

GRAU D'ANGLÈS
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**Non-Translated Role-Playing Games and
Their Usefulness in Second Language
Vocabulary Acquisition**

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Abstract

This project is about the acquisition of vocabulary for in second language with the visual resources of a role-playing videogame. It is hypothesised that non-translated English Role-playing Games (RPGs) offer an opportunity to acquire vocabulary in a L2. This is related to the Involvement Load Hypothesis, which concentrates on the need, the search and the later use or application of vocabulary from a learner in an L2, and the Learning Burden, which focuses on the idea that the closer the L1 and L2 are in relation to their similarities, the easier will be for the learner to acquire new vocabulary. Three participants have been selected to take part in case studies to see if there is some kind of evolution in their L2 English vocabulary by playing Final Fantasy XIV. The finding indicates that cutscenes in non-translated role-playing game offer great opportunities for L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Key words

Second language, videogames, vocabulary acquisition, language teaching

1. Introduction

1.1 Previous research on videogames and L2 vocabulary acquisition

Videogames have been a topic of research for many reasons, but the focus of this piece of work would be testing if they are useful for acquiring a second language L2 or, at least, improving our own vocabulary when learning a second language. Most Many linguists are in favour of the use of videogames to enrich one's vocabulary and that, in addition to some previous notion knowledge of the language one is interested in, may prove useful in L2 vocabulary acquisition.

The games that have been researched fall into four separate categories that go from the more specialised language (such as sports games) to a wider range of more general vocabulary and topics (such as RPGs – role playing games). Said categories are sports games, virtual pet games, simulators, and RPGs (role playing games) (de Haan, 2005).

We can group the first three categories under one single scope: they are useful for because of their lack of their focus on one single topic or genre. Taking sports games, for example, it is better to acquire vocabulary from one of these games because there is certain that we will not encounter a great deal into vocabulary not related to the sport appearing into the game. Simulators go one step further and, instead of presenting just one topic like sports game, they focus also on the relation between people or between a task or activity and what has to be done to accomplish said task or activity. They also comprise different vocabulary related to the field they try to recreate and represent. When one plays *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001-2020), a housing-centred videogame where you can catch insects, go fishing, dig some fossils, and customize your character in whichever way you

want, for example, we can acquire vocabulary related not only with the house, but also vocabulary related to insects, plants, fish and so on.

RPGs on the other hand, fall into a different category than the two examples above because they present the player with a story with its plot, characters, environment, etc. There is plenty of vocabulary to acquire. If one takes any *Final Fantasy*, which is one of the most famous fantasy game franchises set in different scenarios depending on the specific version of the game played, for example, one may acquire vocabulary related to a fantasy world. Another example to take into consideration when talking about the language acquisition related to RPGs is *The Rune Factory Series (Marvelous, 2003-2021)*. Rune Factory explains the story of the main character, who usually has amnesia, and the adventures he/she has to experience to regain their memories. What may be useful as research is the fact that it is an RPG simulator: while you fight monsters you have to tend to a farm and try to go on a date (and eventually marry) one of the bachelors and bachelorettes that the game presents to you. So, it has this double categorisation and, possibly, this doubles usefulness when trying to acquire vocabulary in a second language.

This impression of videogames being useful is reflected by previous research, as seen in Farr and Murray's (2016) handbook contains a whole section on Gaming and Young Language Learning. Although most research share the same idea of the usefulness of the three first groups of videogame categorisation discussed above, there are some that agree with the usefulness of RPGs in acquiring new vocabulary (Sundqvist, 2013). Thus, this work will focus on an RPG and its visual resources as meanings to learn L2 vocabulary.

The approach in which videogames may prove useful in acquiring vocabulary is a communicative approach to language teaching. This involves the use of language in a

realistic communicative situation. A theoretical construct which explains their usefulness is the Involvement Load Hypothesis. This concept advanced by Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), takes into consideration the need, the search and the evaluation of a word when learning a second language. In other words, the necessity an individual has for the vocabulary item in the second language, if it is useful or not for their objectives; the search said individual has to do in order to accomplish this objective; and the uses the subject has for the search done. Therefore, according to this theory, some videogames have the upper hand when it comes to L2 vocabulary acquisition.

If we take into consideration the four categories of video games explained above, three of them more commonly share similarities with our surroundings. For example, in real life, sport plays a major role in some people's everyday routines whether they play it or simply watch it on TV or in person. If a person wants to learn some vocabulary related to their favourite sport and is interested in videogames then, they could try to play games related to it. In consequence, a person's acquisition of language of said sport will prove useful for the sole purpose of understanding better his or her hobby (or simply enrich his or her vocabulary to become one sports player someday, for example). Having these real situations in-game, he or she can apply them into his daily basis. Thus, the necessity, the search and then the later use of said vocabulary, will be always present at the time the person is trying to get the meaning of the game he/she is playing. They will have this need to know the vocabulary, to search for meaning and context in which the vocabulary is used, and then they will try to use it so as to practice it and retain it for their lives.

Virtual pets and simulators prove also useful to focus on one single topic. On the one hand, virtual pet videogames have the characteristic of having to tend to a pet, and thus, the vocabulary acquired would be related to this field. If one must import a word from

one situation to another (the videogame to real life), one will see clearly that the vocabulary used in said games have a place in his life. Words like *cat*, *dog*, *vet*, *scissors*, *play*, *tag*, etc., some related and the others on the same domain (and others, like *scissors*, which would be, for example, used in the school domain), will make the learner of the language accustomed to use them in his real relations with the domain of animals. On the other hand, and with the similarity in which you must tend to something, simulators also have this fictional-realness relation to them: even if the situation in the simulator is not real, they do have characteristics that can be applied to the real world. Simulators then, as the name suggests, are the closest type of videogame with the veracity and realness of the world and the surroundings of the learning player. Games like *Animal Crossing* (mentioned above) or *The Sims*, where you have to construct your own house and create relationships with neighbours, covers situations in real-life that everyone, not only players, can benefit from. Thus, the need of the person playing the kind of videogames mentioned above will have the necessity to understand them in order to use their vocabulary in their lives. So, if this person has the necessity to understand the vocabulary to make use of it in his or her life, this person will search for the meaning, context, and perhaps, pronunciation, of the vocabulary he/she is trying to use.

