Important ideas from...

LANGUAGE AT PLAY
DIGITAL GAMES IN SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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CHAPTER 2

Goals

Learning tasks and goal orientation

L1 A SCENARIO: THE THIEF IN THE MUSEUM

Professor Martin

In an intermediate-level Spanish classroom, Professor Martin has created a contextualized task consisting of several activities for learning the subjunctive. He presents a story from the news describing the circumstances of an actual burglary recently committed in a Spanish museum and then leads a brief discussion about the incident and a painting that was stolen. The class is then divided into groups of three to complete an information jigsaw task. The students are given handouts with different fictional information for each group member. Each sheet lists a series of invented facts, suspect descriptions, and lists of evidence, from which the students are supposed to work together to solve predictions about who committed the crime and what might have happened. Professor Martin instructs the students to discuss the information and write five sentences using the phrases of doubt, possibility, suspicion, and importance that he has written on the board. He believes this will aid them in practicing the subjunctive mood in a meaningful way. However, the activity does not turn out as intended. Instead of engaging in meaningful communication to complete the task, each learner approached the task differently, and many did not complete the task successfully. Some resorted to English to be sure they had the right answers. He is looking forward to taking a new approach that allows for a more meaningful level of student involvement next time.

The Students

Erica, Mateo, Lillian, and Roland start out excited about class and about perfecting their skills. However, the day does not turn out as they had hoped. While loing a mystery activity prepared by Professor Martin, Erica's group became distracted by several vocabulary words in their suspect descriptions. They had time only to look up the words and write them down in their notes. Erica is worried because they finished only three sentences. Mateo's group completed two sentences but then agreed that the painting that was stolen was ugly and it did not matter that it was stolen. They ended up talking, instead, about what they had for lunch. Lillian's group was frustrated with the difficulty of the task right away so, instead, wrote two sentences accusing fellow class members of stealing the paintings. Roland's group gave all the sheets to the smartest student, who wrote five correct statements, which the others copied. Overall, the students generally knew what they were supposed to do, and some produced the appropriate outcome; however, Erica, Mateo, Lillian, and Roland all expressed a lack of interest in, or frustration with, the activity.

2.1.1 Scenario questions

1. What pedagogical approach is the instructor using? What do you think of the activities leading up to the main jigsaw tasks? What do you think of the primary jigsaw task? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Have you done similar activity sequences with students? If so, what were they like? Have you done them as a learner yourself? If so, what were they like?

2. What does the instructor intend for the learners to learn from the activity? What do you think they actually learn?

3. In another implementation of the same scenario, perhaps in a different context, the task could have resulted in the intended outcome. What might the instructor have done to encourage the outcome he wanted in this implementation?

This classroom activity presents a worst-case L2TL scenario that could very well have turned out differently. Often, well-designed, well-intentioned tasks such as this one do result in the intended outcomes, but many times they do not. In this chapter, we explore how a game-informed perspective might alter, and even add to, our understanding of the presented scenario. As is the case throughout this book, we do not mean to imply that game-mediated activities are unequivocally superior to those that are not; rather, considering this sort of activity from a game-informed perspective provides insights into how, and why, outcomes could be different and, in many cases, improved.
2.6 A GAME-ENHANCED SCENARIO: THE MUSEUM GAME

In consideration of the insights discussed in this chapter, we return to our learning scenario using a game-enhanced L2T2 approach.

Professor Martín has researched and evaluated several low-cost casual adventure games for his intermediate Spanish class. He has found one that is thematically about a series of art thefts at a string of museums (Art Thief, http://www.agame.com/game/art-thief.html). Based on the game’s reusability, four copies are purchased and are loaded on four language lab computers. As a lab activity the next day, he goes through the tutorial of one of the games for 10 minutes with his students and explains that each of them should play the game for at least one hour during open lab time as homework over the next week. He then asks them to complete a written journal task in which they describe their experience playing the game from the perspective of the game protagonist, a detective attempting to determine who is committing the crimes. In class a few days later, as a second task, Professor Martín introduces a news report reading and discussion activity about the actual theft of a famous painting in a Spanish museum and has students write, as homework, their reaction to the painting and the burglary, and they speculate who could have stolen the painting. He then asks the students, in groups, to discuss their opinions of the actual art theft while referring to their reaction papers. Finally, when the first game journal activity is due, the groups are asked to write and perform a skit for a new level for the game in which the imaginary detective must find the painting that has been stolen. The class then engages in a critical discussion task on the similarities and differences among the game, the imaginary detectives, and game levels, and the real art theft.

