

Evidence for Second Language Socialization in Multiplayer Online Game Play

* * * *On the Internet* * * *

Seyed Abdollah Shahrokni

Western Oregon University

<shahroknis@wou.edu>

Abstract

This ethnographic case study aims to examine second language socialization (SLS) in a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) called Stronghold Kingdoms (SK). To explore the affordances of this community for SLS, the social dynamics in a Faction community during 4 life-time periods, namely, war, post-war peace and life in exile, end of the world, and immigration to a new world were investigated using three methods: observation, analysis of records (in-game forum exchanges), and interview. The results suggested that the norms of the Faction community, that is, communication, collaboration, skills, support, rules, closeness, trust, status, and shared experiences provided a supportive environment for SLS. Moreover, the results of an in-depth interview conducted with one of the Faction non-native English speakers (NNES) revealed that the affordances of SK were important in the development and improvement of second language skills. Therefore, this study offers implications for second language pedagogy and research.

Keywords: second language socialization, SLS, computer assisted language learning, CALL, multiplayer online games, MMOG

Massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs; see Appendix A for a list of abbreviations), which are played by geographically dispersed users, have been the focus of much language education research in recent years (Shen & Williams, 2010; Squire, 2007; Young, 2009; Zhang et al., 2017). These games seem to be versatile tools in supporting task engagement, social dynamics, feedback, and collaboration (Peterson, 2016; Squire, 2008; Sykes et al., 2010), with

research suggesting that playing MMOGs alongside face-to-face classes supports students' motivation, vocabulary learning, and acculturation (e.g., Bytheway, 2011; Rankin et al. 2009; Sykes et al. 2008; Thorne, 2008). However, one of the gaps in research on language learning in MMOGs is a frequent reliance on cognitivist theories of language learning (e.g., Chapelle, 2003, 2009; Palmer, 2010; Watson-Gegeo, 2004), whereas social environments such as MMOGs need to be explored through a sociocultural approach to language development as well.

Second language socialization (SLS) aims to understand “how persons become competent members of social groups and the role of language in this process” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 167). SLS, then, as a sociocultural approach to second language acquisition, can provide useful information about language learning in MMOGs (Duff & Talmy, 2011; Ellis, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Watson-Gegeo & Nielson, 2003).

The purpose of this study, accordingly, was to explore the affordances of an MMOG for SLS. By doing so, this study also answered Lam's (2004) call for more global research on SLS in virtual social spaces, Palmer's (2010) call for more studies on SLS in MMOGs, Chappelle's (2009) call for diversifying the theoretical base of SLA research through sociocultural approaches, and Reinhardt & Sykes's (2012) and Peterson's (2016) calls for further sociocultural studies on the affordances of MMOGs. The results of this study suggest that the norms of the MMOG community explored here provide a supportive environment for SLS and second language development. More specifically, this study tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the sociocultural affordances of the Faction community for SLS?
2. How does the Faction community shape and support the NNES' development of linguistic skills?

Literature Review

Research in SLS has generally followed two tracks (Duff, 2007; Ochs, 1992, 2002): indexicality and communities of practice (CoP). The first orientation, indexicality, has taken a linguistic-semiotic-anthropological approach to analyzing the language produced by participants new to a community by identifying the discourse markers showing that a language learner indexes him/herself as a member of a certain sociolinguistic context. For instance, Lam (2004) found that two Chinese immigrant student participants in Canada used the Cantonese particles *ar* (indicating softening of tone) and *la* (indicating requests) at the end of their English utterances in a bilingual chatroom environment to mark their Chinese background and affiliation with the group. The indexicality track, then, has relied on micro-analysis of sociocultural knowledge and practices in interactions to identify socialization patterns.

The latter orientation, communities of practice (CoP), however, has focused on a macro-social analysis of the process through which a newcomer in a community of practice gains membership and legitimacy in that sociocultural setting (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For instance, Black (2006) investigated how a Chinese immigrant student in the US was able to designate herself as a legitimate member of a fanfiction community by actively participating in the group activities and using the shared resources while receiving support from other members in the process.

SLS in Online Participatory Communities

The first group of studies in this review explore the potential of online communities in supporting SLS. The ethnographies of these environments and discourse analyses of the exchanged messages show that the participants developed the identities of legitimate and respected members of the community (Black, 2005, 2006; Lam, 2004), with this status further leading to the participants' increased confidence and handling the linguistic and pragmatic problems they had in their face-to-face (F2F) classes (Nguyen & Kellogg, 2005).

For instance, Black (2006), as mentioned earlier, explored how a teenage Chinese girl in the US, resorted to a fanfiction online community where she actively read and wrote anime stories in English to compensate for her low English proficiency in real-life situations. Her sustained participation in the community and the support and scaffolding she received from fellow writers ultimately enabled her to establish herself as a successful bilingual Asian writer. For instance, in one of the comments she received on her character, *Meiling*, from a more experienced community member, she was humorously, and with reference to the plot of the story, encouraged to continue her writing:

Meiling is so evil! Ha!
Don't stop
if you do I'll strangle you!
Haha! (p. 180)

Lam (2004), in a seminal study, explored how group dynamics and affiliation could lead to a member's socialization in a bilingual chatroom. In her study, two immigrant Chinese girls, Yu Qing and Tsu Ying, feeling isolated in the new community, joined a bilingual Chinese-English chatroom where they interacted with other bilingual interlocutors. The researcher found that the participants were initially inclined to use the Internet for playing games and downloading music, but, as they participated in the chat community and interacted with others, they gradually overcame their fear and started practicing their English and making friends. The results of this eight-month study showed that Yu and Tsu developed the identities of legitimate members of the community, code-switching between Cantonese and English whenever necessary, which designated them as bilingual-immigrants. For instance, the participants employed Cantonese particles *ar* and *la*, indicating respectively the softening of the tone and requests, in their writing to affiliate with the bilingual community in which they were participating:

A. can't send mail to u **ar**
B. next time give my (sic: me) your add **la** (p. 55)

Furthermore, the results of the interview suggested that the participants' virtual identity transferred to real-world situations where they could confidently handle the communicative problems they had once encountered in their F2F interactions. Yu, for instance, said that her participation in the chatroom made her realize that "making mistakes" and producing "a lot of wrong words" was "no big deal" (p. 51). Finally, calling for more globalized research into language socialization, the researcher stated that local contexts tend to marginalize people while new technologies and participatory discourses such as chat could be liberating.

SLS in MMOGs

The second group of studies reviewed here examined the potential of MMOGs for SLS. Virtual worlds (VWs) have been found effective in encouraging the process of SLS and, by extension, *TESL-EJ 24.4, February 2021* *Online Game Play / Shahrokni* 3

developing language skills. For instance, Zheng et al. (2009) found that the interactions between NNES and NES (native English speakers) in Quest Atlantis (QA), an educational problem-solving MMOG for teenagers, resulted in language development, enhancing the appropriateness of the language the participants produced both at utterance and discourse levels. For instance, in the interview, a participant said, “QA helped me with my learning English, especially in language use and communication. My spoken English has improved, so has my ability to act according to circumstances” (p. 504), which indicates that participation in the CoP while solving game-based quests has the potential to improve the language learners’ linguistic and pragmatic skills. The researchers coined the term “negotiations for action” (p. 489), a reference to Long’s (1985, 1996) negotiation for meaning, to capture the essence of group participation and coordination towards the accomplishment of communal goals in an MMOG CoP.

Likewise, Palmer (2010) conducted a study on L2 pragmatic socialization in the MMOG World of Warcraft (WoW). Through ethnography and discourse analysis, she investigated the use of general speech acts (e.g., greetings), pragmatic moves (e.g., negotiation for loot allocation), and pragmatic situations (e.g., refusals and gendered interactions) that the participants engaged in while playing the game. There were two main participants in the study: the researcher herself and a Spanish-speaking Faction member, Hector. The researcher, a skilled WoW gamer and NES, decided to learn Spanish by playing in a Spanish game world, which she found to be a rich supportive environment for language development. As she was a skilled gamer in English worlds, she soon established herself as a competent player, someone to whom other community members turned for support. This condition brought her new obligations and required her to be responsive to fellow gamers who spoke Spanish. Initially, her responses were low-risk, but, as time passed, she was able to make more complex sentences in a variety of contexts:

By appropriating the pragmatic moves... we not only helped create our player identities in Spanish, but also gave ourselves the power to exercise our agency and initiate group activities and the linguistic finesse to adhere to cultural norms during loot allocation. (p. 238)

This study showed that active participation in the game CoP could lead to a player’s identity development, exactly in the way that the researcher in the study was able to gain membership and legitimacy among Spanish-speaking players, being able to appropriate a host of speech acts and pragmatic moves required of a competent player.

In yet another study, Shahrokni et al. (2020) explored the process of SLS in Stronghold Kingdoms (SK). Using a case study methodology and three data collection measures, records of gamer’s conversational forum exchanges, focus group, and interview, the researchers found that success in the game was mainly dependent on communication and coordination (32.95%), gaming skills (22.88%), dedication (14.66%), conduct (16.59%), and real-life conversations (12.89%). In addition, the results showed that group participation and assumption of social responsibilities in the game allowed the main participant, Emil, a Serbian skilled gamer in an English-speaking game world, to develop the linguistic skills required to play the game legitimately and be known as a competent member of the community. For instance, answering a question on why he kept playing the game for 5 years, he showed his zeal in being part of a multicultural community by saying (*incorrect spellings and grammatical forms are intentionally left intact*):

Emil: I think the most interesting part was a feeling that I comunicat and play with people that are all over the wourld but in game at the same time with me! I also start to participate in TS [TeamSpeak] activities, I was comunication with people from USA, G Britain, China, Holand, France...I was talking to theese people, geting to know them, see how they react and think about situations in game and problems in game...one player told me on TS that when we talk about some things from past, how we make war back in past that he feels like “war veteran“...well, probably is the close filing must say” (Emil means to say it’s probably the closest feeling to vicariously being a war veteran; Shahrokni et al., 2020, Quote 8, p. 62)

The results further suggested that the focus of all the participants on accomplishing the group’s shared goals prioritized actions over linguistic skills, allowing Emil to appropriate his language in a supportive environment where he shared his gaming skills and apprenticed (socialized) into the linguistic norms of the group in the process. For example, when Jack, one of Emil’s NES members of the Faction, was asked about Emil’s leadership skills, he provided the following about his lack of a native-like English proficiency:

Jack: Playing online games means interaction with people of other languages. And i figured out that just asking for the meaning if you don’t understand the meaning is the best way to communicate. You always find a way to speak together. (Shahrokni et al., 2020, Quote 17, p. 63)

The studies reviewed above generally provide positive evidence concerning the affordances of online communities and MMOGs for SLS. Based on the literature, it appears that being a member of a virtual community and interacting with the members towards the accomplishment of the shared goals while accessing the community’s shared resources tend to provide the participants with a host of opportunities for learning, identity development, and socialization.