And finally, in the case of RPGs (role-playing games) although RPGs do not usually have realness in them and, in the majority of cases, the world that is presented to the player is related to fantasy. Taking into consideration games like *Final Fantasy* or *Dragon Quest*, the world, story, characters and items that the game requires the player to use, may differ from the ones one may expect to encounter in a daily basis (as opposed to virtual pet games, simulators and sports games). But it is in this difference that researchers have seen a good way to acquire new vocabulary for their second language acquisition: the

experience of a non-real world, can make the player be more focused and motivated to complete the story and immerse, or involve, in Laufer and Hulstijn's (2001) terms, themselves in the game.

According to Zou, Huang and Xie (2019), MMORPGs (massive multiplayer online role-playing games), are beneficial for L2 learners. As they have the feature of being online, the interactions made within the game allow the players to learn new vocabulary to communicate with their fellow players so they can reach the same goals. In addition, the use of pre-made quests given by the NPCs (non-playable characters) of said games and the customization screen of the player's characters are also useful to expand the vocabulary the player may have beforehand (for example, to acquire vocabulary related to the body for the character customization, and of chores when completing quests, although they may not be related at all to a real situation).

As Zou, Huang and Xie have demonstrated, they take a different approach of the different types of games that exist and their categorisation. In DeHaan's (2005) work, games are categorized in four different types, but Zuo, Huang and Xie go one step further and make no distinction between real games (such as a role-playing games that can be performed in a classroom) and games that use technology as their base to learn a second language (*Duolingo*, to mention one). Therefore, their categorization and games can be structured as follows: tutorial games, simulation games, role-playing games, motion-sensing games, gamified digital books, 3D virtual games, adventure games, card games, board games, and serious games (Zou, Huang and Xie, 2019). They are all useful to acquire second language vocabulary as they provide different methodology to the learning process. RPGs would fall in the category of adventure games, as they tend to have an adventure where a main character has to go through a world map, solving quests, talking

to different characters and navigate different dungeons in order to advance to the next quest to complete the game.

1.2 Learning vocabulary

Before investigating how RPGs can help learners acquire vocabulary in a second language, the question that arises is what is involved in knowing a word. The answer can be explained by comparing both L1 and L2 and the relation between them. If, for example, the learner knows and understands a Romance language and thus, it is his first language, then it would be easier for him to understand another Romance language as their L2. If not, then the process and the understanding of it would be more complicated. The concept of the learning burden (Swenson and West, 1934) is thus applied: the effort a learner puts when learning a language. For example, L2 vocabulary with Greco-Latin roots has a lower learning burden for learners whose L1 share those roots.

Although one can extract the meaning of a word by only its context and the situation it is used in, there are other words that cannot be extrapolated from the L1 to the L2 and thus, the collocation and use of a word, for example, in the L1 may differ from the collocation of the same word in the L2. However, there are some factors, such as the receptive and productive use of a word. Productive use involves understanding how a word is used, collocated, pronounced and written. While the receptive aspect focuses on the listening and reading capabilities of the learner, the productive aspects concerns their writing and speaking. By knowing the four different aspects mentioned above, the learner can recognize the word given and try to understand its meaning by the repetition of it and the context it is used in (Nation, 2007).

When the learner is playing *Final Fantasy*, to give an example, he or she will be transported into a world where the rule of repetition is applied in the entirety of the experience. Vocabulary related to weapons, items and even locations (such as *cave*, *harbour*, *city*, *town*, *castle*, etc.) may help them remember said words and know to apply them. As for the meaning of the words, the learner can relate them with the visual resources the videogame provides. For example, although they may not know the word *harbour*, when presented with a seaside town full of ships and sailors, they can relate the word with the environment of the videogame and the knowledge he has of the real world (Nation, 2007). The player then, depending on the learning burden and the relation between L1 and L2 can figure out meaning and relating words by listening or pronouncing them repeatedly in order to retain them and learn them better. The player can also write or read them to try to figure out their spelling and comprehend their collocation within a sentence. By training both receptive input and productive output, the learner can lighten their learning burden and thus, make it easier to understand and learn new vocabulary, even if it is not related to their L1.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this project is to investigate the usefulness of RPGs and their cutscenes, a series of multimedia elements that appear in a videogame that give context to the story which can either be only images or they can also be accompanied by voice acting, to acquire vocabulary for a second language. More specifically, the object of this study then, is to take a non-translated RPG, in this case *Final Fantasy XIV*, which is a MMORPG with players from around the world, to prove that with its cutscenes, even if not translated

to into the learner's L1, can help a person understand the context in which the scenes take place and the vocabulary they contain.

In this paper it is hypothesised that the visual resource of a scene from a movie or a cutscene from a videogame can be useful to make relations between what it is seen and what it is said or what is happening. In most cases the character speaking is making references of the situation, using vocabulary related to it and, to some extent, the context of the situation the character is in. We also have to take into consideration the gestures of the character when speaking or the facial expression he or she is using, something they put emphasis on in most recent videogames with new technologies: as technology advances and new devices are invented, the technology used when creating a videogame also advances, leading to a more detailed modelling of the characters and their facial expressions, the sceneries and the engine they use to create the game. Although the vocabulary used may not be known by everyone, if the learner catches even a glimpse of what is happening in the cutscene, the learner can guess the meaning from the context. To give an example, if there is a cutscene in which there is a naval war, vocabulary related to the sea and war may be understood by the context and the fiction-realness of the situation, even though words like, for example, *ship*, which do not have a direct relation with the L1 of the learner (if his or her first language is Spanish), are not known by them.

2. Methods

2.1 Materials

The materials that would be used to test this hypothesis will be some cutscenes from the videogame Final Fantasy XIV (henceforth FFXIV). As one of the most played MMORPG at the time of writing, it provides the players with a variety of cutscenes that put them in context of what is said and done to reach a wider audience with its scenarios and story. As for the cutscenes used for this paper, the introduction of the game is a good opportunity to investigate the usefulness of videogames to acquire vocabulary for the L2: they provide more context and meaning than later scenes, as they tend to have more action happening in the background (some of the scenes that happen later in the game are reunions and gatherings and thus, no context is given, the player has to have some knowledge of the language to relate concepts). FFXIV has quests called Main Scenario Quests, which will tell the story of the Warrior of Light, the main character, which will be used to test the hypothesis of this project. The part of the game that will be used then, will be the introduction of the game, the first steps into the world of FFXIV, which differ depending on the first class the player chooses (see below), until the part which is the same for everyone. The vocabulary used in this first section of the game varies depending on the city the quest is located and the characters that take part of it. For example, the first steps into the game may contain vocabulary about nature in a material and spiritual contexts; monarchy and social status, as well as crafting vocabulary; or about piracy and the sea.