Erica, Mateo, Lillian, and Roland are excited about the idea of learning something. In addition, the activities are fairly difficult. Erica had trouble getting access to the lab when she needed it but eventually was able to complete her required game time and actually enjoyed finding the missing art. Mateo, on the other hand, was at first not excited at all and said he thought the idea of playing computer games was not appropriate for the hard work of learning Spanish. However, upon completion of the full unit, he felt like he had learned something and really enjoyed comparing the real news report with the fictional game. Lillian and Roland found that their experiences playing the game any way they chose afforded them a sense of agency and autonomy. Lillian focused on finding as much art as possible, and Roland focused on learning as much about the in-game characters as possible. Also, despite their seemingly different gameplay experiences, documenting their gameplay from the perspective of the protagonist forced them to focus on the language of the game; which was all about art museums and crime solving. In the dialogue activity, most groups took on a playful stance, presenting situations in which the detective, classmates, the King of Spain, and Professor Martín himself committed the art thefts in the game. In their game journal papers, students used many new vocabulary items introduced by the game, which also helped them read the actual news report and write and discuss their reactions to it. Language from both the journal and report activity were then recycled in the dialogue and critical discussion activities, but in transformed registers. Professor Martín was pleased by the outcome of the week’s instructional module.

2.6.1 Scenario questions

1. What is your reaction to the game-enhanced scenario? Taking a game-enhanced perspective, how might it have been better, or how could it have been worse?
2. What were the four tasks and their instructional objectives? How did the instructor incorporate elements of learner choice and agency in them? How did he combine curriculum needs with learner-driven goal orienting in the game?
3. What was the role of the game in the overall curriculum and tasks (e.g., the news report)? How did the instructor complement the in-game tasks the students completed with the journaling and dialogue tasks?
4. How did different learners authenticate the tasks differently?
5. If you know Erica, how do you think the activities might have encouraged the use of the subjunctive voice and target vocabulary?

In this scenario, Professor Martín uses a literacy-informed, integrated approach. He creates a set of game-enhanced learning tasks whereby learners achieve curriculum goals in learner-driven and authentic or, rather, authenticated ways. The tasks are not game driven, but are driven by the activity of the learner—players, in balance with instructional demands. Learners are given options and the means to develop awareness and autonomy. In gameplay, the language is both a means and an input object—learner—players are using the L2 as the linguistic means of gameplay and the fictional content of the game serves as linguistic input. At the same time, the tasks incorporate multiple sources of input and multiple forms of output. At another level still, the learners are asked to transform their experiences into other modes, for other functions, that is, other genres such as conversations and opinions, and to develop critical awareness of digital gaming. A literacy-informed approach is only one approach to game-enhanced L2 pedagogy—in coming chapters, we will explore other approaches through different scenarios.
CHAPTER 3

Task #2

Interaction

With, through, and about
digital games

3.1 A SCENARIO: GAMES ARE FOR LONERS . . . OR ARE THEY?

A high school German instructor, Frau Benuti, has been reading about digital

games for language learning and is considering their use in her class. She knows

that most of her students love digital games—they write about them in their

journals, and they have even asked her how to say words such as neinble and

owned in German. ¹ She is not sure if she can use digital games in class, how-

ever. When she brought the idea to an administrator, he brushed it off because

he had heard news stories that presented video games as unhealthy and socially

isolating. Also, he was not sure how Frau Benuti could fit digital games into

the already full curriculum whose first priority was meeting all of the bench-

marks of the national standards. He also talked about how morally corrupt he

thought a particular auto theft game was, and he mentioned a study that claimed

that American teens who played video games for more than 20 hours a week

were more depressed than other teens. Frau Benuti's administrator planted some

seeds of doubt in her mind, but she was not sure how to respond.

