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Submission of paper

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3. **Type of presentation intended:** Paper

4. **Broad thematic areas in SLA research which best describe the proposal:** Lexicon; Social context and SLA; L2 use.

5. **Title of the paper (max 20 words):** Learning by playing: Relations between out-of-school digital gameplay and L2 English proficiency

6. **Abstract (max 450 words, including references).**

The relation between digital gameplay and language learning is a growing field of interest within SLA. Gee (2007) was among the first linguists to highlight the affordances offered by digital games for learning and literacy; subsequent empirical studies have proved him right as regards L2 learning. The present study is grounded in sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) where social interaction is fundamental; likewise, social interaction is central in many games (see e.g. Peterson, 2012). The aim of the present study is to shed more light on the relation between digital gameplay and L2 English proficiency, vocabulary in particular, as well as on the relation between gameplay and learners’ attitudes towards English. To this end, a sample of 80 L2 English learners (aged 15–16) were divided into three Digital Game Groups (DGGs) based on frequency of out-of-school digital gameplay activity: (1) non-gamers, (2) moderate gamers, and (3) frequent gamers (≥ 5 hours/week). Due to the gendered distribution of non-gamers (predominantly female) and frequent gamers (predominantly male), these three DGGs are also partially defined by gender. The study attempts to answer the following research questions: (1) Are there any correlations between out-of-school digital game play and (a) L2 proficiency, (b) vocabulary, (c) attitudes towards English, and (d) outcomes in terms of various grades? (2) What is the role of gender in any correlations observed? For the present study, we use datasets originally collected for Author1 (year), comprising questionnaire data, vocabulary tests, essays, assessment data, and school subject grades. The data were analyzed quantitatively using Pearson’s chi-squared and Cramér’s V for tests of association between nominal variables, and t-tests, ANOVA, and classical eta squared for tests of variance with numeric variables. Results show a medium to large effect of gameplay, but also gender, on vocabulary. Further, DGG 3 had the most advanced vocabulary, the highest rated essays, and the highest final English grades, closely followed by DGG 1, while DGG 2 trailed behind. Attitudes varied between the groups, but DGG 3 tended to have the most positive attitudes towards English. One conclusion is that both gaming and gender are connected with L2 English proficiency.