The introduction of the game, depending on which first class you choose to play as (warrior, mage, healer, etc.), has the main character listening to a set of characters while going in a carriage to the destination the first class is attached to. In the very first part of the game, the main character is in a carriage with a merchant, which explains to them

their motive of the voyage and questions the main character about their motivations to begin their journey. Vocabulary related to the future and accomplishment of jobs and locations in the game have a role in this conversation.

In the following section, once the main character arrives at their destination they have to talk with a series of NPCs, programmed characters within a game which gives the player a set of quests, to keep advancing in the story. The first quest that appears, aside from the previous cutscene with the trading merchant, is to talk with an NPC which explains the player what to do next. The player has to visit three specific locations in the city: the plaza in which there is the main source of transport of the game; the guild of the first class the player has chosen; and a character that explains the player the basics of trade.

The game continues having the main character coming back and forth to the same initial spot, where the presentation of the game took place. It is then that one of the NPCs tells the character to go find a person outside the city gates to get a job. After leaving the city and meeting with him, the character which gives the player the task, asks the player to go find a missing person in the vicinity of a big tree. Once there, the player is introduced to two recurrent characters throughout the game, which will help him/her during the adventure. In this place, there is no difficult vocabulary aside from names of fictional places within the game. Moving on to the next story-related quests, the player has to complete more tasks outside the city. In this case, the people that gives the player quests are a set of characters that need help by slaying some beasts, but vocabulary related to mining and this profession appears within the dialogue. There is also some cutscenes where the main character, helping one of this miners getting rich and escaping his status of refugee, has to defeat a golem, a mythical creature from folklore, which is summoned by a masked man. Once these scenes are finished, the player is seen as a hero and thus,

he/she is meant to meet the sultana to receive her thanks for helping her subjects. Upon arriving back at the city, the main character is presented by yet another task: the royal crown has been taken and they have asked for a ransom for it.

After retrieving the crown from the bad guys, the main character is praised by the royal guards of the city and is later invited to a banquet in her honour. During the time at the banquet, she is told about the Calamity that struck the world five years before and, before long, she falls asleep while she has flashbacks showing the war that happened during the Calamity. In this section of the game, the vocabulary used is quite simple and, even if the player is not related to war, can get the general meaning and context with the scenes that appear on-screen. Vocabulary such as *withdraw*, *retreat*, *go forth*, *etc.* is frequently used.

Once the main character wakes from her sleep, she is asked to go meet the General which she was speaking prior to her collapsing. The General, seeing potential in her, seeks her assistance and appoints her his personal envoy to the other two city-states, and sends her to the flying ship in order to visit them.

Up until this point, the story is different for everyone and from this point onward, the story is the same for every player. Here is the end of the material used for this project.

2.2 Participants

As the investigation is related to the understanding of a videogame and the acquisition of vocabulary for the L2, the first participant chosen has a relatively low level of English.

The participant is a 21-year-old female, speaker of both Catalan, Spanish and the Valencian variety of Catalan, whose level of English is around an A2: she knows the basic structure of sentences; the syntax and grammar; and some vocabulary related to her field

of study (Nursing). She has always liked French and has found it easier than English, which has found difficult because English words have a wide range of meanings, one word having more than one, and most of them counting with a wider range of synonyms. She also expresses having difficulty with the tenses which she finds difficult to comprehend because of their structures, leading her to confusion as to why in present, past and future tenses, verbs ending in “-ing” can be used. The last reason is the pronunciation itself. She does not understand why it is not pronounced the same as it is read. She does not play videogames of any kind, and the last one she had played is *Animal Crossing* and in her L1.

The second participant is a 30 year-old boy from Uberlandia, a city in Brazil. It has around 670 thousand people, so people from around the country and beyond are always coming and going. As the official language is Portuguese, there is no real necessity to speak or write in English, but they do it regardless. His official level of English is a B2: he understands written English but has problems speaking it, as he lacks proper pronunciation for some of words. He also studied English at school and university. His major problem comes with verbs: he knows them, he knows their meaning, but finds it difficult to distinguish regular from irregular verbs. He plays videogames and he also plays *Dungeons and Dragons*, a well-known role-playing board game where every action has to be taken by throwing a dice, depending on the number the dice falls in, the character can or cannot do the action the player wants them to.

The third and final participant is a 27 year-old male from Tarragona. He has no official certificate of proficiency in English, but he thinks he has a B2 towards a C1 level. His understanding of English comes from playing videogames, as they were not always translated, so he had the necessity to learn it to keep playing. The participant also thinks

he is skilled with languages, and what he likes the most of English is pronunciation, intonation and the rhythm people have to achieve when speaking it. He finds English to be useful as it is an internationalized language that is spoken around the world. He plays other MMORPG as well as other fantasy games like *FFXIV*.

2.3 Procedure

While the researcher plays through the first part of the first expansion of *FFXIV: A Realm Reborn*, the participants will be translating sentence by sentence and getting the gist of the whole dialogue the character is delivering. Once the cutscene ends, they will be asked if they have understood what happened and they will explain with a few words their sensations and if they have retained, in the short-term, the words that they have been translating. After the brief explanation, the researcher will keep playing and asking if they have understood where we have to go or what we have to do next and, once another cutscene appears, the procedure will start over again. At the end of the set of the cutscenes used for this investigation, the participants will provide an oral summary of the vocabulary learnt by watching the cutscenes.