Frau Benuti, however, has seen her own children playing games and has

a different view. Her kids interact with the stories in the games and through the

games with their friends. They also seem to talk about the games, coming up

with strategies and critiquing them all the time—as a matter of fact, that is all

they seem to talk about sometimes. Her 10-year-old daughter seems especially

taken with adventure games—her favorite at the moment involves a detective

who travels through time to interpret mysterious objects found on a deserted

island. The other day she dropped the word artifact casually in an argument

with her brother. He is 14, and he seems to prefer role-playing games—

¹ In German slang, neinble is a slightly derogatory term for new player, and someone who is owned

as been resolutely defeated.
guess the food item based on longer descriptions (e.g., "this vegetable is yellow and has small kernels"). For the answer, they have to search through the game to find the answers (in this case, "corn"). She then has small groups of students devise similar descriptions of vocabulary from the game, and she conducts an in-class quiz show using their descriptions. The students seem to enjoy the activity, and they ask for other activities using social networking games. They also begin to ask many questions about cultural elements in the game as well as pragmatic issues with some of the people they interact with in the game.

She goes to her administrator with an argument showing that game playing can in fact be highly social and that games can provide much productive, learning-focused interaction, especially when supplemented by wraparound activities. She explains her Farmville vocabulary activity, shows him the game in German, and presents some of the cultural information students have learned. He seems surprised and promises to reconsider his stance.

3.6.1 Scenario questions

1. Consider Farmville or another casual social networking game. If you are not familiar with one, we encourage you to play for 15–20 minutes in any language(s) of your choice. What sort of language is built into the game? How do players usually interact with, through/around, and about the game?

2. As you answer the following questions, consider the scenario just described. What tasks made up the scenario activity and what were their instructional objectives? How did the instructor incorporate interaction with, through/around, and about games in the tasks? How could she incorporate more interaction on other levels?

3. Into what traditional units or lessons could the content of a casual social networking game such as Farmville, focused on food and farming, fit? What other games have content that could fit with traditional curriculum topics? How could activities promote interaction with, through/around, and about the game?
Chapt. 4

Feedback
Real-time, individualized, and instructional

4.1 A SCENARIO: THE FEEDBACK CHALLENGE

Professoressa Feng

Professoressa Feng is in the process of grading her Italian class's exams for chapter 3. Although the scores are acceptable, she finds herself wishing for a more effective means to help students gauge their progress. In an ideal world, she would have time to give more detailed feedback to each student individually at various points throughout the course prior to the chapter exams. However, the reality of classroom, administrative, and service responsibilities makes it extremely challenging. Moreover, high-stakes assessments are a necessary component of her end-of-the-year report on learning outcomes. Professoressa Feng works hard to include formative assessment, that is, feedback meant to help improve performance. For example, she gives general suggestions for improvement after each communicative task, a weekly participation evaluation for each student, and personalized comments during pair and group work. These assessments are a consistent part of her everyday teaching practices, but there are 28 students in her class, making it difficult to address each student individually. She knows she cannot get to every student for every activity, so, in an effort to be thorough and careful, she systematically rotates among groups, giving feedback where she can. She mostly corrects grammar errors and answers questions about how to say certain words. Professoressa Feng then spends extensive time giving detailed, summative feedback on three formal writing assignments, four chapter exams, and one oral exam per semester. Despite her attention to student learning, the results are not exactly what she is hoping for.

The Students

Lorenzo is enjoying learning Italian, but he is worried about participating in class and gets very stressed when he has to turn in work for feedback because he does not want to get anything wrong. He took a chapter exam last week and just got the results back from Professoressa Feng. Although the score was excellent, he was hoping to get some additional insight into various words he could use for the same foods. Since he got a 99%, there are very few comments on his exam. Nevertheless, his success adds pressure to be consistently correct during class.

Laurene is not as happy with her score as Lorenzo. She studied very hard and used many of the same structures she had been using during group work in class. However, these were marked wrong on her exam, and she is just now finding out what she should have been saying. Also, Laurene is confused by some of the cultural information marked incorrect on her exam. For example, couldn't the ways in which people choose to apologize depend on their personalities?

Luke got an 89% on the exam and is fairly happy with the score. He breezes through it and then files it in his notebook, never to be seen again. He will study the material for the chapter 4 exam.

4.1.1 Scenario questions

1. Do Professoressa Feng’s feedback practices seem similar to foreign language classrooms with which you are familiar? What are the advantages and disadvantages of her formative and summative assessment practices?

2. What are some alternative feedback methods Professoressa Feng could use, given her institutional and time constraints?

3. Are Lorenzo, Laurene, and Luke recognizable student profiles from a language classroom? What type of feedback might be more useful for each of them?

