

Learning08: Methodologies and Practices for Approaching Learning as a Social Phenomenon Inside and Outside of School

Pilar Lacasa, University of Alcalá

Children and new media ecologies: Bringing commercial videogames into the classrooms

Why are we speaking about ecological models to approach new media? We understand ecology following Urie Bronfenbrenner and collaborators (1998) when they approach to generation of meaning in specific contexts and relationships between people and their environment. We also considered James Gee (2008) model in which modern video games can illuminate the nature of human thinking and problem solving as situated and embodied. Adopting these perspective my presentation explores children's and adults' conversations in the classroom when commercial games are used as educational tools to develop digital literacies. We discuss a series of conversations in order to explore how children and adults, who are helping them in the classroom, focus on specific themes than have also been of interest for game designers and academic analysts. Now these topics are introduced from a very different perspective, *the point of view of children, teachers and researchers who play and learn with and from videogames*. Our data come from a project developed in collaboration with Electronic Arts-Spain and performed according to an ethnografic and action research perspective. Three different games (NBA LIVE 07, Harry Potter anf the Goblet of Fire and The Sims 2 Pet) were selected as a representations of sport, adventures and simulation games. Five workshops of between 6 and 12 sessions of about 90 minutes each were organized during the school year 2006/07 in two public schools in Madrid, each of them structured around one specific game. All the sessions were videotaped and complementary material was gathered (Appendix 1 includes information about this process and the analytical procedure). Preliminary analyses are included as a result of a conversational analysis. *The main goal of the analyses was to explore how relationships between virtual and real life are established by children and adults when playing and discussing the game*. Although these analyses are still very preliminary, *we wish to discuss how children and adults manage to be conscious of these games, understood as dynamic systems that involve specific rules and represent fictional worlds. Specific dimensions of each game seem to orient the reflective processes that we interpret as a form of "situated*

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cognition". We understand that such processes of reflection about the game are an important part of digital literacy education.

References

Gee, J. (2008). Video Games and Embodiment. *Games and Culture*, 3(3-4), 253-263.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology. Fifth edition. Volume 1: Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 993-1028). Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.