3. Results

3.1 Participant 1

The first participant had some difficulties to understand some words, but she understood what she had to do next and although she had problems following directions such as go west or go north, once the cutscene finished and she kept playing, she knew what she had to do. When she arrived at the first location, once she knew that the aetherite, the transportation method used in the game to go from one place to another, all proved quite easy for her because of said object on screen while the NPC was explaining what the device was and its function. She understood the context with the provided scene, but sometimes she had forgotten a word and had misunderstood it for another one with a somehow strong resemblance, because the words are written the same way or they start with the same syllable, even though it was not related to what the NPC was explaining (for example confusing *belong* for *become* or *bear* for *to bear*). At the second location, words like *fame*, *fortune*, *riches*, all with near-cognate form in L1, meaning exactly the same in both languages, were more familiar to her and she had nearly no difficulty whatsoever in understanding she was being introduced to the class she chose at the beginning of the game.

The next scenes involved vocabulary related to the marketplace (Figure 1 and 2), more specifically, the importance of it and the situation it had in the city and in relation with other major cities. She understood the context and meaning of the words and sentences that were popping up on-screen and completed the translation with ease. She understood the word *busy* as to be crowded with people and not to be loaded with work; as well as the word *both* referring to two things that appeared before.

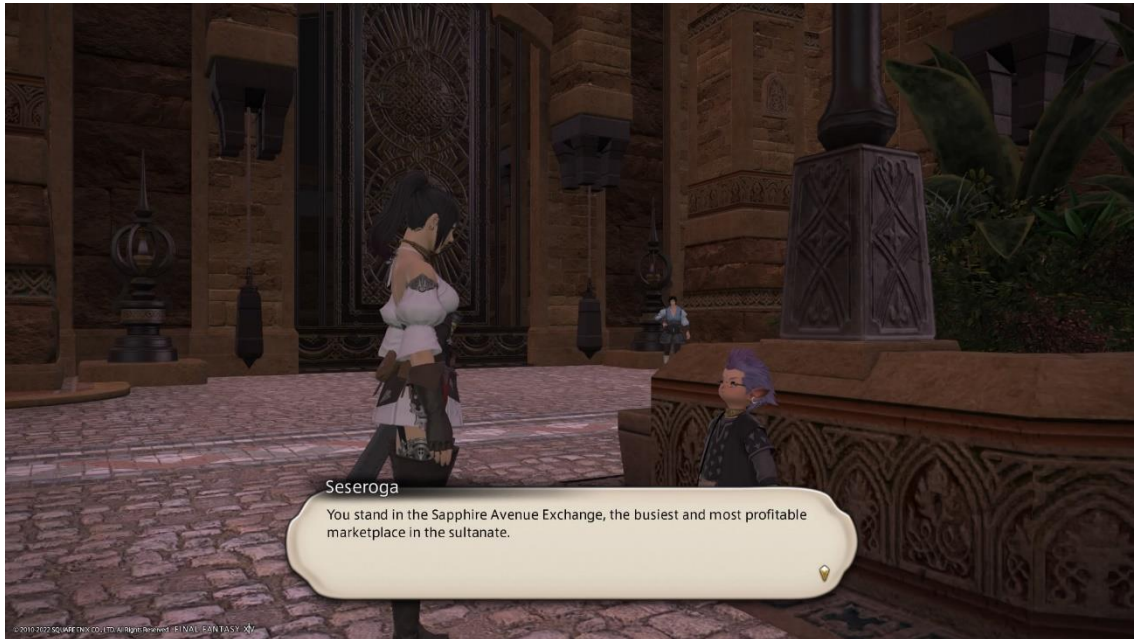


Figure 1 – The main character arrives at the Sapphire Avenue Exchange.

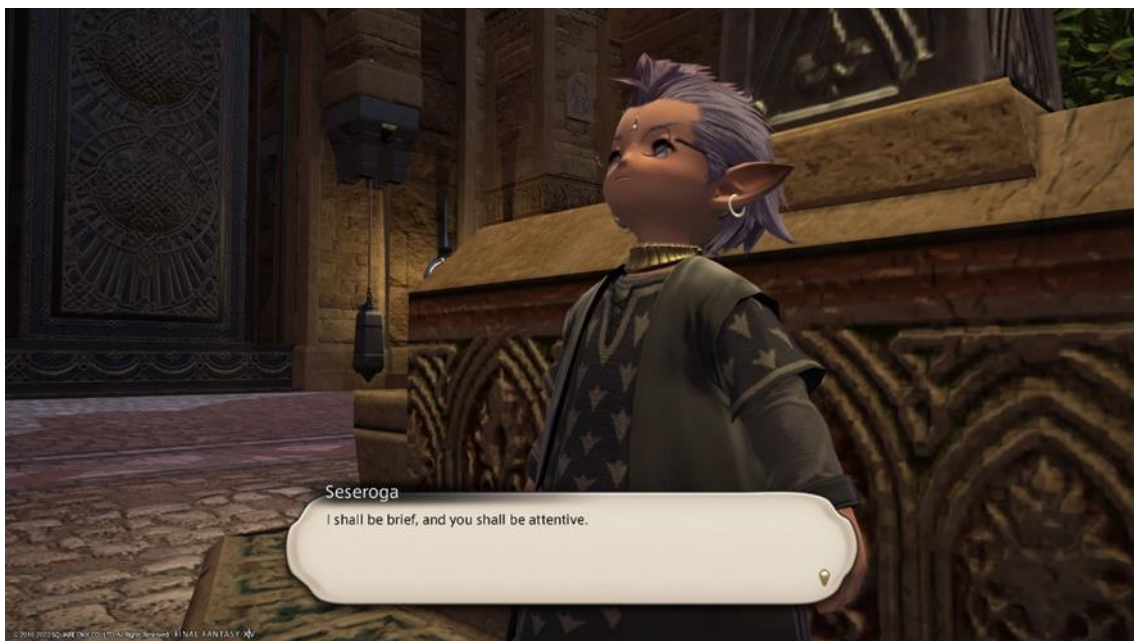


Figure 2 – Seseroga is about to start the explanation on the marketplace

The first participant understood, with previous knowledge while playing the game, what the character was telling her. She also knew they were in a marketplace, and therefore,

the vocabulary used was that of trades. And thus, she was able to make an evaluation and guess the meaning of *marketplace*.

As progression has its limitations and to keep advancing you have to level up your character, I thought including the quests for her first job, in this case gladiator, a warrior who uses sword and shield to attack, may be also useful to test this theory following the same procedure as with the regular cutscenes. Although she did not know any vocabulary related to fighting, war, weapons, etc. (figure 3) she did not have any problems comprehending it thanks to previous sessions and thus, she remembered words like sword, which has appeared previously in other dialogues.

