

Serious Video Games as Literacy and Vocabulary Acquisition Environments for Greek as Second/Foreign Language: The Case of “Einstown”

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Abstract : The Covid-19 pandemic has affected millions of people on a global scale, while lockdowns and quarantine measures were adopted periodically by a vast number of countries. These peculiar socio-historical conditions have led to the growth of participation in online environments. At the same time, the official educational bodies of many countries have been forced, for the first time at least for Greece and Cyprus, to switch to distance learning methods throughout the educational levels. However, this has not been done without issues, both in the technological and functional level, concerning the tools and the processes. Video games are the finest example of simulations of distance learning problem-solving environments. They incorporate different semiotic modes (e.g., a combination of image, sound, texts, gesture) while all this takes place in social and cultural constructed contexts. Players interact in the game environment in terms of spaces, objects, and actions in order to accomplish their goals, solve its problems, and win the game. In addition, players are engaging in layering literacies, which include combinations of independent and collaborative, digital and nondigital practices and spaces acting jointly to support meaning making, including interaction among and across texts and modalities (Abrams, 2017). From this point of view, players are engaged in collaborative, self-directed, and interest-based experiences by going back and forth and around gameplay. Within this context, this paper investigates the way Einstown, a greek serious video game, functions as an effective distance learning environment for teaching Greek as a second|foreign language to adults. The research methodology adopted is the case study approach using mixed methods. The participants were two adult women who are immigrants in Greece and who had zero gaming experience. The results of this research reveal that the videogame Einstown is, in fact, a digital environment of literacy through which the participants achieve active learning, cooperation, and engage in digital and non-digital literacy practices that result in improving the learning of specialized vocabulary presented throughout the gameplay.

Keywords : second/foreign language, vocabulary acquisition, literacy, serious video games

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