4. Some notable challenges in giving feedback for L2 learning and assessment are highlighted in this scenario. What are they? How are these similar or different from what happens in your L2L context?

This scenario represents common challenges associated with feedback in L2L. Under the constraints of time and course demands, educators often strive to provide individualized and meaningful feedback to students with mixed results. In this chapter, we explore ways in which a game-informed perspective on feedback can enhance and alter our understanding of feedback for L2L. We do not advocate it as the only possible approach, but we point out ways in which game-informed pedagogy offer solutions for overcoming some of the obstacles faced by educators when providing feedback.
4.6 A GAME-INFORMED SCENARIO: THE GOLDEN TREASURE

After grading the chapter 3 exams, Professoressa Feng can feel the challenges her students are facing. She knows that something needs to change in the way she gives feedback, and she remembers that a student once mentioned how great digital games were at helping a player get better. She decides to check a few out and work with her students, Lorenzo, Laurene, and Luke, to design a feedback system that would enhance her language course for the next semester. Over the summer, she and her students play a number of complex digital games and start to notice how feedback is used to help players become better. They then design a model to help transfer some of these behaviors to the Italian classroom. Professoressa Feng’s feedback model for the new semester includes the following:

* She develops two point systems: punti d’oro (gold points) and punti d’argento (silver points), whereby 1 gold point is worth 10 silver points. Students earn gold points from tests and class assignments, and they earn silver points from class participation, assisting other students, risk-taking (e.g., speaking first to answer an open question), using feedback given on assignments, participating in out-of-class sessions, and doing extra-credit assignments. Gold points are permanent, but students can lose silver points by not attending to feedback, or by losing them in duels (see later discussion). She creates a chart on the course website that shows how much every class activity is worth. Students can also check the website to see their progress.

* Based on the curriculum objectives, she develops another system of tesori (treasures) as pictures on cards, and she awards them for a 100% score on small quizzes and assignments. These are listed on the website. For example, a smaragdo (emerald) is awarded for a quiz on avere (have) conjugations, and a pozzume (potion) is awarded for a composition describing one’s family. Students may repeat a quiz or assignment as many times as they like until they earn the tesori, and they may exchange each one for the number of silver points that she determines for each individual.

* She creates a duel system, whereby students, as individuals or teams, may challenge one another to duel for silver points and treasures once a week. Duels typically focus on more complex language structures or cultural elements of language.

* She creates a level system, mirroring the Italian nobility title system: cavaliere, barone, conte, marchese, duca, and principe (including feminine versions), in which each corresponds to a different number of points. Students level up as they accumulate points. Students can check their levels on the website, and they receive a certificate whenever they gain a new title. She sees the students’ final point tally to determine a component of their final grade.

After working with Professoressa Feng over the summer, Lorenzo, Laurene, and Luke are looking forward to the upcoming year and decide to enroll in Italian 2 to see how the system works. Lorenzo finds himself advancing more quickly than he had been previously and experimenting with language in ways he was scared to do at earlier levels. His test scores remain high, but he is more willing to speak up in class. He won a duel with Luke for a calice (chalice) by naming five Italian regions in 15 seconds. Laurene now knows where she stands, and she has posted her marchessa certificate on her Facebook profile. She still struggles with language, but she attends the out-of-class sessions once a week to gain more points. Luke now saves all of the feedback given on tests and assignments because he is intent on becoming a principe. He is earning a lot of silver points by helping other students in the out-of-class sessions. For her part, Professoressa Feng is trying to use the system to provide feedback to students when they need it, and to reward them when they use it. She spends a lot of time developing and fine-tuning the new system, but she has realized that time spent now will save her time later. The more numerous smaller activities are a lot of work, and it is sometimes a challenge to note who has earned which points when. Still, she sees the students’ motivation increasing and has a much better idea of where they stand individually, and where they need assistance.