Methodology

Research into SLS has traditionally been conducted through ethnographies (Duff & Talmy, 2011) to “incorporate the relevant macro- and micro-dimensions of context” (Watson-Gegeo, 2004, p. 341). Ethnography is one of the oldest qualitative methodologies which provides detailed, emic, and holistic descriptions of cultural behaviors (Dörnyei, 2007). In its most basic form, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), ethnography:

... involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research. (p.1)

Hence, ethnographic research primarily involves “intensive, detailed observations of a setting over a long period of time” (Watson-Gegeo, 1988, p. 583) as well as in-depth interviews with participants to develop an insider perspective and a thick description of the patterns within that particular cultural setting (Geertz, 2005; Glesne, 2016). However, there are mixed views regarding the use of ethnographic methods in virtual world (VW) research. Although ethnographic research is potentially not specific to real-world contexts, as virtual spaces espouse their own unique culture (Boellstorff, 2008), it’s a bone of contention that a virtual space cannot physically be attended, with researchers observing the setting and communicating with real people (Hine, 2000, 2008). Nonetheless, some researchers (e.g., Boellstorff, 2008; Boellstorff et al., 2012; Guimarães, 2005; Hine, 2008; Kolo & Baur, 2004) believe that

ethnographic work can suitably be transformed to VW settings, as VWs are “legitimate sites of culture” (Boellstorff, 2008, p. 61) and represent a dynamic cultural setting as authentically real as real life (Kolo & Baur, 2004). This study, likewise, considered an MMOG a legitimate site of culture and employed ethnographic methods to research it. In other words, this study is a virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000; Rheingold, 1993).

The role of researcher in a virtual ethnography is also unique. As with real-life fields, a VW field needs to be attended, but not in a conventional manner—virtual ethnographers do not travel to (distant) places and embark upon observing the other (Hine, 2000); rather, it is necessary to have a virtual identity, an avatar, and live in that community (Pearce, 2009). In an imaginative three-dimensional (3D) terrain, somewhere on the hard disk of a server, avatars live among other unreal personae, embodied as humans (or other creatures), dressed in special attires, and possibly carrying special gear. It is both unreal and, at the same time, very real. The avatars do not reveal any clues about a player’s real-life characteristics (e.g., whereabouts and occupation), but the ethnographer may not need these pieces of information to be able to write field notes and conduct interviews; rather, the goal is to be part of that community and see the interaction patterns in their unreality (Palmer, 2010), hoping, throughout the course of the game, that somehow one is granted access to hidden layers of the culture.

For instance, when I first joined a Faction in SK, I only knew players by their avatars. The avatar revealed information about the players’ ranks, gender, assets, achievements, quests, indicating their gaming prowess. However, when our Faction came under attack by House 16, and our ability to coordinate became vital to our survival, my Faction members shared more than game-related issues, as they considered the group a safe zone. I became one of them and, in the words of Geertz (2005) when raided by the police while watching a Balinese cockfight, the “village was a completely different world for us” (p. 58). For instance, I learned that some of the Faction players had many alternative accounts (alts) which helped them reinforce each other. Interestingly, I gathered that a female player whom I had supplied with weapons in the past was in fact a male player with a female alt!

Therefore, I chose ethnography as the methodology for this study because it meshed well with both a tradition of SLS research and the exploration of emergent cultures of VW communities. Ethnographic methods (please see below) would enable me to be immersed as a participant-observer in a dynamic culture, be part of the life events of a community, develop a profound understanding of what it was like to be in different communal terms with both Faction members and other competing Factions and Houses (e.g., belligerent, friendly, or neutral), follow my participants, and develop insights into their feelings and socialization experiences.

Setting/Field

This study was conducted in the context of SK, a strategic MMOG featuring a 3D simulation of a hierarchical society of medieval times. SK had a population of five million active players based on the most recent estimates at the time (Kingdoms Mobile Gameplay | Firefly Studios, 2016), one roughly similar to that of a real-world country such as Norway with a population of 5,258,317 (Population – SSB, 2017). The players joined the game by creating a free account on the game website, downloading the client (for PC, Mac, Android, or iOS), and choosing a server/world from among 77 worlds in English (15), German (11), Russian (11), French (7), Polish (8), Spanish (8), Italian (6), Turkish (7), and Portuguese (4). I played an English world

for five years until it ended in August 2017. The game gathered players speaking English as a native language or using it as a means of communication.

Gameplay. Starting the game, participants are *spawned in* (join for the first time) as a “Village Idiot,” the lowest rank, and provided with a small unpopulated village to run. This idle village requires immediate action, both economic and military. Economically, the player needs to create the village industries to produce resources (wood, stone, iron, and tar), food (apple, cheese, meat, fish, bread, and ale), weapons (pike, sword, shield, bow, and catapult), and banqueting goods (venison, salt, wine, clothes, furniture). Along with these, town buildings, such as housing, entertainment, etc. should be constructed to help attract people to come and live in the castle.

When there are enough food, shelter, and jobs, and people are happy (see Figure 1), the player still needs to conduct “research” in the areas of industry, farming, education, and military to enhance the quality of life for the people of the village. Through strategic completion of research tasks, the players gain skills and experience in the game, and they will get access to new skills, leading to popularity and honor points.



Figure 1. A Fully-Built Village

After overcoming the economic challenges, the military development begins—the player now has to deal with the many enemy artificial intelligence (AI) targets on the map (see https://strongholdkingdoms.gamepedia.com/Enemy_AI and Figure 2), which destabilize the parish by sporadically attacking, ransacking, and pillaging the village. In addition to this important task, the player also needs to perform several quests to harness his/her gaming prowess, achieve medals, and rise through the ranks, from a Village Idiot (1) to Crown Prince (23), which will enable the player to have more villages and vassals.



Figure 2. Attacking an AI Castle

This description, however, merely reflects the individualistic aspect of SK; the world is home to thousands of players owning multiple villages and being in communal relations (e.g., trading) with each other (see Figure 3).

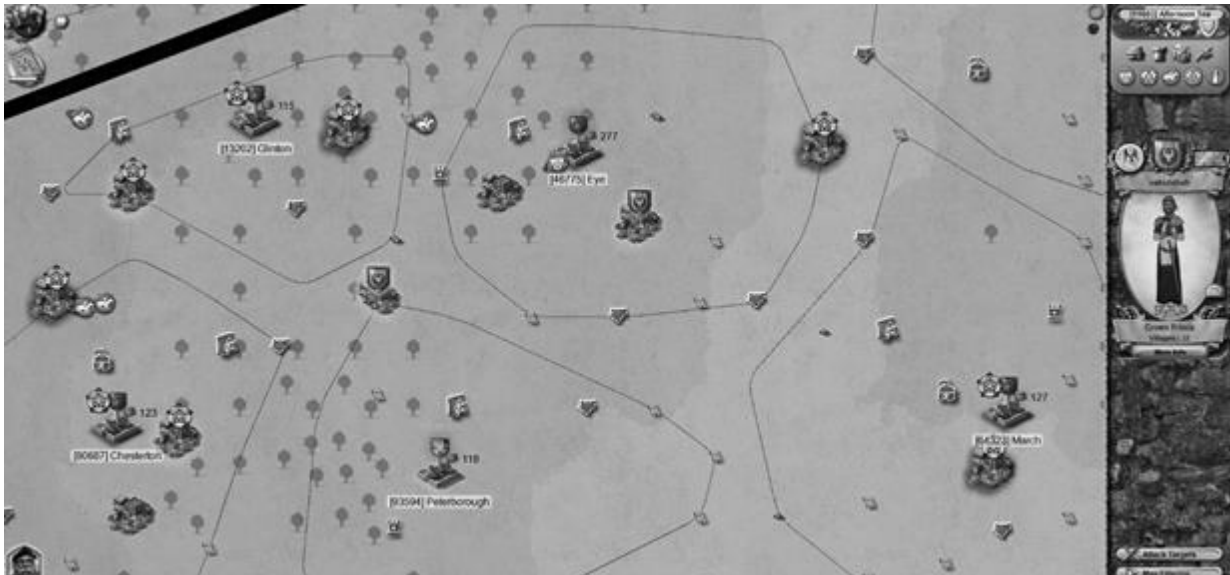


Figure 3. Part of the UK World Map

Clicking/tapping on each village on the map displays the profile (see Figure 4) of the player owning that village. The profile reveals the player's avatar, coat of arms, achievements, quests, number and location of villages, and Faction and House affiliation, if any. Moreover, there is a "send a message" icon at the bottom of the interface which can be used to contact the player.



Figure 4. The Author's Game Profile

The social life of players, however, starts with their joining a Faction, a group of 40 players, participating in elections, serving as liege lords or vassals, and affiliating to one of the 20 competing Houses. As dominating the world is a challenging shared goal, the Factions banded under a House are required to participate actively among themselves and with others, following Faction and House regulations—a government. For this purpose, a host of communication channels (e.g., the in-game textual mail interface and/or third-party text/audio applications such as Discord and TeamSpeak) and roles (e.g., marshalls, generals, officers, diplomats) are required to ascertain that there is coordination among all the parties in an alliance (see Figure 5). The game ends with one House emerging victorious through five ages (rounds) of gameplay, each with new challenges and rules.

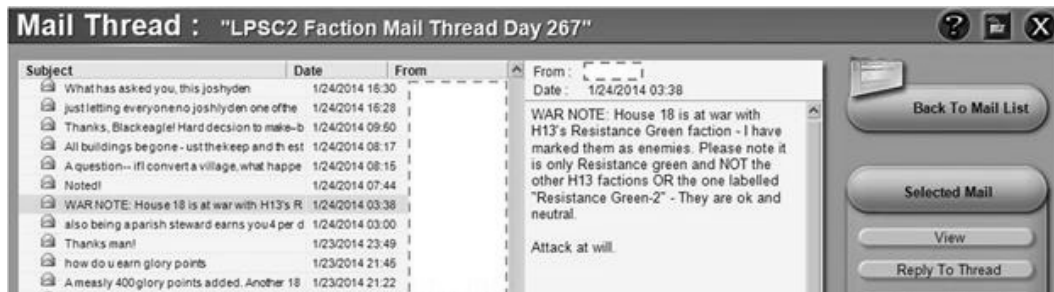


Figure 5. In-Game Mail Between Players (IDs Redacted to Preserve Privacy)

Participants

The participants were a community of 8 NES and 2 NNES. The NES group were from English-speaking countries, two male participants from England, and 1 female and 5 male participants from the US. The NNES group comprised a female participant from Sweden and a male participant from Egypt. All participants were considered experienced, as they had played more than two years together, although joining the Faction at varying degrees of competence (see Table 1). These players were together throughout four gameplay stages.

First, over a political issue, they were dragged into an all-out war with the dominant House. Next, having lost their territory, they had to separate for a period of time. Then, they reunited and formed a neutral House which gathered all the non-warring players. Finally, the world ended, and they immigrated to a new world, where they are, at this writing, still playing.

I, likewise, was part of this community for more than three years, and this study focused on my three-year journey with them. The participants were aware that I was collecting data for the purpose of this study. All names are pseudonyms (including that of the present researcher, Vahid).

Table 1. Participants’ Ranks at the Time of My Entry into the Faction

No.	Name	From	Rank
1	Morning Destroyer	England	Crown Prince (23)
2	Mire	England	Prince (22)
3	Middo	Egypt	Marquis (20)
4	Tikeno	Sweden	Countess (19)
5	Jennifer	US	Dame (16)
6	Treld	US	Knight (16)
7	Bear	US	Knight (16)
8	Justin	US	Duke (21)
9	King	US	Prince (22)
10	Golden	US	Viscount (18)
11	Vahid (researcher)	Iran	Earl (19)

Data Sources

This study was informed by three data sources: observation, records/artefacts, and interview.