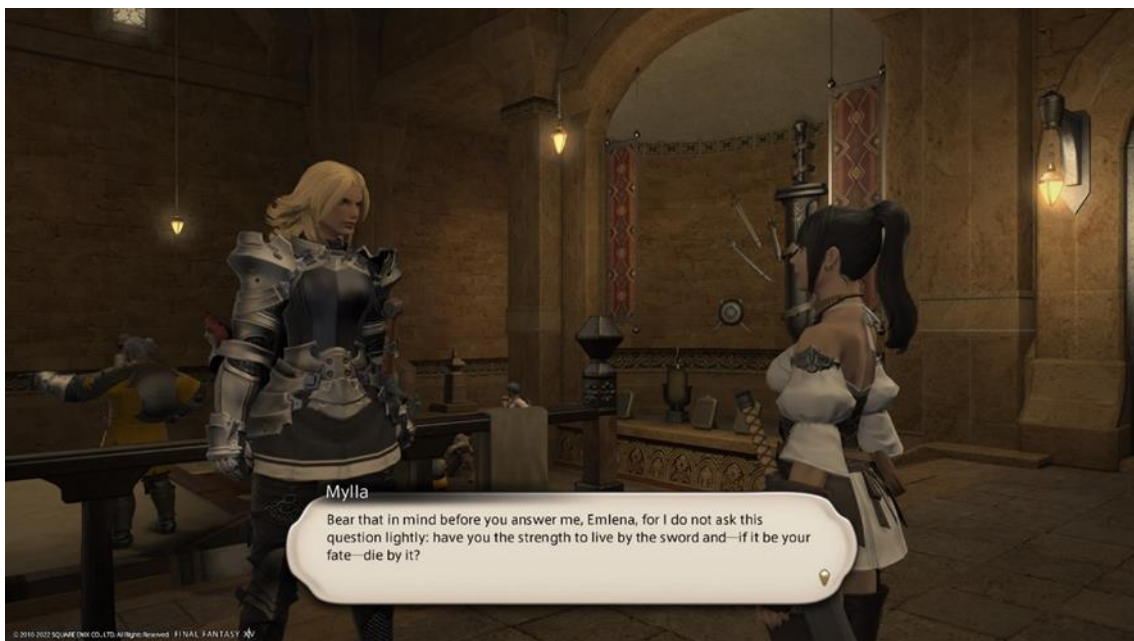


Figure 3 – Mylla is trying to make sure the main character wants to become a gladiator

As she was familiar with these words due to their similarities with her L1, she had no problems extracting the meaning. She had a low learning burden as the word *prestigious* (figure 4) is similar to the word *prestigioso/a* from Spanish.

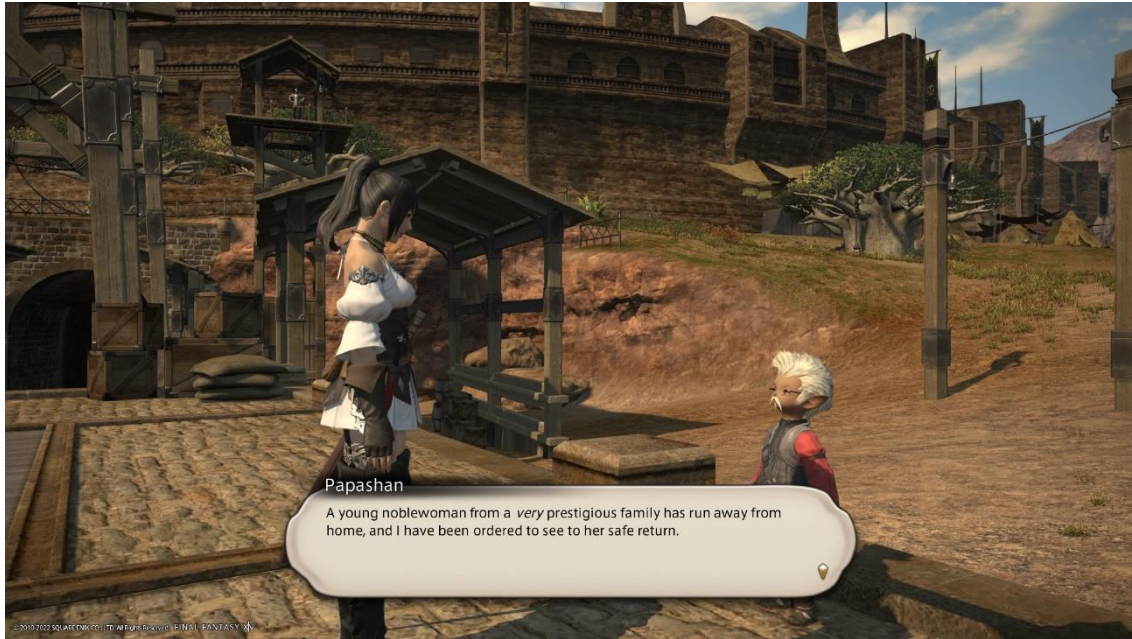


Figure 4 – Papashan explains the situation of the missing person

She had problems with the way some characters talked, as she found strange that nearly all words are shortened or lacked a few letters. She also was shocked to know that *yer* meant *your*, but she later identifies *ye* as *you*. The language used is informal (figure 5), as she has not studied this kind of vocabulary or structures in school. This is an argument against the usage of cutscene to acquire L2 vocabulary which may arise. However, the obvious counterpoint to this is that this is closer to reality, as people speak differently, and with their own varieties of English which can be understood with the help of the game and later be applied in real life.

