a vivid picture of changes in young people's literacy practices. Thus, teachers and researchers need to consider how to use gaming culture from a comprehensive perspective to help students including language learners to develop their traditional/multimodal literacy as well as to prepare for an upcoming multilingual/multicultural age.

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