Observation. As a research method, observation refers to the “systematic recording of observable phenomena or behavior in a natural setting” (Gorman, & Clayton, 2005, p. 40). This method is employed by various methodologies. Ethnographic research, specifically, relies heavily on observation which enables researchers to devote attention to the setting, use their senses, take field notes, and write thick descriptions of the culture into which they enter. Therefore, in this study, I conducted observations of the field, looking for exploratory data on the community cultural norms, and participant behaviors in various stages of the game.

Being a participant-observer, and having been with the Faction for three years, I was well included in the community and in rapport with all members, that is, I was a full-time resident of this community (Schensul et al., 1999). This was advantageous because I had access to naturalistic data—nobody acted differently in my presence—I was one of them. They also knew that I was researching and were responsive to my occasional questions. On the other

hand, there was a risk that I was so immersed in the culture that I might be blind to the data that an outsider might perceive as valuable. To take heed of my bias, then, as Bernard (1994) suggests, I needed to remove myself from the field to be able to write about it. Furthermore, as I included other data sources in the study, I was able to diversify the knowledge base of the study through data triangulation.

As to the procedure of data collection, I relied on what Angrosino et al. (2000) consider a “selective observation” in which the ethnographer focuses on select activities in the community (p. 677). Framed in SLS, my observation attended to the sociocultural norms of the community which allowed a NNES to develop his/her linguistic skills.

Records/artefacts. In MMOGs, players interact over forums and chat servers to coordinate their actions. As these social venues store valuable data on community participation, I analyzed the discourse in community threads through the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. The rationale for this phase of research was to develop a formal survey of the field, looking for patterns related to SLS. The combination of observation and analysis of records helped the design process of the interview protocol as well.

Interview. After identifying possible SLS themes based on the results of observations and analysis of records, I created a semi-structured interview protocol to tap the identified themes and inquire into more information about the SLS process, with specific reference to the participants’ (game) life journey. To cover all areas, the protocol included items corresponding to six groups of questions: structural, experiential, comparison, hypothetical, behavioral, and phenomenological items (Glesne, 2016, see Appendix A).

Data Analysis

As mentioned above, I used ATLAS.ti (ver. 8.2) to organize the data for coding. At the beginning stages of the research, I came up with codes based on the title of chat threads (e.g., activity thread), but, as the research progressed, especially through analyzing the records, I refined my codes and came up with more representative codes and categories for the data. In other words, through grouping and renaming in ATLAS.ti, the codes evolved as each phase of data collection was completed.

In order to analyze the records, I conducted two levels of coding—open and axial (Saldaña, 2015). First, I conducted the open coding of the in-game Faction messages. Through this phase of analysis, the transcripts of data served as primary documents in ATLAS.ti as I developed codes. Next, I tried to find relationships between the generated codes and transform them into categories and concepts. The purpose of this stage of data analysis was to discover the sociocultural norms of the community, aiming at answering the first research question, and later using this information to answer the second research question through the interview.

In this article, all references to Records (2015 and 2016) derive from data from the forum exchanges informing this analysis.

Credibility and Trustworthiness/ Potential Limitations

The first credibility measure was my five-year gaming experience. I had been playing the game for a long time and knew the setting very well. Furthermore, over these years, I had risen through the ranks and positioned myself as a high-ranking player who could enter closed circles and be trusted. Therefore, it was easy for me to be both a “fly on the wall” (Howe & Eisenhart,

1990) and a participant-researcher. However, despite the benefits of this stance, there was a limitation to assuming both roles—being biased in interpretation. To address this limitation, I tried to minimize this risk through member checks and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) throughout the study. I had about 10% of my data inter-coded by a colleague. I also presented my participants with my data analysis to ascertain that our accounts did not differ.

The second credibility measure was to triangulate three data sources. The sequence of data collection progressively developed into a more representative picture of SLS in SK. In addition, throughout different phases, I relied upon inter-coder checks to ascertain the accuracy of the data I was coding. Finally, in writing the report, I drew from my experiences in understanding what was taking place and strove for clarity in my thick description while relating the findings of each data source, allowing the readers to judge for themselves the credibility of the findings.

Theoretical Framework

Second language socialization (SLS). This study is framed in a tradition of research on SLS (e.g., Duff, 2007; Duff & Talmy, 2011; Ochs, 2002; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001, 2012; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Essentially, SLS is a first language (L1) acquisition theory that explores how children, as newcomers in their societies, socialize into the norms of their cultures (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). In SLA research, likewise, language socialization (LS) research explores the process through which an L2 learner socializes into the norms of the L2 community, gaining membership, legitimacy, and linguistic competence (Duff & Talmy, 2011).

Similarly, MMOGs have a dynamic culture, with many geographically-scattered players coming together as teammates. Furthermore, these multicultural communities have their own norms to which the players, if they wish to affiliate with a particular Faction, should affiliate. There are social responsibilities to be assumed by community members so that the coordinated play of the team leads to the accomplishment of the shared goals. For instance, in SK, when a new player joins a Faction, s/he needs to abide by the norms and regulations of the community. Some of these norms are considered general knowledge and veteran players know them. For instance, a veteran player knows that “scouting” another player’s village is a hostile act which can lead to conflict. However, some of the norms are specific to Factions. For example, our Faction had a rule that each member needed to login to the game at least three times a week, repair possible damages caused by AIs, vote, and station 400 troops (250 archers and 150 pikemen) in the castle so that it cannot be scouted or captured in a surprise attack when they were offline. In order to socialize into the norms of this community, it is imperative to communicate with the Faction members, learn the rules, and serve the communal goals. Therefore, SLS could provide a useful theoretical framework for this study, examining how language skills could shape and, simultaneously, be shaped by one’s socialization.

Communities of practice (CoP). Wenger’s (1998) CoP theory meshes well with the tenets of SLS. Simply put, a CoP is a group of people (i.e., community) who gather around a shared interest (i.e., domain) and participate in communal activities (i.e., practice). Similarly, the players in an MMOG come from different backgrounds, but they form groups, and collaborate towards the accomplishment of shared goals. This requires the players’ active participation in a community that has shared goals and threats, uniting them in the face of challenges.

Furthermore, a CoP supports members' learning and development through social interactions between novice (less proficient) and legitimate (more proficient) members of the community. Through this interaction, accordingly, novices will apprentice to the norms of the community, and “gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community” (p. 95), and pass on this knowledge to other novices. In other words, a new member (a novice), due to his/her low competence, is initially peripheral in a community; however, they will gradually evolve to fill a central position in that community, a process which is referred to as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). Researchers (e.g., Delwiche, 2006; Palmer, 2010) argue that MMOGs provide many opportunities for LLP. For instance, when players join SK, they are spawned in the game as a low-ranking player who is in control of a small unpopulated village. Gradually, however, they learn the strategies to develop the village, defend it, acquire more villages, join Factions, assume group responsibilities, and be team players. Therefore, MMOGs can be considered instances of a CoP where participants have “shared experience over time, and a commitment to shared understanding” (Eckert, 2006, p. 1).

Results

In this section, I first present the results from four phases of the study: 1) War against the world, 2) Post-war peace and life in exile, 3) End of the world, and 4) Immigration to a new world. Then, I present the results of the in-depth interview with a NNES of the Faction, Middo. However, before I delve into the results, I need to provide some context.

The war started when House 16, Lionheart, a coalition of several Factions, defeated House 2, the High Castle. House 2 members were known for corruption, alting (that is, using alternate accounts to influence votes and elections), and making the game a “dead” world—a place where nobody could progress or develop through hard work. Therefore, people of the world, including us, were happy that the tyranny of House 2 had ended.

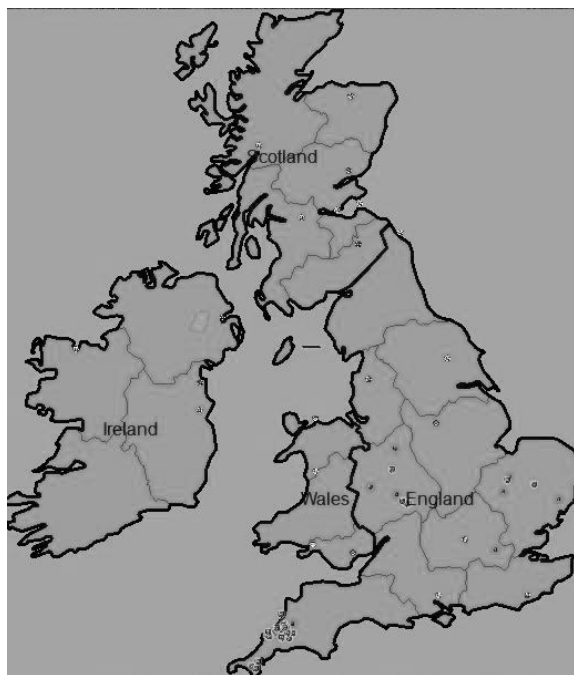


Figure 6. Territories Owned by House 2

The new leaders of the world called for unity, but by that, they meant for players to abandon their voices, and abide by the rules set by the “alliance.” It actually worked for some time, but eventually, some key players, feeling betrayed, left the alliance and became neutral. When one is neutral, they neither support nor oppose causes championed by the active political parties in the game. One of these players was Morning Destroyer. Before he broke his allegiance to Texan, the leader of the revolution and now the king of the world, he led a Faction of veteran players who were key in the alliance’s victory. However, he was now considered an enemy of the state, ruling over a small county, Devon, in South West England, where my villages were located as well. It was obvious that the alliance could not tolerate this transgression.

At the time, I was a farmer in Devon—I was not involved in any conflict—I was just developing my economic and military prowess to survive the game’s internal challenges, such as feeding my people and removing AIs from my parishes. However, it was short-lived and I was dragged into this conflict by accepting an invitation from Morning Destroyer. Upon accepting that invitation, I found myself surrounded by enemies all around me. It was scary, but inclusion in the Faction’s communication thread gave a reason to stay with them and get to know them, realizing that the game was more than individualistic play—it was alive with non-stop conversation, small talk, jokes, friendships, fun, and hard times.

One day, a Faction member, Trelld, decided to capture a village owned by another Faction member, Chino, who was inactive. Inactive players, and by extension their villages, are potentially very dangerous to a Faction, especially if the player is a steward who needs to constantly attend to the parish’s everyday affairs such as removing AIs and disease points from the parish. As the player had been inactive for a long time, his parish showed 300 disease points. Therefore, Trelld decided to capture Chino’s villages because they were a source of vulnerability—the disease points could signal to the enemy that the player was inactive and they could capture his villages and expand into our territory.

There was a problem, though—one cannot capture an ally’s village; therefore, the Faction leader (or officers) needed to drop him from the Faction so that Trelld could launch the attack. This operation was very risky because, if a player is not aligned with a Faction, as the rules dictate, they are considered “loners” and, hence, they may be attacked, whereas an aligned player, someone who is part of a Faction, has the backing of the Faction and cannot be attacked. After a lot of speculations, we decided that it was safe to start the attack, as we had not recorded any activity from alliance villages around the targeted area. Due to the time-sensitivity of this operation, we had also mobilized multiple players to attack at the same time. The zero hour for the operation arrived, everyone was ready, and Morning Destroyer dropped Chino. However, to our surprise, instead of Trelld or anyone of us, a player from the alliance, Black Dog, attacked the village on a fast-army strategy card and captured the village in less than a minute. This incident led to an all-out war, which ultimately led to our defeat and banishment.