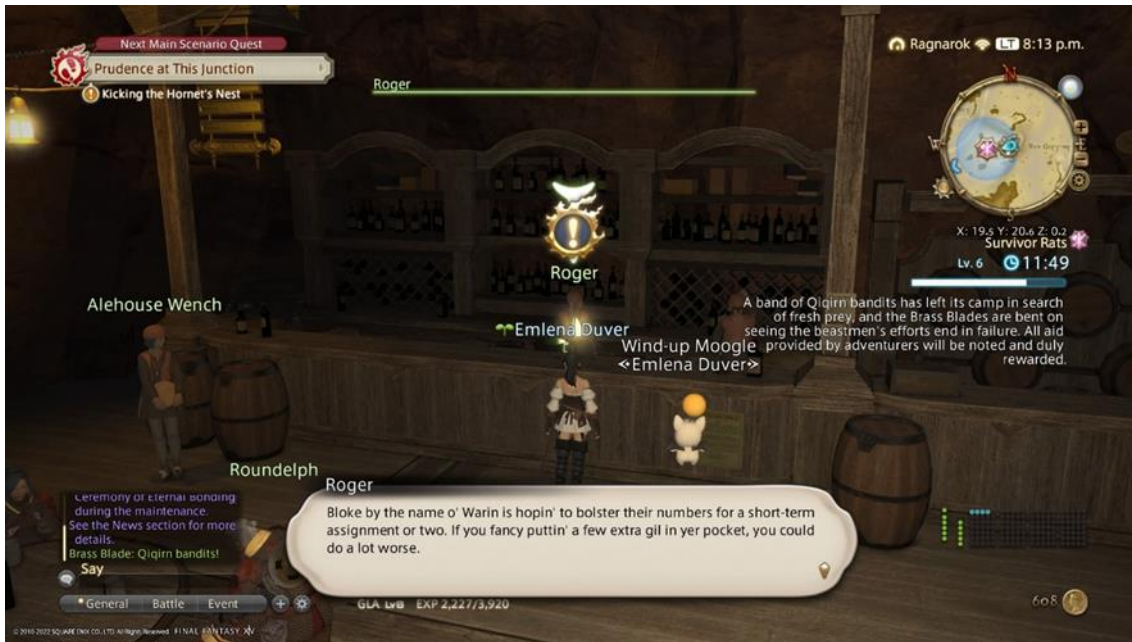


Figure 5 – Roger assigns a mission to the main character

The vocabulary used in subsequent quests were also related to locations, the character has to move around finding different NPC again to progress through it. In this case, the non-playable characters were miners thus, vocabulary related to said profession appeared in the different dialogues. She understood the description the NPC was telling her about the cave the quest took place in, and because of the appearance of previous vocabulary, she had virtually no difficulty to contextualize what was happening with the aid of the cutscenes. There were, however, problems understanding the other part of the quest, which involved a little vocabulary about mythology and sorcery. The utterance of a sentence in a different order and said vocabulary, confused her without aid and she struggled to understand it. She also had no difficulty whatsoever to identify the word *ye* as the pronoun *you* (figure 6).

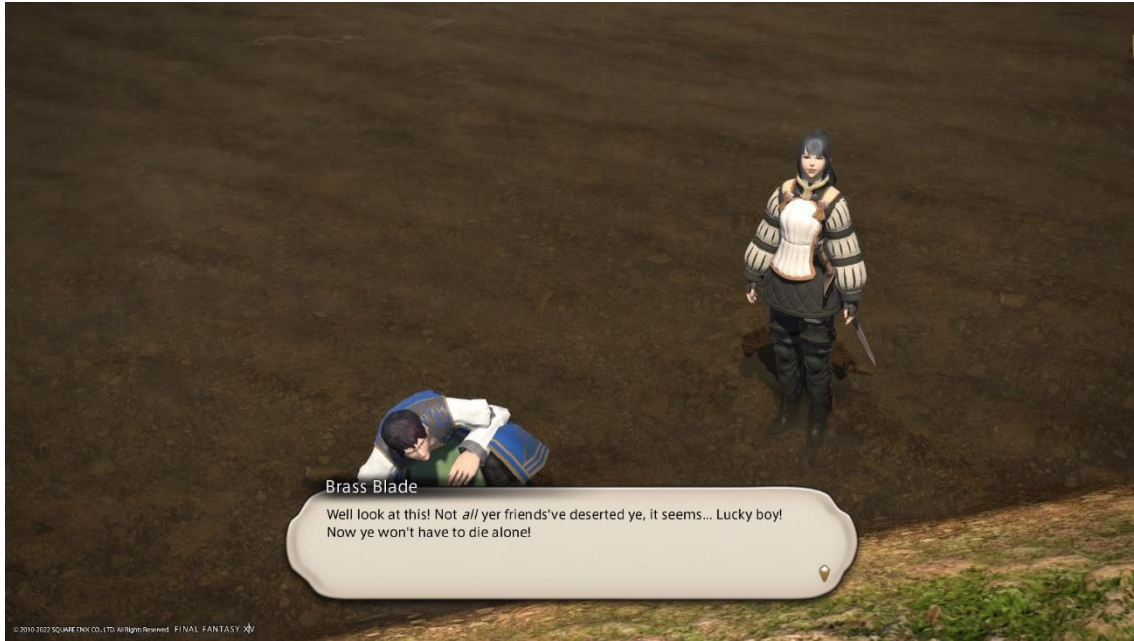


Figure 6 – The Brass Blades mock both characters

What she has problems with is identifying antecedents as she does not relate pronouns to previous dialogue but to dialogue that appears currently on screen. Therefore, she mixes concepts and sentences and translates them or understands them as if the pronouns they make reference to, appear in the dialogue she is currently working it.

3.2 Participant 2

The second participant had a better understanding of the language, so he had less difficulty to understand the vocabulary he was presented with.

His segments of playthrough involved a series of quests around the retrieval of a stone, which later is found out some monsters had eaten it. He struggled understanding chunks of information such as “nary a day goes by” meaning “there is hardly a day which passes” (figure 6) even when giving him the latter example to help him understand as there were

no relation between the scene and what was being told by the NPC talking to the main character. But he understood the vocabulary related to trading that was presented to him.