4.6.1 Scenario questions

1. What is your reaction to the game-informed scenario? Does it seem realistic for L2T2?
2. Does this new model cover all of the elements of a meaningful feedback system—individualized, just-in-time, scaffolded, and relevant? If so, in what way? If not, in what ways could it be improved?
3. Some may argue the system proposed by Professoressa Feng is just about entertainment and fun, and not about learning. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. How might students be taught to learn in this game-informed feedback system? What would be the challenges of teaching students how to use it?
Context
The role of narrative

5.1 A SCENARIO: THE PROMISE OF NARRATIVES

ikegami-sensei
In a fifth-semester university Japanese classroom, Ikegami-sensei is thinking about how she will maintain her students' interest when she introduces a reading that is longer than usual next week. It is part of the curriculum, but, over the years, she has found that many students lose interest when she introduces longer pieces. She explains to the students that it is important to be familiar with some foundational pieces of literature, and she starts with simplified versions of twentieth-century pieces, hoping to keep students interested. The best students seem to follow, but most of the others trail off. She has thought of doing some pieces with manga (i.e., Japanese comics), but she tends to agree with some of her colleagues that they should introduce pop culture pieces in addition to, but not in place of, foundational literature. She has taught lower levels using Japanese fairy tales, and she found that most students enjoyed them, although she found them childish. In any case, she is thinking of allowing the students to use translations with the tougher pieces, in the hope that this will help the students understand them better.

The Students
Cindy has taken four semesters of Japanese and visited Japan for a summer study abroad program. She is still in contact with many of her Japanese friends, and she enjoys speaking the language, although she finds reading and writing more challenging. After her experience in Japan, she is a bit more critical of lessons during which students have to read pieces from traditional works of literature. Once she was in Japan, she found that she enjoyed reading (or trying to read) popular magazines and manga, and that both gave her something to talk about with her friends.

Robert visited Japan in high school, and she is thinking about doing a double major in Japanese and art. She is very interested in anime (Japanese animation) and Japanese fan culture, and she was happy when an instructor in a previous class had activities involving popular anime cartoons. She has written some fan fiction about her favorite anime characters, but only in English with a few Japanese words thrown in here and there.

Peter was convinced to take Japanese past the basic language requirement because of his love of Japanese video games. He has tried to play some on his own in Japanese. He has found that when he masters a particular game in English, he can then play the game in Japanese with the help of a dictionary. He has also found a few websites with discussion boards frequented by American gamers who like Japanese games, and he enjoys following the discussions and reading gaming tips.

5.1.1 Scenario questions
1. What are the main curricular demands of intermediate and advanced language courses, and how are they different from those of basic language courses? How do instructors usually approach these challenges, and how do students respond?
2. What approaches and techniques for teaching literature in the L2 classroom are you familiar with? In your experience as an instructor or learner, which are effective, and why? What issues are there with less commonly taught L2s, and L2s with non-Roman writing systems?
3. How are the students in this scenario similar to or different from those you have known as a learner or instructor? What are their reasons for studying the language, and what sorts of activities do you think they would find meaningful and interesting?

This scenario presents an L2TL situation familiar to many, in particular, an instructor faced with the literature-oriented demands of a high-intermediate curriculum. These more advanced courses often have trouble attracting and maintaining sufficient student enrollment because of the dramatic shift between the kinds of activities common in lower-level courses and those related to literature-oriented, higher-level courses. Intermediate- and advanced-level activities tend to be more literature focused, sometimes implemented using more traditional approaches such as grammar-translation. Unfortunately, these approaches often decontextualize the target language in ways that make it difficult for students who cannot relate to the context of the narratives or lessons presented.

Although digital games will never replace all literary content, they can complement it with contexts and narratives that are familiar to learners and that can be connected to traditional literature and literature-oriented approaches. Digital games and traditional literary works have the potential to complement one another. Moreover, games may inform our understanding of the role of context in learning and may offer transformative insights into how we teach narrative in the L2 classroom.
5.6 A GAME-ENHANCED SCENARIO: DESIGNING GAME NARRATIVES

In consideration of the insights discussed in this chapter, we return to our learning scenario using a game-enhanced L2TL approach.

Ikegami-sensei became interested in games when she noticed that her student Peter tried using slang that she knew he did not learn from the course. When she asked him about it, he said that he learned slang from playing Japanese games and from online game forums. In one of his recent journal entries, he wrote from the perspective of his Final Fantasy game character, so that instead of the normal "Today I ate toast for breakfast," he wrote something like "Today I outwitted the leader of the cave tribe," which struck her as very creative. She did some research, and she found that many role-play games are quite story-like, so she thought she might offer some extra credit to students who tried to play a Japanese game. She thought about the basic way she learned to teach literature—to have students analyze characters, settings, and plot—and she tried to imagine the same framework for playing a game. She found an old worksheet with the framework and gave it to Peter and told him that he could tell her more about his game for extra credit by using this framework. His report was interesting, and she is now thinking about other ways she might use digital games for learning Japanese. She might ask her son to bring in his old PlayStation and some old games and set them up in the language lab.