War Against the World

Collaboration. The members were from the US, Britain, Egypt, Sweden, and Iran, and their being in different time zones prevented them from logging on to the game server all at the same time. Besides, some worked at regular jobs and had their own non-game responsibilities (although Trelld and Morning Destroyer played from their work computers as well). Therefore, we created a system of login hours at which we connected to the server and engaged in collaborative tasks. One of the most important tasks during the war was “timed attacks” where

two or more players coordinated their attacks to inflict maximum destruction to the enemy's castles (see Figure 7). For instance, the first player would act as a "breaker," breaking the castle defenses, and the second player, who had a captain in his army (and was slower), would capture, or raze the "open" village just seconds after the first attack. At this point, if the operation had not been intercepted by the enemy, the player who had captured the village, supported by other group members, would use the newly owned village as a base to initiate other attacks and expand into the enemy's territory. This would usually take more than two hours, and it would end in the players' interdicting the newly captured villages against other attacks. There were a total of 162 timed attacks involving 2 players, and 43 timed attacks with more than 2 players involved during the war. The following conversation shows a timed attack plan to topple the sheriff of Cornwall:

***Morning Destroyer:** Perhaps we should perform a strike, take out the sheriff with about 20 well timed, simultaneous attacks?*

***Mire:** hm.... wonder how well that will go over. :stuck_out_tongue*

***Morning Destroyer:** Very few people in H6 know how to run or handle time attacks (Records, 2015)*

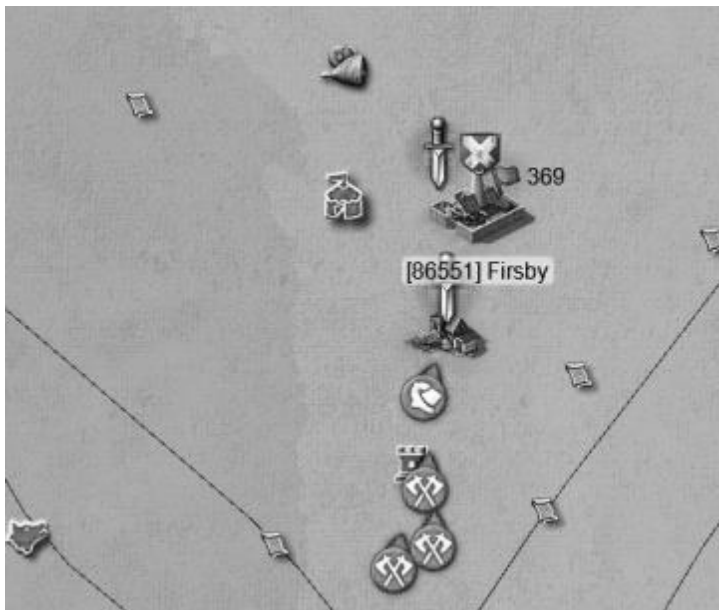


Figure 7. A Typical Timed Attack

(Three Breakers Hit the Castle Seconds Before the Captain Captures or Razes the Village)

Skill. Besides collaboration, running timed attacks required skills. It was necessary for the members to know how to survive a conflict, especially one against the whole world. Therefore, a large amount of data in my data set highlighted skills, tactics, and strategies to survive during the war. The players in my Faction, Brown Eagle, were not used to fighting—only the leader was. Also, what exacerbated the situation was the unexpected pace at which an all-out war had erupted. For instance, the following message, a report from Mire, shows how the map colors, representing territory ownership, changed due to power struggles:

Mire: Awwww... This morning Cornwall was orange as now, then neutral, then orange again- because "Prince Binomia" got in H6 for a moment – because of the Black Dog, then neutral again and now back to orange...

Prairie is declared enemy by Killer and Mystic.

Plano was rest by Typhoon [he means reset] last night in Devon and got shelter by Prairie in "The Lizard," got a village of Earth1423, developed by Prairie before so Sphinx got Redruth back by monking and Prairie sent his monks... then Sphinx attacked as per advise of H6's Faction "Killer" but IDed himself first for 4 hours...

Plano should be razed according to Mystic... but now all villages of Prairie and one of Plano's are under ID for about 16 hours.... (Records, 2015)

Therefore, a lot of information in my data set was on how players needed to supply arms or goods to other players, strengthen their castles, build up defenses, attack, and a host of other war-related skills. For instance, in the following conversation, Morning Destroyer explains how to set up pitch monsters:

***Morning Destroyer:** Pitch monsters stand up very well against attacks, but you have to maintain them religiously. In other words, you cant log off for 2-3 days and come back. You have to repair everyday or your castles strength will falter. (Records, 2015)*

Support. Faction members supported each other throughout the war. This support ranged from an early welcome, supplying of goods, and advice on skills development to collaborations on Faction defense and attack. In other words, in the Faction community, shared activities were performed through supports provided by the community members in many forms. For example, military campaigns required "monk" support as either a prerequisite or complement. Before a timed attack, the players usually needed to excommunicate the targets so that they did not interdict themselves¹, and, after the attack, the players needed monk support to be protected against counterattacks. Even when there was no active military campaign, the players needed to influence elections and have one of their members take control of parishes, counties, regions, or countries, which would provide them with the power to use bigger armies to "break" their opponents' castles. Figure 8 shows a monk support activity removing the sheriff of Norwich and installing another player through votes. Each monk (shown below in blue and red) is travelling towards Norwich. Upon arrival, each monk influences the election by one vote.

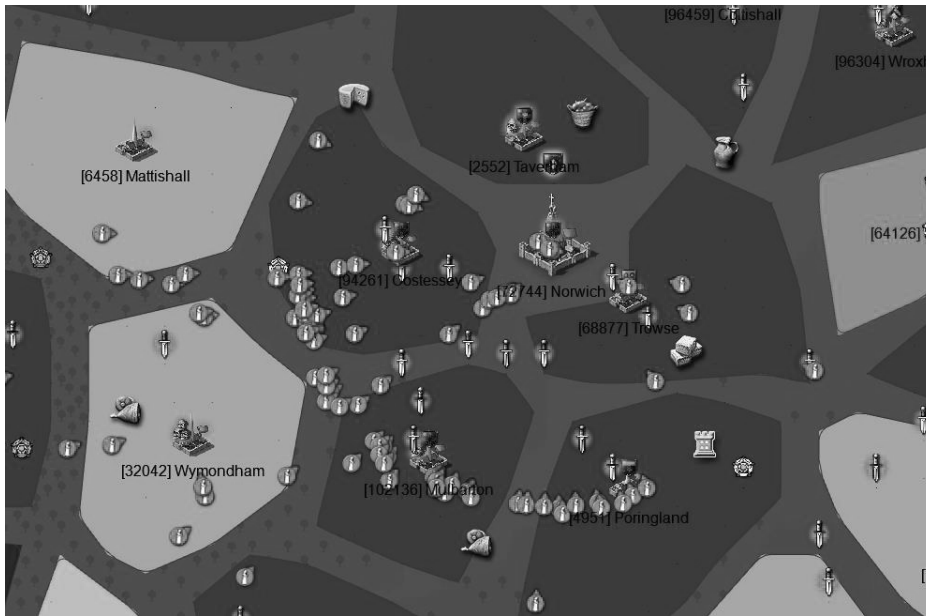


Figure 8. Monk Support

Rules. The Faction community valued rules, which were explicitly announced every time a new Faction thread was created. Generally, the domestic rules of the Faction were negotiated in a panel composed of the Faction general (FG) and other officers, and later shared with other members through regular proclamations. The organization and level of detail included in regulations depended on the person and situation; however, they all laid out rules for members to follow (in fact, the pretext for war was our alleged violation of the rules set by the alliance). For instance, the following message shows how monk-voting a parish, Waddesdon, was considered a hostile act:

P-Jazz: Any voting against the Alliance in Waddesdon will be considered a hostile act. Be warned!

Vahid: You may forward this to my faction leader.

P-Jazz: Your faction leader has already been warned about interfering with the Alliance.

Vahid: You're well aware that you're taking the parish from a Brown Eagle member, that is an act of war.

P-Jazz: I am taking the parish from a neutral. This is none of your business and you would do well to stay out of it. I have warned you and you can pass it on to the entire faction. (Records, 2015)

Closeness. The members, albeit at war, knew each other very well, checked on each other, made jokes, and felt responsible for their friends' assets. The following message shows how humorously the Faction members interacted with each other, although what happened to Justin, that is, his army being destroyed on an arranged capture, was a frustrating incident:

Mire: i asked you 4 times not to attack and you did it anyway

Justin: You asked me to capture your village. I told you to open your village. You killed my army. You still wanted my help with your village. I am not going to waste another 35k gold on a failed capture. Do you want me to fix your village or not?

Bear: I know a man that knows a pub where a man sits in it that owns a greyhound and drinks vodka and can get it fixed for a price for you :wink:

Justin: HA HA two Greyhounds...my attacks are on route to your villa now...let that be a lesson boy :joy and Rum and whisky.

Bear: you got the patience of a saint:innocent: (Records, 2015)

The Faction conversations, in abundant numbers, showed that the members were very close, and valued this connection through a knowledge of their personal lives and humor.

Trust. Co-player members needed to trust each other. Despite continuous psychological and physical warfare, the members stayed together and defended their territory until they were defeated. Although trust was the glue of all players' activities within the boundaries of the Faction at this specific time, there were times during the war when they specifically shared their dedication to the cause. For instance, the following exchange shows how the players expressed their support for the Faction and its leadership when the alliance gave them an ultimatum to decide if they wanted to fight or surrender:

Justin: I'm all for war. I can also help with monking/excomm. Would be nice to get Morning Destroyer into buckingham. How many votes does Black Dog have?

Middo: I'm in.

Jennifer: It sounds like a total war. I'm just thinking of heavy defense :-??

Treld: Very much defense (probably I overmonk my villages :-D)
(Records, 2015)

Communication. Communication runs across all themes in an MMOG where players do not physically interact. For instance, the invitation that I received from Morning Destroyer to join their Faction was a form of communication that was prevalent in the game—recruiting. The language that players used to advance a threat, devalue a player, make a request, position oneself as a competent player, etc. were all part of communication.

Status. During the war, players specifically showed their status to opponents in different ways, such as referencing the history and names, showing confidence, signing their messages with their ranks and positions, boasting about or hinting at their skills, using commands or capital letters, or a mix of them. For instance, in the following message, Black Dog, showing his skills, orders Morning Destroyer in capital letters to look at the time on the attack and scout reports to understand who is to blame:

Black Dog: LOOK AT THE TIME THE ATTACK ON ISAACU HIT THEN LOOK AT THE TIMES WE SCOUTED AND ATTACKED YOUR GUY are you blind or just ingoring the fact that your players braught this on. (Records, 2015)

I conclude this section with Morning Destroyer's words on winning a war, briefing his Faction members on what was expected of them during a military conflict, showing his status as an experienced player:

Morning Destroyer: There is a lot more to war than "element of surprise." There is also "skill" -The ability to launch effective breaker armies, the ability to create an effective captain army, the ability to launch timed attacked (to name a few skills). There is also cooperation and communication. If you lack either, then your war is going to go down hill. Plus activity but that's obvious. (Records, 2015)

Post-war Peace and Life in Exile

After the war was lost, the players in our Faction all went into vacation mode (VM). The conflict had been so intense, with both sides inflicting damages on each other. However, as the alliance had more forces and players, this unbalanced battle would eventually have to end in favor of House 16. All the gold was spent, faith points (FP) used, and most of our villages were captured or razed. There was no point in continuing this war:

***Morning Destroyer:** Guys I want you to leave this faction and go to a neutral one. It looks like it is a lost battle. This is now a lose-lose battle, we can't win against so many with so few.*

***Treld:** Sadly you are right Morning...*

***Morning Destroyer:** My respect goes out to you all in this thread... disappointing isn't the word for the rest. Those of you that have lost villas I will open all mine at the front door take them, I will be leaving this world, there is nothing left but the alliance and a bunch of farmers. This world is dead. Good luck and take care all of you. (Records, 2015)*

With Morning Destroyer gone, we decided to activate the VM to at least keep some assets that had been left while restoring our gold, honor, and FP sources. In other words, it was a “tactical retreat.” Furthermore, Morning Destroyer’s unexpected abandonment of the Faction in this manner left us somehow irate and feeling betrayed. At any rate, we needed to leave. For about one month, a great deal of communication and collaboration had drained everyone both in real- and virtual lives. After two weeks, we all deactivated VM and logged back to the game. I was so excited that I was seeing everyone again. All of us except Treld logged back to the game at the same time. A week later, Treld also joined. Things had calmed down and nobody was after us. Also, to avoid confrontation, we left the Faction and stayed neutral, but we were still communicating. The whole world was now orange and controlled by House 16.