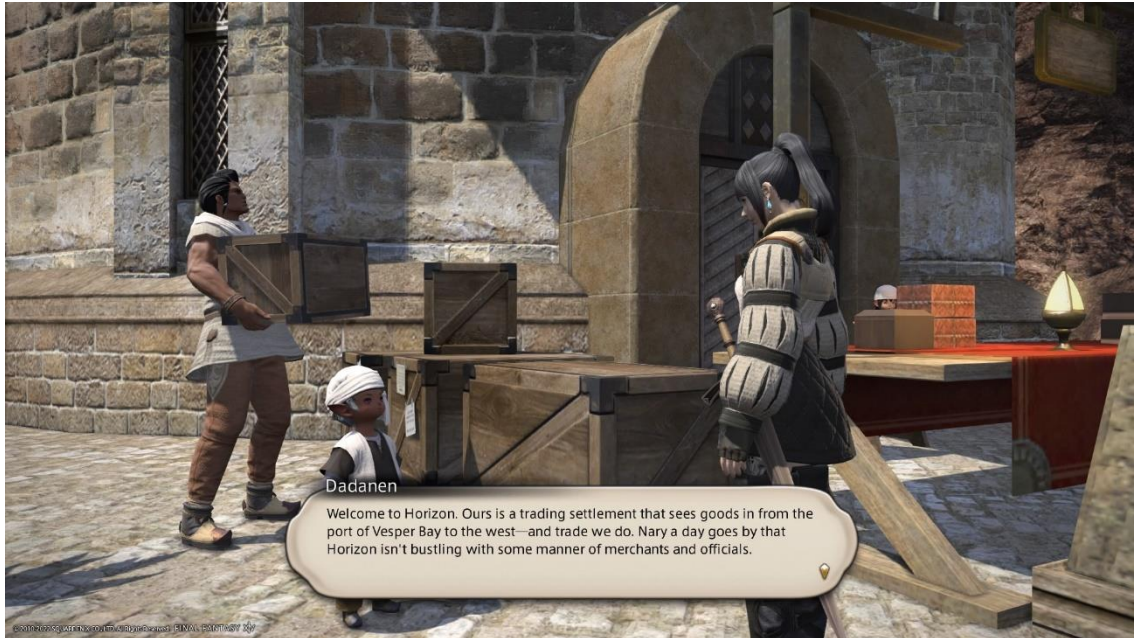


Figure 6 – Dadanen welcomes the player to Horizon

Although he understood all the dialogue, he could not figure out the meaning of *plumb out* as *run out of* (figure 7). He also had the same problem of the first participant encountering dialect words, which can be used as an argument against the thesis of this project. However, it is a good chance to encounter and understand real language, as there are also dialectical words in real life.



Figure 7 – Dadanen explains his lacking of supplies

As game progressed, the main character had to attend a banquet and she was presented with a story five years prior to the game. The participant understood it by watching subsequent images and he did a good job linking both cutscenes and dialogue. He understood they were having a banquet in honour of the main character and that the NPC speaking was praising her. The main character fell asleep and had a flashback, and the participant had also no problem understanding it was a flashback about a war and that it was also an event from five years ago. The only things he missed were a few vocabulary related issues and synonyms, words that are not written the same way as their standard counterparts or words that are not used anymore, only in literature or poetry, but that mean the same, such as the word *ought* instead of *nothing* (figure 8), due to the way the NPCs speak.

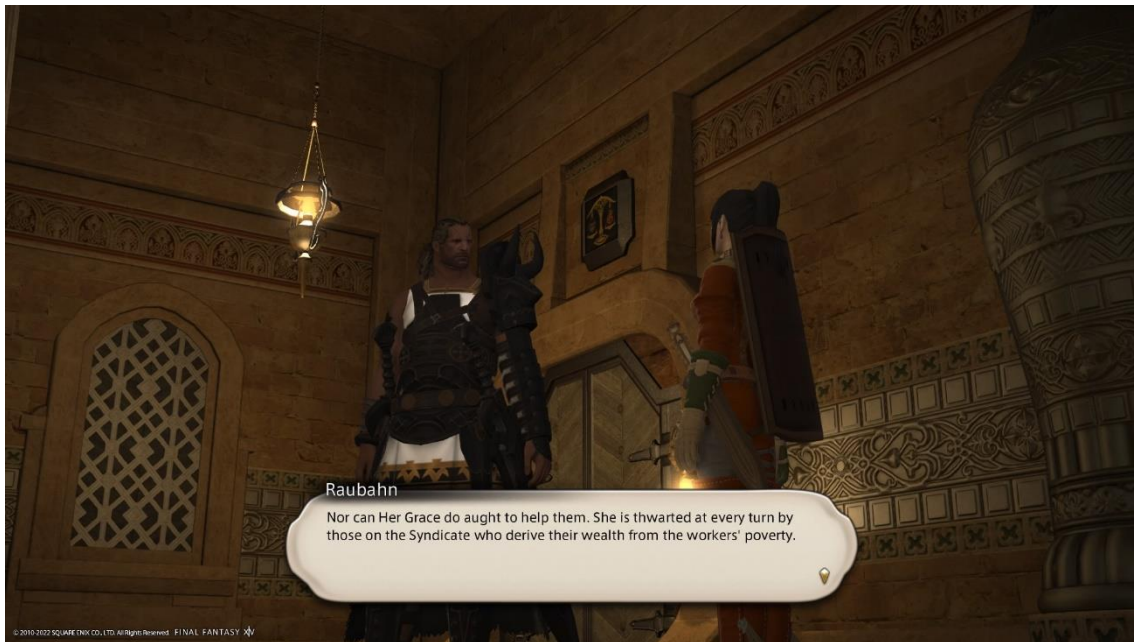


Figure 8 – Raubahn assures the Sultana wants to help the people of the city

The second participant struggled to understand the verb *to bear* and the reference and meaning of the word *former*, given there are two options that are given to the main character as her outcome in the story (a hero or a martyr, being a hero the former option) (figure 9).



Figure 9 – Raubahn does not want the main character to waste her life

3.3 Participant 3

The third participant had nearly no difficulty to understand what was happening whatsoever. He is used to playing other videogames and, specially, other MMORPGs, which makes it easier to him to follow the mechanics of FFXIV. He had understood everything that was happening and he even caught what was happening behind the main dialogue, that is to say, the situation of the story and what was going on at all times.

4. Discussion

4.1 Conclusions

The conclusion of the project is that it is probable that the Involvement Load Hypothesis is sustained for learning vocabulary RPGs as well as other kinds of games. It has been shown how interpreting cutscenes involves the central Involvement Load Hypothesis concepts of search, need, and evaluation. It is obvious that, in some cases, the vocabulary learnt is more commonly used by people, such as the one related to sports, to everyday tasks and situations, and vocabulary related to animals or plants, to give some examples. This vocabulary is not so much seen in RPGs because sometimes they revolve around fantasy worlds that have little to do with the real world, so the necessity to know the vocabulary that appears, and the later need to use and evaluate it, is not really used in a real situation in some cases.