Cindy is very interested in Peter's project, because some of her friends in Japan talk about playing games. She has played an online social networking game called Peepo Girl with her Japanese friends, and she is wondering if she could write a story about it for extra credit. Roberta also heard about Peter's report. She went to fanfiction.net, where she found over 12,000 fan fiction stories about Final Fantasy. She read some and became really interested, and she wondered if she could write fan fiction in Japanese. For his part, Peter is feeling proud of himself, and he is thinking about doing a double major in game design and Japanese.

5.6.1 Scenario questions

1. Think of a simulation, roleplay, or adventure digital game you have played. What narratives and discourses are in the game? How could these elements be used for an L2 learning activity? If you have not played such a digital game, consider a non-digital game you have played, such as a board game or a murder mystery roleplay.

2. What sort of extension activities could be done with the report that Peter produced about his game?

3. Do you think that working with game-mediated narratives can be as effective as working with more traditional narratives, as in novels or films? Why or why not?
CHAPTER 6

Motivation
Engagement and flow

6.1 A SCENARIO: KEEPING STUDENTS INTERESTED

Mme. Smith

Mme. Smith is teaching a French course and really enjoys the students, her class, and the material. She is extremely enthusiastic, loves to be in the classroom, and always provides opportunities for her students to attend cultural events outside of class. There is not a more passionate, prepared, and enthusiastic teacher in the French program. Despite her efforts, Mme. Smith is facing some challenges. First, she is having trouble focusing her students on learning French more than just a good grade. Even though she tries hard to motivate them, the default for students always seems to be the grade. For example, last week she put together a game-enhanced project that involved playing a cooking game to learn lexical items. This was followed by students preparing a report on regional styles of French cuisine. Although the students were successful with the activity, some did not really engage with it beyond what they needed to do to get As. She had hoped they would want to do more.

Second, the majority of Mme. Smith’s students are not choosing to study French beyond beginning proficiency levels—about three-quarters do not plan to continue past the fourth semester. She encourages them to continue by pointing out the many benefits of advanced language study, the opportunities for study abroad, and the economic benefits of advanced proficiency in French may have for their future careers. Nevertheless, students do not seem to want to continue.

The Students

Toward the end of the semester, Mme. Smith asks her students why they do not want to go on to fifth-semester study. She is curious about their motivations, and she hopes to use the information to improve retention rates.

Ruby believes that she has met her goal of getting As in all her Fre and she does not want to risk getting a B in higher-level course heard were taught by tough professors. Layla tells Mme. Smith she is interested in continuing because she thinks she has the basics down and four semesters of French on her resume. She believes that she goal of taking French to help her land a good job. Reggie reports not thought about continuing with French until the cooking activity been recently thinking about majoring in culinary arts with a minor but he was not sure he wanted to take any literature courses at all so he said he wished there were cooking and business courses taught.

6.1.1 Scenario Questions

1. Does this scenario resonate with you? Does it seem reflective of a beginning-intermediate sequence (often the first two years) in a language classroom? Why or why not?

2. What are some factors in this scenario that are related to the retention of the students? Do other contextual and social pressures contribute to their decisions?

3. What role do grades play in this scenario? Is this dynamic consistent with what you observe in L2TL contexts?

This scenario presents a common situation in L2TL. Although the factors associated with motivation are difficult to isolate, they are part of the contextual institutional, and cultural assumptions of study environments, as is the case with Mme. Smith and her class. A mediated approach does not change or solve these constraints, the role of motivation in digital games can help explain the tension between the motives of students with digital games as an alternative to the mundane experience of learning a foreign language.