Shared experiences. We could not help but to reflect on what happened during the war: Why did it happen, why did we act the way we did, why did Morning Destroyer have to leave, and so many other questions. Reflecting on these occurrences, we shared memories of the war and discussed them. We also planned for the future, whether we would create a Faction and join a different House, go rogue, or go separate ways given our daily-life responsibilities. Ultimately, we decided to farm. We created a new Faction with a different name, Rainbow of Chaos. Furthermore, we decided to join a House, as being neutral could lead to conflict. Upon the advice of a friend, we finally joined House 20, which, in a nationwide vote, had been reserved for players who want peace.

Support. Now, as part of House 20, we needed to support each other economically. The war had officially ended and we needed supplies (stone, wood, iron, and tar) to build up the remainder of our villages which had been pillaged and ransacked multiple times during the war. Therefore, we needed to develop our economic industries (e.g., stone quarries, woodcutter’s huts, iron mines, pitch rigs, and farms) along with carts and markets to trade goods. Furthermore, we needed to charter new villages, and, as we had lost almost all of our gold and honor, we needed to sell our goods in the markets and hold banquets to rank up. Therefore, we created a support thread and posted our needs and offered help. Everyone tried hard to rise and help others to rise as well:

Middo: Wood and Stone for 112049 and 26216 Village pleaseeee

Mire: Sending loads landing in an hr to 2 hurs (Records, 2015)

To sum up this section, most of the activities in this phase of the Faction life revolved around shared experiences and support, although there were codes which could be placed under trust, closeness, collaboration, skills, rules, and communication. This phase, which lasted about 16 months in real life time, saw the other nine players pulling together and living peacefully as they interacted towards development both with each other and other players in the House. By the end of this phase, everyone was a Crown Prince, and, I can say, they were all seasoned in the workings of the game, although they did not engage in any war. In terms of social responsibilities, all my nine co-players had stewardship roles in different parishes, Mire was the FG of Rainbow of Chaos, King, Trelld, Middo, and Tikeno were officers, and the other members were players. Also, the number of players in our Faction had risen to 17. Also, most of us had the experience of playing different worlds in SK.

End of the World

After several rounds of glory race (whereby players competed over holding key positions in the game) and global wars, the world was close to an end. Based on the rules, all active players received strategy card packs, with higher ranked players and those in the winning House receiving more perks and “diamond” cards. This phase of data analysis sees a great deal of planning for the next world to which players needed to migrate. Here we also see all the themes mentioned above in place, with the following being more outstanding.

Rules. The world was coming to an end and players wanted to know what would happen next, who would win the race, how would the world end, what were the prizes, how would they be given to players, who would get them, and many other inquiries of this sort. We had never finished a world, so this would be a new experience for all of us. Therefore, the players inquired about the end of the world:

Bear: So what happens when the world ends? Who gets what prizes? Or a free for all, and all out war, which I can't see happening on this server!

Mire: By default, all players get bronze prizes if they are at or above prince level and have one village. For the players in the top 5 houses, their bronze prizes are upgraded to silver. For the top house, their silver prize is upgraded to gold. This might be an easier way to look at things. (Records, 2016)

Despite frequent answers to questions regarding the end of the world, Wild-Lion, the marshal of House 20, issued a proclamation and laid out the rules of the game and the future of our journey. We continued the path of peace and decided to immigrate to a new world called USA 1.

Closeness. Here we see many attempts for the Faction members to be together in the next world. Some were planning to quit the game, because it had been almost one year and a half of gameplay:

Jennifer: I tried to leave the game, but I can't.

Bear: I keep wanting to leave the game, but never get around to it, so i might as well stock up on as much as possible, and help the ones that want to continue, get theirs. (Records, 2016)

Ultimately, however, we did not quit—we landed in yet another region, East Washington, and started again.

Excitement. We were so excited that the game was ending. This gaming journey had been filled with happy and sad memories for all of us, and now there was a new world that we hoped we would start together again. One month before the world ended, Trelld and Bear joined USA 1, which had just started, to help accommodate the Faction there. They reported back to the Faction about the area, the neighbors, and what Factions and Houses existed in USA 1. In other words, they were scouting the area, making sure that we would enter a safe place:

Jennifer: How is life in the new world?

Mire: Yes, so what precisely are you buggers up to on USA1?

Trelld: Not much, boss. Kinda waiting it out, I guess. Everything peaceful there. No siege camps yet. Looking for the Honour. I have 3 villages in USA 1 and producing more resources than some people with 8. (Records, 2016)

Communication. There was a lot of communication over team-making in USA 1. We were part of House 20, the peace-loving House, so we were mostly in contact with other Faction members of House 20, and we hoped that they would join us. Therefore, we started communicating with other members to see if they were interested in joining the House:

Trelld: Hey Seeker, long time no see! How have you been?

Seeker: good how about you?

Trelld: Good, you playing any worlds at the moment?

Seeker: World 1 and 2 but not that much 1-2 villages max :)

Trelld: A lot of us are on USA 1 if you'd like to join :)

(Records, 2016)

Immigration to a New World

Finally, the world ended on day 1,555 11:02:24 PM game time when House 16 pressed the “End the World” button. For a few days logging in to the game would show us fireworks (in a gaming manner) on a frozen world (see Figure 9). After a few days, the world got deactivated and no login was possible. Therefore, as planned, we immigrated to USA 1.

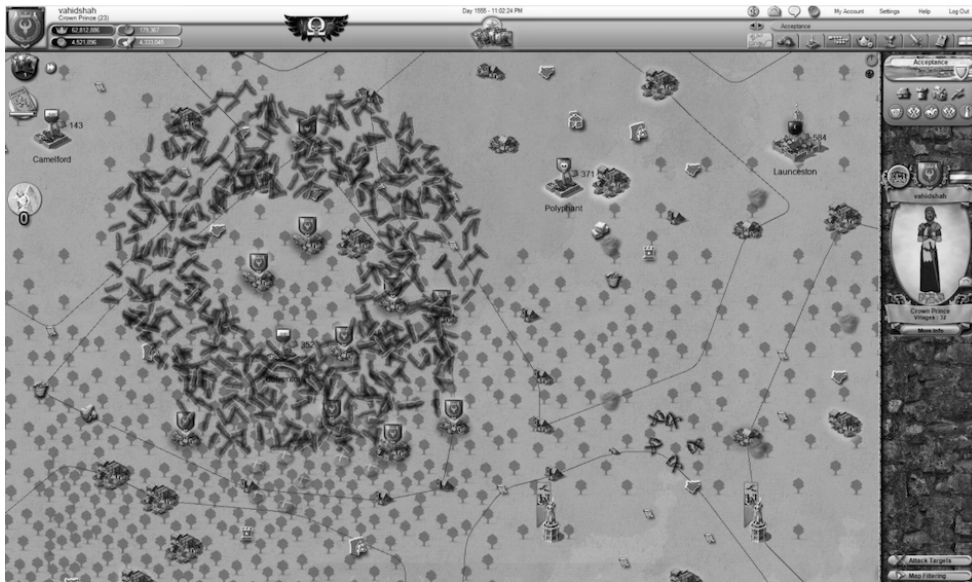


Figure 9. Fireworks

The hardest part with a new world is that one needs to start from the very lowest rank, and, when one is used to a full repository, it is not easy. Therefore, we needed support, which was the reason why Bear and Trelld had settled down in East Washington before us. Upon the entry in the world, we messaged each other and created our communication channels.

Support. Mire, as the FG of Rainbow of Havoc, had already created a new Faction with the same name; however, we could not join it until we reached Rank 7 (Bondsman). A support channel, therefore, was created, helping us rise to that level as fast as we could. Through this thread, we requested what we needed and all the Faction members helped:

Vahid: Can you LL [Liege Lord] me at 49310 (Peace)? Thanks! I got a new villa–yay!

Justin: Yep and request sent Vahid: Thank you ;) (Records, 2016)

Since we were neutral, not affiliated to any House, other players could attack us under different pretexts. Therefore, we also created a security thread to help us against possible aggression by other neighboring players from non-aligned Houses.

Rules. A new world has many rules to follow, most of them similar to what we were used to in our previous world. As new settlers, we needed to be briefed on the new land's rules so that we did not cross any lines that could potentially lead to a new unwanted conflict. In other words, our experience of the previous world made us cautious at the beginning. In that respect, Halo, the marshal of House 20, issued the following proclamation:

Halo: Nothing is really going on, right now, but I would just like to send a reminder to my fellow players. Check with your Sheriff for county rules—although most are just common-sense. Still, the willingness to communicate goes a long way to showing the local power-in-charge that H20 is not a threat. Expansion can be misinterpreted as a threat. So, once again, communicate with your sheriff (for taking stewardship of a parish), and your steward (for starting a new village). I know I'm stating the obvious, so forgive me... It's just a reminder ;) (Records, 2016)

Quite related to this category was the politics of the new world. In order to survive a new world with its own dynamics and power struggles, we needed to make certain that we showed a friendly picture to the rest of the world. Therefore, we also regularly embarked on humanitarian actions, such as making donations and healing diseases.

Interview

In order to investigate the affordances of the Faction community for language development, I created an interview protocol (see Appendix B) comprising six main questions and many probes around them. The interview (see Appendix C for the interview text) was conducted via the text mode of Discord where I approached Middo and asked him if he would allow me to do an interview (I originally had plans to interview Tikenno as well; however, she was not available for an interview while the study was in progress).

The interview was conducted on three occasions, with the participant being open to my questions. The first two sessions were during my data analysis, while the third session was a follow-up conducted after the data analysis was finished.

The following components / purposes were investigated:

- Demographics: age, gender, geographical location, and language
- Description / experience: gaming experience
- Structural: whether he had assumed any social roles in the game, and, if so, how it had affected his language development
- Contrast: asked him to compare his gaming experience and linguistic skills with other Faction members.
- Hypothetical: posed him with hypothetical scenarios.
- Behavioral Event: investigated his SLS journey in reference to certain game points
- Phenomenological: asked him to express what being “competent” in the game meant to him
- Probe: asked for clarifications on many issues which were shared

Midido was a 27-year-old male Egyptian gamer who spoke Arabic as his first language. He had been playing the game for more than five years, with SK not being the only game he played or was playing at the time—he had played the offline version of the game, Stronghold Crusader, and was playing other games and multiple worlds at the time of the interview. Furthermore, he had assumed different social roles in SK and other MOOGs.