As for the learning burden, it is also obvious that if both L1 and L2 are not related somehow, it would be more difficult to reach a favourable conclusion as to the usefulness to use a videogame entirely in the L2 to learn vocabulary relating it to the L1. The learning burden for some of the words that appeared within the game were low, as some words have a strong resemblance or have the same root as the L1 of the participants. Words like *fame*, *riches* or *fortune* have the same root for both L1 and L2 and thus, it has been easier for them to try to get the meaning from the text and context of the scenes even if said words were accompanied by other which meaning or appearance are not related to their L1. This project has used visual material to prove that it can be possible to learn at least some vocabulary for the L2, knowing little to none said language. So, to sum it all up, the idea of the Involvement Load Hypothesis linked with visual resources, in this case Final Fantasy XIV and its cutscenes, has proven efficient in learning or retaining some

vocabulary in the short term. Perhaps if the project had more time, the longer term effects of RPGs on vocabulary learning could be studied and it could reach a more solid conclusion as to the usefulness of visual resources to learn L2 vocabulary and keep using it over time.

While conducting the experiment, there was evidence that the two participants that are more familiar with the vocabulary of RPGs had nearly no trouble understanding the scenes and text that were presented to them, as they are accustomed to play videogames and, in both cases, other MMORPGs and such. The other participant, however, as she is not interested in videogames whatsoever, lacked this previous knowledge in vocabulary related to RPGs. Another thing to take into consideration is, although they all did a good job relating scenes, context and texts, the difference in language level was obvious: while the first participant has never been good with English although she tries (having an A2 level), the other two participants, with both having a language level of a B2 or more, had nearly no problem with it. Something that makes the game difficult for a language level A2 may be the vocabulary used by the characters: some use regional and specific language; others may shorten words; others may use vocabulary no longer used by common people (e.g., *go forth* cited above) etc. so the difficulty of the experiment is the richness of vocabulary and sentence structure used, not understood by every language level that wants to start playing this game or have a first approach to RPGs.

4.2 Limitations

The limitations this project has encountered while making the hypothesis are both time and lack of participants. As the project only lasts four months or so it is always a race against time. Because of this, the amount of cutscenes and visual material used has been cut. The project could have been expended using the first expansion of Final Fantasy XIV, but because there has to be also a theoretical part in the project, the time spent in doing the practical sessions with the participants have been limited. The first participant was not available as much as would have been ideal. She is also studying, and it was difficult to find free time where both of us could work on this. Also, long periods of time playing affect her attention, so it has proven difficult as well to play. We kept doing one hour session a day because if we extended it, she lost interest or was too exhausted to keep going. Considering all limitations related to time, she has been focused for the most part and she has been interested in knowing the meaning of words she did not know existed. In conclusion, the participant has proven to be efficient in knowing words and to maintain interest throughout the playing and learning process and has been interested in knowing pronunciation in some cases, learning synonyms, and situations in which the different words she did not know are used.

As for the other two participants that took part in this project, they were also called in little to no time to take part in it. The short time spent with both has proven useful for this project, but it has been short nonetheless. The second participant has spent two to three hours participating and, although his level of English is that of a B1, he had some difficulty understanding a few verbs and words. He has, however, understood the general context with the material given, in this case the cutscenes that appeared while playing. The third participant had no difficulty at all understanding everything, but it is also worth

mentioning that he only had one single session of one hour, so his participation in relation to the other two, is minimal to say the least.

Speaking of the general limitations that have affected all participants and myself, the first one that appears is the lack of time, mentioned before, but related to the amount of cutscenes and progress of the game. As there were days in which we could not continue because the first participant could not play, there were some breaks between sessions. The other two participants were recruited at the last moment, so for their parts, they could participate the days they were asked to. This is reflected in the amount of cutscenes and parts of the game that each participant has experienced: while the first participant has played around ten hours distributed in different sessions, the second participant only had two sessions of one hour and a half each, and the third, only one session. Thus, making difficult to compare the real progress the three participants have done.

The second limitation is the real progress made, as mentioned above: as the first participant had made a good effort remembering vocabulary for next sessions, this had not occurred or at least it could not be seen due to the brief time spent with the other two participants. There is also to take into consideration that there is no knowing if the vocabulary they were able to recognize was known before this study or if they acquired it while playing. It can be said, however, that there has been much vocabulary that has been guessed by context by three participants. The first participant had little to no knowledge of English, so the vocabulary she had learnt can be retained in her memory and she can later then relate what she had seen in the game to other vocabulary she may encounter in her life. The second participant already knew vocabulary before playing, but there has been vocabulary new to him, so it can be said that he has used previous knowledge to understand the context without difficulty. The third participant, as well as

the second one, also had previous knowledge and vocabulary that he could relate to while playing and, since there has been only one session with him, it would be difficult to say with certainty whether the vocabulary he understood from in the cutscenes was a result of the cutscenes themselves or previous knowledge.

The third limitation would be the use of only one single game. In relation to the first limitation which was the time, it has only been possible to use one game, but as there is only one person doing this project, it is obvious that analyzing and using more than one game was not something plausible.

The final limitation, in relation with the previous one, is the game used for this project. Not everyone is interested in fantasy games and, as such, not everyone has the same pace at which they learn vocabulary when using this method. Some people may be attracted to sports, some people may like a simulator better, but people that like RPGs do not come in large groups, so it is difficult to keep the attention in something you are not attracted to or something you lack interest in. It is well to add that not all participants play games. For example, participant one had only played *Animal Crossing* and in Spanish, a genre that differs greatly from the nature of the game of this project.

To sum all up, the three participants have done a great job and it has been a good experience and idea to have more than one participant as it is better to make comparisons between people with different levels of English. Given the personal situation or the way the three of them have learnt English, it is good to say that RPG (in this case MMORPG) are a good way to learn vocabulary and are a good resource to reinforce the English taught at school. Taking into consideration the second and third participants for example, they both have played videogames all their lives, so they had no problem at all with concepts

that appeared in the game (something that cannot be said, for example, of the first participant, which has never touched a videogame, and if she did, it has been in Spanish). All in all this has been an interesting and valuable project and is certainly a worthwhile avenue for future research.

5. References

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