6.2 MOTIVATION IN L2TL

The important role of motivation in L2TL and digital games is unmistakable in the complex factors associated with student motivation. High language learners and learning activities that seem to motivate them. Unmotivated learners are another story, and it is not uncommon to hear administrators, and parents lamenting students’ lack of motivation toward the course. These complaints are sometimes accompanied by a comment on the hours students “waste” playing digital games or using popular social networking sites and mobile applications. We do not deny that the unproductive use of immersive technologies may have an alternative to considering all uses as wasteful, we propose
6.5 A GAME-ENHANCED SCENARIO: GETTING MOTIVATED TO LEARN FRENCH

Mrs. Smith takes Reggie, Layla, and Ruby to lunch after the semester is over to get a better idea of what she could do to motivate them to continue taking French courses. Reggie starts joking about how he worries that he is now addicted to the cooking game they played in class, and he is wondering if there are other similar games he could play. The students then engage in a lively discussion about their favorite games and why they like them. Layla really likes social networking games because she gets to compete with her friends and be part of a larger community of players. Ruby counters that she really does not like digital games, but she wonders if they would be more interesting in French.

As she listens, Mrs. Smith realizes that many of the digital games her students are talking about may be highly engaging for them and may even motivate them to continue learning French.

Mrs. Smith decides to play some social networking games over the summer and gets involved in a Francophone community playing Cityville, chatting with some and even friending some players to be online neighbors. She decides to build her fifth-semester course in the fall around the idea of motivation and self-reflection, using portfolios as an authentic assessment instrument. She builds the syllabus around popular topics and technologies in contemporary France and includes a unit on social network gaming. This unit entails gameplay for the students in French, analysis of a few websites created by player communities, and cultural analysis of game culture in France, based on some interesting news stories on the growing game industry there. As a final project, she has students choose a digital game or other technology and write a review of it from the perspective of a French learner. In the reviews, she asks students to reflect on why they thought the technology was, or was not, a good way to learn French.

She implements the course, and the results are positive. Eight of the ten students chose to review a game. Six students wrote how they met several French speakers online through their games, and how they felt as if they were part of a community. One wrote that although she did not like games when she started the class, she liked that some fellow players did not know she was not French, and how that gave her a different sense of who she was, or could be, in a French world. Another student, who was already a hardcore gamer, talked about how he played Diablo III in French and encountered "griefing" in French, the practice in online multiplayer games of complaining and being difficult in group play. It was full of satire and especially complex French for a fifth-semester student. Another wrote how she feared she did poorly in her other classes because she would lose track of time while playing Cityville. Reggie, who decided to take the class after all, became friends with a few players who were studying to be chefs and is learning about the French system of culinary training from them. For his final project, he created a proposal for an online pâtisserie management game.

Overall, Mrs. Smith was impressed and is working to include digital games in the sixth-semester course she is teaching in the spring. She is happy to see Layla on the class list for the spring and plans to send Ruby a message about the new syllabus.