He had learned English in school, but he believed that speaking with a NES in the game was important in developing language skills, helping him to learn “new vocabulary” and “improve the structure of sentences and grammar.” He also mentioned another MMOG called Angels Online (<https://ao.igg.com/>) that he had played, which helped him with “remembering the language.” When asked if playing the game could help him communicate with a tourist in a hypothetical situation, he mentioned that it had, especially when he “wanted to ask about something,” as the game helped him with “practicing and learning the language” without which his “English would be forgotten.” He believed that “if u dont use the language u will forget it after sometime.”

He played as part of a Faction in SK and was in contact with some players on Facebook. He rated his activity level as medium, due to life and work responsibilities, but said that he had been more active on Discord when playing Angels Online, or generally more active in the game when he was unemployed. He believed that playing as part of a team was more enjoyable as “you do a part and others do another part.” He was generally not interested in taking so many responsibilities, “a big issue in [his] personality,” so he had refrained from assuming high-office roles which would put him “in front line.” He was considered a skilled player, and, thus, had been asked twice to be a Faction leader in two other worlds that he was playing; however, he had declined the offers, opting for the less responsibility-laden position of “officer” in our world.

His written English showed instances of various local errors; however, those errors did not interfere with communication. For instance, there were errors in his responses such as: word choice (e.g., i was afraid that u maybe quit), punctuation (e.g., i would say its medium), grammar (e.g., i dont like much responsibilities), missing word (e.g., my English not very well), and spelling (e.g., hay sry i was in a vacation). On the other hand, his writing showed a mix of simple and complex structures along with a satisfactory range of vocabulary. For instance, there were passive structures (e.g., I’ve been asked to be a Faction leader), complex structures (e.g., not only SHK is the online game that i play i play also another game), dropping “that” in a clause and adding an appositive (e.g., i hope everything is good there), conditionals (e.g., i could handle it alone i would do it alone sometimes), and different expressions (e.g., thanks to the online games). Rating this writing piece using an IELTS Writing Task 2 rubric (see <https://www.ielts.org/-/media/pdfs/writing-band-descriptors-task-2.ashx?la=en>) could place him in the sixth band score level, descriptive of a very good language user. Of course, I could not know how much of this proficiency was achieved through gaming, but gaming, as *Middo* acknowledged, contributed to his proficiency.

Final Thoughts

To conclude this section, I map the findings of this analysis on the tenets of the CoP model (see Figure 10). As the analysis shows, a Faction community in SK could be considered as a CoP where players, forming communal ties, gathered around a shared domain and collaborated towards accomplishing shared goals by engaging in shared practices. In this dynamic community, newcomers could receive support from old-timers, moving from a peripheral to a central position in the community. As could be seen, the breakout of war united the community towards a shared goal and they developed their communal ties and skills in the process, becoming competent members of their Faction. All members, regardless of background, contributed to the cause and, even though they lost the battle, stayed together and formed their own neutral Faction and House in a new world. Likewise, the one of two NNES players in this community who was the subject of the present research, *Middo*, used the same affordances and engaged in the social dynamics involved in the community to develop his language skills at the same time that he enjoyed the play. This supportive environment, filled with input, output, noticing, social interaction, feedback and scaffolding, trust, and excitement, gave him the potential for second language socialization.

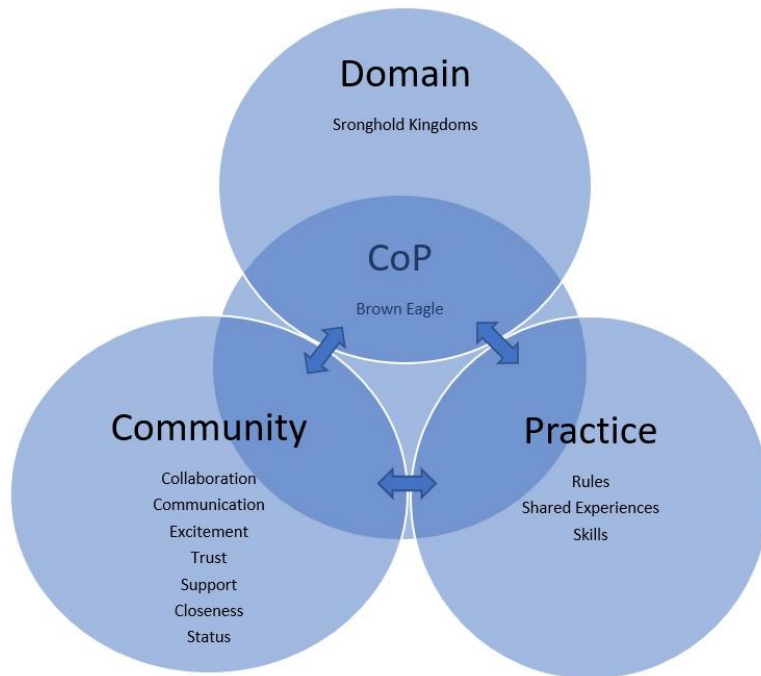


Figure 10. Model of SK CoP

Based on this model, the principles of a CoP, namely, domain, community, and practice characterize the social dynamics at work in SK. The domain, that is, the shared area of interest—the gameplay—gathered players from diverse backgrounds in the game world, providing them with a reason to invest in the domain. Pursuing their goals (e.g., dominating the world), the players, then, engaged in communal endeavors and shared practices with other community members, forming communal ties, experiences, and feelings. The diversity of members’ backgrounds, interests, and goals, all relevant to the domain, had the potential to shape different relations, feelings, practices, and courses of events within the CoP in such a way that the world housed multiple sub-CoPs within its premises. Moreover, the principles of the CoP were in constant interaction with each other. That is, domain interacted with both community and practice, and vice versa. For instance, the interest in dominating the world motivated the development of certain skills whose acquisition corresponded to differing status levels within the community. Likewise, higher status entailed the expertise in the workings of the game which would maintain the interest in the domain. For instance, a high-level player such as Morning Destroyer possessed different skills and viewed the gameplay differently from other lower-ranking players.

Brown Eagle was a CoP within SK, a sub-CoP to be exact, which was not part of a House. The Faction members, who came from different backgrounds and gaming experiences, gathered around their interest and formed communal ties while engaging in shared activities in the face of changing times. War united them against an external enemy; peace gave them a chance to rise again; the end of the world had them excitedly plan for the future; and immigration gave them hope to live together at peace. The range of activities required to live during each time was unique and, at the same time, recurrent. Only the priorities changed; for instance, while communication and collaboration were essential communal activities during all times, they were vital during the war, as the Faction faced an existential threat. Elements which helped the members stand together during their three-year journey were communication, collaboration,

support, trust, excitement, closeness, and status. These elements, on the one hand, interacted with the community practices, such as the knowledge and observance of rules, development of skills, and shared experiences, and with domain on the other.

Accordingly, the dynamics within Brown Eagle were compatible with those of a CoP. However, the categories' closeness and excitement, while emerging in two eras, namely, war and end of the world, enveloped all Faction endeavors. Faction dynamics were always emotionally charged—happiness, sadness, fear, anger, joy, and surprise were some of the emotions that I personally felt during my gameplay, and I think the gameplay aroused similar feelings in my co-players as well. Therefore, the role of emotions in consolidating a CoP, while currently not a tenet of the theory, was an undeniable part of the dynamics in SK.

Discussion

In this section, I revisit and answer the research questions. Furthermore, I detail the contribution of this work to the field of second language teaching and learning and discuss how these findings can shape future research and practice.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the process of SLS in a Faction community called Brown Eagle in an MMOG called Stronghold Kingdom (SK). Two research questions drove this inquiry:

1. What are the sociocultural affordances of the Faction community for SLS? And
2. How does the Faction community shape and support the NNES' development of linguistic skills?

What are the sociocultural affordances of the Faction community for SLS? To answer this question, I became a participant-researcher in the Faction community for three years, where I could observe the group dynamics at the same time that I was participating in communal activities. Also, I collected as much data as I could from our communication threads over these years, a period during which the Faction passed through four eras—war, post-war peace and life in exile, end of the world, and immigration to a new world. The data were coded, categorized, and thematized based on the principles of the theoretical framework, SLS, with a CoP orientation. The results showed that a Faction community could be considered a CoP with various opportunities for SLS and language development. Brown Eagle, in line with the tenets of the CoP, was founded on a domain (gaming), a community (SK), where close communal relations were formed through communication, collaboration, support, trust, status, experiences, and practices structured through rules and skills. Likewise, this dynamic community provided its newcomers with opportunities to apprentice to the norms and become central members of the community through group participation, support, and apprenticeship in a friendly environment. Therefore, in line with the tenets of SLS, this community showed evidence for potential affordances for SLS.

The different eras experienced by Brown Eagle triggered different group dynamics among its members. Although all categories of norms were at work in all eras, some were more salient during specific eras. For instance, the breakout of war mobilized almost all categories (collaboration, skill, support, rules, closeness, trust, communication, and status); the era of post-war peace showed shared experiences and support; end of the world showed rules, closeness, excitement, and communication; and immigration to a new world showed support and rules

(see Table 2). I find a similar pattern between these norms and what could happen in real-life CoP where different priorities could arise out of necessity at different phases of one’s life journey.

Table 2. Summary of Faction Norms

War	Post-war peace and life in exile	End of the world	Immigration to a new world
Collaboration	Shared Experiences	Rules	Support
Skill	Support	Closeness	Rules
Support		Excitement	
Rules		Communication	
Closeness			
Trust			
Communication			
Status			

Note: Instances of these categories could be seen in all Faction life eras, but they were more salient during the corresponding era.

How does the Faction community shape and support the NNEs’ development of linguistic skills? To answer this question, I conducted an interview with one of the non-native English speakers of the community. The results showed that the participant, a 27-year-old Egyptian gamer, considered the affordances of MMOGs in general, and SK in particular, very important and useful in shaping his linguistic skills. He asserted that his participation in this community helped him keep his English “at a good level” by “really talking to english native talkers.” He even went so far as to say that he “really thank god for online games to get [him] to this point in [his] english language.” Furthermore, the diversity of lexical and grammatical features in his language showed that his language proficiency, based on an IELTS Task 2 writing rubric, was descriptive of a good language user. Therefore, to answer this question, the results show that there is evidence to assert that MMOGs potentially provide a supportive environment where principles of language learning (e.g., input, output, authenticity, social interaction, noticing, feedback, and scaffolding) can be supported in a CoP.

Contributions to the Field

This study has made several contributions to the field. First, it provides supporting evidence on the effectiveness of MMOGs for teaching and learning purposes. The results support Prensky (2001) and Gee’s (2003) assertions that learning with games is a unique experience, as learners participate in an affinity space with fun, playful, rule-governed, goal-oriented, interactive, outcomes-based, feedback-laden, adaptive, competitive, challenging, and fictional content. The social dynamics at work in SK supported these qualities. Second, this study applied the SLS framework to another unexplored gaming context, thus responding to Palmer’s (2010) call for more research into SLS in MMOGs, and found similar results that MMOGs provide special affordances for SLS. Third, on a methodological level, this ethnographic case study provided a macro-analysis of MMOG contexts, which, due to their recency, are gravely under-researched and sometimes negatively viewed, thus answering calls by Reinhardt and Sykes (2012) and Peterson (2016) for more sociocultural research on MMOGs. Fourth, on a theoretical level, SLS, being a fairly new perspective in SLA (Duff, 2007; Zuengler & Cole, 2005), was found

to be a robust lens through which to look at the sociocultural norms of MMOGs, hence, responding to Chappelle's (2009) call for diversifying theoretical perspectives on SLA. Finally, this study provided compelling evidence that social approaches to SLA are equally important in our investigation as cognitivist approaches, as, according to Ochs (2002), language learning is "part of a much larger process of becoming a person in society" (p. 106).

Implications for Practice and Research

This study has many implications for practice. This study showed that the dynamics in MMOGs can help language learners develop and/or improve linguistic skills (Black, 2005, 2006; Lam, 2004). Group participation and collaboration, negotiations of actions, feedback and scaffolds, authenticity and connection, and balanced challenges are required to make an engaging learning experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Egbert & Shahrokni, 2018; Zheng et al., 2009). The story of Brown Eagle and its consistent perseverance through adversity, among other factors, was about the interaction of these elements, which formed close bonds and shared learning experiences for all members. It is imperative that we use the potential of MMOGs to develop engaging learning environments where participants can interact, collaborate and/or compete over solving shared authentic tasks and balanced challenges. These elements will make learning engaging and allow students to explore a broader range of knowledge (Beatty, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Widdowson, 2012; Squire, 2008; Squire & Jenkins, 2003). At present, such standalone educational MMOGs are scarce in the field; however, CALL applications and technologies could effectively be employed and adapted to create such online CoP. Likewise, gamifying education, that is, using game elements in non-game settings, has been found to be an effective strategy to catalyze engagement, motivation, attention, and investment in learning (Dicheva et al., 2015).

This study has certain implications for research. It would have been ideal for this study to have looked into the process of SLS from the beginning of Middo's linguistic journey. Through this, I could have seen how he developed the sociocultural and linguistic knowledge and practices in the process of becoming a member in this community. Likewise, this might have allowed me to find out how he played peripherally and when and how he moved to the center of the community. However, playing the game for both of us did not start by our entering Brown Eagle. Personally, I had been playing on and off before, and he had played other MMOGs and was already a member of Brown Eagle when I joined. Therefore, unfortunately, I could not track his sociocultural and linguistic developments over the years by analyzing his language; what I arrived at was the product of his non-SK, SK, and non-game sociocultural and linguistic experiences. Therefore, this study, at its best, scratched the surface of the SLS process, establishing that SK, as a diminutive of MMOGs, was a legitimate site of culture and a CoP, where there were ample resources and opportunities for sociocultural and linguistic development.

In addition, this study showed that Middo had a positive attitude towards his linguistic journey in SK. Further research is required to delve more into the process, rather than simply the product, of a NNES's SLS journey, accessing the initial posts and exchanges of their progression longitudinally. Another issue which needs to be considered in further research is conducting more interviews with participants.

Finally, research should focus on the role of emotions in group dynamics and organizational settings. It seems that the formation of a CoP needs observance of the sociocultural norms of

the community; however, the duration of a CoP depends largely on emotions. For instance, in our case, Morning Destroyer left the Faction after the war, never to return. He was the leader of our Faction and he let the leadership be porous although he mentored us into acquiring the gaming skills in the beginning. What is it then that kept us together? Different events and the feelings experienced through them since the beginning of our gaming journey could have contributed to our three-year journey. Therefore, further research is required to assess the importance of emotions in community formation and longevity.

Conclusion

This qualitative study investigated second language socialization (SLS) in a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) called Stronghold Kingdoms (SK). Spanning three years of ethnographic work and using three data sources, that is, observation, analysis of records, and interview, the study showed that the sociocultural affordances of the MMOG provided a supportive environment for SLS. The community which formed around the shared interest of playing the game was filled with communication, collaboration, support, experiences, closeness, trust, and excitement, making it a vibrant environment for SLS. Furthermore, the results of an in-depth interview with a non-native English speaker-player suggested that MMOGs in general and SK in particular supported his language development. The results of this study have several implications for theory and practice, mainly highlighting the affordances of MMOGs for language learning and calling for longitudinal research into the process of SLS.

Notes

[1] Excommunication removes the power of a player to interdict themselves. Interdiction allows players to be protected against attacks, that is, nobody can attack them anymore. When one clicks on an interdicted target, it shows the time estimate on interdiction effect, for instance, “can be attacked in 5 hours.” That is why before a timed attack, we usually excommunicated the targets (that is, the players) so that they could not interdict themselves. If they did so, we could not attack them and the operation would not succeed. Both interdiction and excommunication are done through monks. That is why monk support is necessary in timed attacks. [[back](#)]

Acknowledgement

I would like to dearly thank the editor of *On the Internet* column, Vance Stevens, for his invaluable comments, suggestions, and edits throughout the publication of this research, which made the process as enjoyable as the research itself.

About the Author

Seyed Abdollah Shahrokni is an instructional designer with the Center for Academic Innovations at Western Oregon University (WOU). His research interests include computer assisted language learning (CALL), second language socialization (SLS) in online social spaces, and Task Engagement.

To cite this article:

Shahrokni, S. A. (2021). [On the internet:*Evidence for second language socialization in multiplayer online game play*] *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 24(4). <https://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej96/int.pdf>

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Abbreviations used in this article

No.	Term	Abbreviation
1.	Alternative account	alt
2.	Away from keyboard	AFK
3.	Communities of Practice	CoP
4.	Enemy Artificial Intelligence	AI
5.	Faction General	FG
6.	First Language	L1
7.	Face to face	F2F
8.	House	H
9.	House Marshal	HM
10.	Interdict	ID
11.	Legitimate Peripheral Participation	LPP
12.	Massively Multiplayer Online Real-time Strategy Game	MMORTS
13.	Multiplayer Massively Online Game	MMOG
14.	Native English Speakers	NES
15.	Non-native English Speakers	NNES
16.	Quest Atlantis	QA
17.	Second Language Acquisition	SLA
18.	Second Language Socialization	SLS
19.	Stronghold Kingdoms	SK
20.	Three-dimensional	3D
21.	United Kingdom	UK
22.	Virtual Worlds	VW
23.	Vocation Mode	VM
24.	World of Warcraft	WoW

Appendix B: Interview protocol

- How long have you been playing? What dragged you to this game?
- How did you learn English? Did playing the game have a role in learning English?
- What roles do you play? Are you part of a Faction? How socially are you engaged with the people in the game? Do you have close friends? Do you know people in real-life as well or it's just an in-game relationship?
- How communicative are you in the game? How much messaging do you have to do? How active are you on Discord?
- Do you learn English outside of the game? Do you need English in your daily life outside of the game?
- What are the characteristics of a successful Faction? What are the characteristics of a successful player?
-

Appendix C: Interview Transcript
July 15, 2018

Vahid: Hi Middo-it's so great to see you here :smiley:

Middo: i was afraid that u maybe quit

Vahid: oh! Thanks! No, I have been here all along. But I was busy with my classes.

Middo: its really more fun to be all on discord

Vahid: Yes

Middo: better communication and fast

Vahid: Sure! I just learned about it. For sure.

Middo: u can also have it on mobile

Vahid: Yes, I am going to do that today :smiley:

Middo: good good

Vahid: How's life?

Middo: well i was between jobs lately stayed home 4 months

Vahid: Aha

Middo: but started to go new to work last week

Vahid: Sorry about that, but at least you have chilled :smiley:

Middo: so i had lately much time

Vahid: Yaaaaaaay-congrats! What's the new job?

Middo: so i was around in game so much

Vahid: Oh-I see.

Middo: and so much watching movies too

Vahid: Nice :smiley:

Middo: well i was an auditor in and audit firm

Vahid: Oh, financial auditor or Psychological auditor?

Middo: its a pretty good job and has a nice future and ppl looks to u good

Vahid: Oh, Great!

Middo: financial

Vahid: I see

Middo: but i started to get bored after 4 years and half so i have 2 of my close friends who has a small clothing factory and i went to get a share and work with them. a big change in life. so its a small business. we hope for the best :smiley:

Vahid: Yaaaay! Great! Good luck with that :smiley:

Middo: thanks :smiley:

Vahid: Where are you from, Middo?

Middo: Egypt. and u?

Vahid: Oh, yeah? I have a friend from Egypt, too. I am from Iran :smiley:

Middo: ah cool

Vahid: But I am in America right now. Studying for my PhD.

Middo: wow thats cooler xD

Vahid: :smile:

Middo: i hope everything is good there especially after trump i mean with u

Vahid: Thanks! Well, our lives get impacted with political decisions. But we keep trying :smiley:

Middo: good good may god help and guide u

Vahid: Thanks, brother :). I love Egypt. I would love to visit Egypt someday. Middo, my Egyptian friend, has told me we will visit Egypt one day.

Middo: well my name is middo too. yes egypt is nice and cheap place to visit.many places to enjoy and 1usd=around from 16-19 EGP

Vahid: Wow! Yes! I will, hopefully. You can visit me in Iran when I go back.

Middo: i wish :heart_eyes:

Vahid: :wink:

Vahid: So, Middo, I was wondering if you could be my research participant so that I can ask you questions about your language learning experiences in the game. :smiley:

Middo: umm lets try xD

Vahid: Yay! Thank you :smiley: Let's do it! So, how long have you been playing? What dragged you to this game? :smiley:

Middo: i think 5 years ago. what dragged me that i was playing stronghold crusader and when i find the online one i was interested to try it

Vahid: Oh interesting! So, obviously, you speak English very well. I know you are from Egypt, so English is not your first language. How did you learn English? Did playing the game have a role in learning English?

Middo: nah my English not very well xD and yeah Arabic is my first language and i learned English while my education years in school and for sure the game and other online games played a role to improve my English . talking with people which English is their native language helped me alot

Vahid: Very interesting! Thanks for sharing! So, you say talking with people who speak English helped you a lot. Can you be more specific? How can speaking with native English speakers help?

Middo: i get new vocabulary from them and helps also to improve the structure of sentences and grammar too

Vahid: Oh, I see. If you want to compare your English with the time that you started the game, do you think your English has improved? If so, how much of it do you think is because of playing the game?

Middo: not only SHK is the online game that i play i play also another game even b4 SHK calls Angels Online which also helped me to improve my English and kept me remembering the language since u know if u dont use the language u will forget it after sometime

Vahid: I see. Very interesting! :smiley: So, in the games that you play, what roles do you play? Are you part of a Faction? How socially are you engaged with the people in the game? Do you have close friends? Do you know people in real-life as well or it's just an in-game relationship? Free free to add to this set of questions :).

Middo: you can say i play as a farmer in SHK language and yes im a part of a faction and i have friends on FB from this game

Vahid: Oh, interesting, Middo :smiley: Thanks! You don't have me as your FB friend :frowning:

My name there is [---]. Let's be in touch there as well.

Okay! Middo, have you ever been in a high-office position, like being a sheriff?

Middo: you mean in real life or in game?

Vahid: both :)? My focus is the game, but you could share your real-life experiences as well if you want to :).

Middo: well I've been asked to be a faction leader twice once in W1 and Global Conflict 1

but i refused in both xD. i dont like responsibilities too much but im liking for a minimum responsibility like being officer here now

Vahid: Oh, I see. What's about responsibilities that you don't like? just curious :smiley:

Middo: i dont like much responsibilities in general like to be in front line and thats a big issue in my personality i should work to change it

Vahid: I see. As long as you're happy with it :).

Okay, back to our interview, Middo! BTW, thank you so much for bearing with me. I really appreciate your help and support. So, how communicative are you in the game? How much messaging do you have to do? How active are you on Discord?

Vahid: Middo :smiley: Where are you?

July 19, 2018

Middo: hay sry i was in a vacation and then i forgot to answer. i would say its medium . not much and not few fair amount .i was so active on discord on my other game Angels Online but not any more

Vahid: Heeeyyyy :) Welcome back! I trust you have enjoyed your vacation :wink:

Wow! I noticed you're gone :wink:

Middo: yeah i enjoyed thank you :smile:

Vahid: Great :smiley: So, do you have time for questions today?

Middo: yes

Vahid: So, you said your're not as active as you were? Why not?

Middo: you know its life and work

Vahid: Oh I see. :smiley: So Middo, do you like to play as part of a group or individually?

Middo : i like to play in a group but if i could handle it alone i would do it alone sometimes

Vahid: Some people say, the beauty of multiplayer online game like SK is playing in a **group**. Do you agree?

Middo: i do agree.playing in multiplayer is more enjoying than playing alone.you do a part and others do another part

Vahid: Middo, do you learn English outside the game? Do you need English in your daily life outside the game?

Middo: nah its rare for me to use English outside online games

Vahid: Oh, interesting! So, suppose you see tourists visiting the pyramids. Do you approach them and talk to them?

Middo: not all the time but it happened few times when i wanted to ask about something

Vahid: Oh interesting. So, did the language you practice/learn in the game help you in those times?

Middo: yeah thanks to the online games it keeps me practicing and learning the language .without it my English would be forgotten

Vahid: Oh, very interesting. So, tell me more about this, Middo. How is it so?

Vahid: Hello, Where are you, Middo? :smiley:

September 1, 2018

Middo: Helo vahid im sry for late respond but I got busy at work and studying. ok lets finish it buy tomorrow.

Vahid: Oh, I see. Sorry! I'm going to finish it soon. Thanks for the time, Middo. So, I want to know more about your language learning in the game.

Vahid: You said you're not going to English classes, so how have you learned English? What is the role of playing games in your learning? Do you think your English has improved over

the years of gameplay?

Middo: my English isn't that well xD but the online games kept my English at a good level and really talking to english native talkers is helpful. i really thank god for online games to get me to this point in my english language

Vahid: What are the characteristics of a successful Faction? Also, what are the characteristics of a successful player?

Middo: characteristics of a successful faction is a faction that works in a team i tested that in SHK many times and its really has a good taste. characteristics of a successful player **is to learn how to work in that team well and give the hand to others when needed**

Vahid: Is there anything else you want to share about your gaming experience with me? How has it been playing for this long time?

Middo: i want also to add that i started to study Accounting,Business and Auditing it also helping my english to be improved since my studies was in arabic all my years from school to university. you may ask me any question again if i didnt answer it well. im sry for being busy this period coz im having many interviews and i have to study for this interviews tests coz im looking for a new job

Vahid: Thank you so much, Middo! That's excellent! I really appreciate your help. It was really interesting to talk to you, and know you at a different level. Before this, we were gaming friends and now I know a lot more about you and your journey. I hope this interview has been useful to you too as much as it has been to me. Thanks again, and good luck with your studies and everything. Hope to see you in person sometime :). Please don't hesitate to contact me if I could ever be of help :). And thanks for the offer. I'll contact you if there's anything else.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Abbreviations used in this article

No.	Term	Abbreviation
1.	<i>Alternative account</i>	<i>alt</i>
2.	<i>Away from keyboard</i>	<i>AFK</i>
3.	<i>Communities of Practice</i>	<i>CoP</i>
4.	<i>Enemy Artificial Intelligence</i>	<i>AI</i>
5.	<i>Faction General</i>	<i>FG</i>
6.	<i>First Language</i>	<i>L1</i>
7.	<i>Face to face</i>	<i>F2F</i>
8.	<i>House</i>	<i>H</i>
9.	<i>House Marshal</i>	<i>HM</i>
10.	<i>Interdict</i>	<i>ID</i>
11.	<i>Legitimate Peripheral Participation</i>	<i>LPP</i>
12.	<i>Massively Multiplayer Online Real-time Strategy Game</i>	<i>MMORTS</i>
13.	<i>Multiplayer Massively Online Game</i>	<i>MMOG</i>
14.	<i>Native English Speakers</i>	<i>NES</i>
15.	<i>Non-native English Speakers</i>	<i>NNES</i>
16.	<i>Quest Atlantis</i>	<i>QA</i>
17.	<i>Second Language Acquisition</i>	<i>SLA</i>
18.	<i>Second Language Socialization</i>	<i>SLS</i>

19.	<i>Stronghold Kingdoms</i>	SK
20.	<i>Three-dimensional</i>	3D
21.	<i>United Kingdom</i>	UK
22.	<i>Virtual Worlds</i>	VW
23.	<i>Vocation Mode</i>	VM
24.	<i>World of Warcraft</i>	WoW

Appendix B: Interview protocol

- *How long have you been playing? What dragged you to this game?*
- *How did you learn English? Did playing the game have a role in learning English?*
- *What roles do you play? Are you part of a Faction? How socially are you engaged with the people in the game? Do you have close friends? Do you know people in real-life as well or it's just an in-game relationship?*
- *How communicative are you in the game? How much messaging do you have to do? How active are you on Discord?*
- *Do you learn English outside of the game? Do you need English in your daily life outside of the game?*
- *What are the characteristics of a successful Faction? What are the characteristics of a successful player?*

Appendix C: Interview Transcript

July 15, 2018

Vahid: *Hi Middo-it's so great to see you here :smiley:*

Middo: *i was afraid that u maybe quit*

Vahid: *oh! Thanks! No, I have been here all along. But I was busy with my classes.*

Middo: *its really more fun to be all on discord*

Vahid: *Yes*

Middo: *better communication and fast*

Vahid: *Sure! I just learned about it. For sure.*

Middo: *u can also have it on mobile*

Vahid: *Yes, I am going to do that today :smiley:*

Middo: good good
Vahid: How's life?
Middo: well i was between jobs lately stayed home 4 months
Vahid: Aha
Middo: but started to go new to work last week
Vahid: Sorry about that, but at least you have chilled :smiley:
Middo: so i had lately much time
Vahid: Yaaaaaaay–congrats! What's the new job?
Middo: so i was around in game so much
Vahid: Oh-I see.
Middo: and so much watching movies too
Vahid: Nice :smiley:
Middo: well i was an auditor in and audit firm
Vahid: Oh, financial auditor or Psychological auditor?
Middo: its a pretty good job and has a nice future and ppl looks to u good
Vahid: Oh, Great!
Middo: financial
Vahid: I see
Middo: but i started to get bored after 4 years and half so i have 2 of my close friends who has a small clothing factory and i went to get a share and work with them. a big change in life. so its a small business. we hope for the best :smiley:
Vahid: Yaaaay! Great! Good luck with that :smiley:
Middo: thanks :smiley:
Vahid: Where are you from, Middo?
Middo: Egypt. and u?
Vahid: Oh, yeah? I have a friend from Egypt, too. I am from Iran :smiley:
Middo: ah cool
Vahid: But I am in America right now. Studying for my PhD.
Middo: wow thats cooler xD
Vahid: :smile:
Middo: i hope everything is good there especially after trump i mean with u
Vahid: Thanks! Well, our lives get impacted with political decisions. But we keep trying :smiley:
Middo: good good may god help and guide u
Vahid: Thanks, brother :). I love Egypt. I would love to visit Egypt someday. Middo, my Egyptian friend, has told me we will visit Egypt one day.
Middo: well my name is middo too. yes egypt is nice and cheap place to visit.many places to enjoy and 1usd=around from 16-19 EGP
Vahid: Wow! Yes! I will, hopefully. You can visit me in Iran when I go back.
Middo: i wish :heart_eyes:
Vahid: :wink:
Vahid: So, Middo, I was wondering if you could be my research participant so that I can ask you questions about your language learning experiences in the game. :smiley:
Middo: umm lets try xD
Vahid: Yay! Thank you :smiley: Let's do it! So, how long have you been playing? What dragged you to this game? :smiley:

Middo: i think 5 years ago. what dragged me that i was playing stronghold crusader and when i find the online one i was interested to try it

Vahid: Oh interesting! So, obviously, you speak English very well. I know you are from Egypt, so English is not your first language. How did you learn English? Did playing the game have a role in learning English?

Middo: nah my English not very well xD and yeah Arabic is my first language and i learned English while my education years in school and for sure the game and other online games played a role to improve my English . talking with people which English is their native language helped me alot

Vahid: Very interesting! Thanks for sharing! So, you say talking with people who speak English helped you a lot. Can you be more specific? How can speaking with native English speakers help?

Middo: i get new vocabulary from them and helps also to improve the structure of sentences and grammar too

Vahid: Oh, I see. If you want to compare your English with the time that you started the game, do you think your English has improved? If so, how much of it do you think is because of playing the game?

Middo: not only SHK is the online game that i play i play also another game even b4 SHK calls Angels Online which also helped me to improve my English and kept me remembering the language since u know if u dont use the language u will forget it after sometime

Vahid: I see. Very interesting! :smiley: So, in the games that you play, what roles do you play? Are you part of a Faction? How socially are you engaged with the people in the game? Do you have close friends? Do you know people in real-life as well or it's just an in-game relationship? Free free to add to this set of questions :).

Middo: you can say i play as a farmer in SHK language and yes im a part of a faction and i have friends on FB from this game

Vahid: Oh, interesting, Middo :smiley: Thanks! You don't have me as your FB fiend :frowning:

My name there is [—]. Let's be in touch there as well.

Okay! Middo, have you ever been in a high-office position, like being a sheriff?

Middo: you mean in real life or in game?

Vahid: both :)? My focus is the game, but you could share your real-life experiences as well if you want to :).

Middo: well I've been asked to be a faction leader twice once in W1 and Global Conflict 1 but i refused in both xD. i dont like responsibilities too much but im liking for a minimum responsibility like being officer here now

Vahid: Oh, I see. What's about responsibilities that you don't like? just curious :smiley:

Middo: i dont like much responsibilities in general like to be in front line and thats a big issue in my personality i should work to change it

Vahid: I see. As long as you're happy with it :).

Okay, back to our interview, Middo! BTW, thank you so much for bearing with me. I really appreciate your help and support. So, how communicative are you in the game? How much messaging do you have to do? How active are you on Discord?

Vahid: Middo :smiley: Where are you?

July 19, 2018

Middo: *hay sry i was in a vacation and then i forgot to answer. i would say its medium . not much and not few fair amount .i was so active on discord on my other game Angels Online but not any more*

Vahid: *Heeeyyyy :) Welcome back! I trust you have enjoyed your vacation :wink:*

Wow! I noticed you're gone :wink:

Middo: *yeah i enjoyed thank you :smile:*

Vahid: *Great :smiley: So, do you have time for questions today?*

Middo: *yes*

Vahid: *So, you said your're not as active as you were? Why not?*

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September 1, 2018

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Vahid: *Thank you so much, Middo! That's excellent! I really appreciate your help. It was really interesting to talk to you, and know you at a different level. Before this, we were gaming friends and now I know a lot more about you and your journey. I hope this interview has been useful to you too as much as it has been to me. Thanks again, and good luck with your studies and everything. Hope to see you in person sometime :). Please don't hesitate to contact me if I could ever be of help :). And thanks for the offer. I'll contact you if there's anything else.*

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