6.5.1 Scenario questions

1. What is your reaction to the game-enhanced scenario? How might it have been done better? What would have made it worse?
2. What approach is the instructor using? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Have you done similar activities with students? Have you done them as a learner?
3. What aspects of the motivational models do you see in the students' behaviors? How did Mrs. Smith's syllabus acknowledge different motivations?
4. How could you apply a similar unit to your L2TL context? What would be the benefits? What would be the challenges?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Game-Based Environment</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Availability Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croquelandia</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>A synthetic immersive environment specifically created for the learning of Spanish pragmatics (i.e., apologies and requests); learners complete a series of quests that guide them through apologizing and requesting in a variety of contexts.</td>
<td>Research prototype only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Island</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>A virtual world developed for young learners of foreign languages; functioning much like an online amusement park with various games, group adventures, storytelling, and a multilingual chat feature. <a href="http://languageislandblog.blogspot.com">http://languageislandblog.blogspot.com/</a></td>
<td>Demo only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentira</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>A place-based, augmented reality mobile game in which learners must search for clues in both a virtual neighborhood and an existing physical neighborhood to solve a murder mystery; learners utilize a mobile device to interact with a Spanish-speaking neighborhood in Albuquerque, NM. <a href="http://www.mentira.org">http://www.mentira.org</a></td>
<td>Open-source code for development in ARIS; freely available online from iTunes via the ARIS application; need an iOS device for play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDDWorld Online</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>A first-person online role playing game (RPG) that immerses players in environments unique to each language's specific culture. Students will interact with other players and with computer-controlled characters who are voiced by native speakers. <a href="http://www.middleburyinteractive.com/story.php?id=13">http://www.middleburyinteractive.com/story.php?id=13</a></td>
<td>Proprietary version available for French I and Spanish I.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.1 (Continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Game-Based Environment</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Availability Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tactical Language and Culture Training Systems</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Immersive 3-D environments that teach language and culture skills for defense situations; include training and practice phases with a focus on voice recognition. <a href="http://www.alelo.com/tactical_language.html">http://www.alelo.com/tactical_language.html</a></td>
<td>Restricted; available for purchase by primarily military entities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zon</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>A two-dimensional virtual world developed at Michigan State University; offers a comprehensive built-in syllabus structure similar to an introductory textbook; learners embark on a journey to China and must interact with non-player characters to complete various activities. <a href="http://enterzont.com/">http://enterzont.com/</a></td>
<td>Online access; freely available for play.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Reinhardt and Sykes (2012).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Sample Task Types</th>
<th>Common Genres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Capture       | take or capture something                    | • find a key that will open a door  
• capture enemy territory             | adventure, action, roleplay, strategy                                           |
|               |                                              | • run through a maze  
• follow a trace left by a captive            | adventure, action, roleplay        |
|               |                                              | • finish cooking a dish in time  
• drive to the finish line before a competitor | adventure, action, roleplay, strategy |
|               |                                              | • enter a cave, release a prisoner, and escort the prisoner back to his or her home | adventure, action, roleplay, strategy |
|               |                                              | • put the parts of a secret message in order  
• get 5 Xs in a row | adventure, simulation management, strategy                                      |
|               |                                              | • avoid choosing the curtain hiding the goat | adventure, action                |
|               |                                              | • create a successful farm  
• sew a jeweled vest               | roleplay, simulation management, strategy                                      |
|               |                                              | • find the capital of a new territory  
• see the breeding grounds of a rare butterfly | adventure, roleplay, strategy       |
|               |                                              | • translate the secret code  
• complete the crossword             | adventure, strategy               |
|               |                                              | • use the invisibility elixir at the right moment  
• and avoid detection            | adventure, roleplay, simulation management, strategy                          |
|               |                                              | • gain and use knowledge in a particular way | adventure, strategy               |

Source: Adapted from Fulerton (2008).

Feedback Mechanism | Description | Example
--- | --- | ---
**Leveling** | Leveling demonstrates how far the player is progressing toward a next step. It typically does not decrease. | In *World of Warcraft*, a player works through a total of 80 levels to reach the endgame point. This endgame level is sometimes raised with expansions to the game as more and more players look for a continued challenging experience.
**Points** | Points are usually given on a numeric scale, increasing as the player does better and often decreasing when the player makes a mistake. | In *Angry Birds*, a player strives for a high score on a variety of levels. Although points are accumulated, they restart at the beginning of each level.
**Asset building** | Assets are in-game resources that a player receives, often as part of collections, that can be stored and used at a later time. They can grant, for example, special skills, access to different locations, and the ability to use other items. | In *Mario Kart*, players collect various items to help them in the race by hitting question mark squares. The various items can be used at strategic times to enable the racer to beat other faster cars.
**Skill building** | As a player practices and becomes better at a skill, feedback is given in the form of a progress bar, points, or level to indicate expertise in the skill. In some instances, the skill feedback is distinct from leveling; in other cases, it is one and the same. | In *Runescape*, a player chooses skills to master such as cooking, construction, magic, or prayer.
**Tips and hints** | Games build in clues that guide a player through the necessary steps to complete a task. They often appear after the player has made a mistake. | In *Super Mario Brothers*, the Toad character often steps in to help players who are lost, teach new skills, and work with a player toward mastery.
**Real-time progress bars** | Short-term progress bars often track a player's progress for a specific period of time or in specific place while completing a specific activity. Bars often reset after the player has succeeded or failed at the activity. | During a duel in *Everquest*, the player has a lifeline that decreases as he or she gets attacked. It resets and disappears upon completion of the duel.
**Sound effects** | Games use auditory cues to indicate correct or incorrect actions. | In *Lifequest*, an alarm clock buzz is used to indicate that the player is running out of time and may lose additional time to play the next day.
**Active and inactive game elements** | Objects and characters are active only when needed. An element's interactivity helps indicate when the player is on the correct or | In *Plants vs. Zombies*, only plants that are relevant to the place being planted can be used. Choices are guided through the available and unavailable plants.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Balance Type</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Fairness creates a balance between a player's resources and the forces working against him or her in a game. This can be achieved through symmetrical games (i.e., all players have the same resources) or careful delivery of resources in asymmetrical games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge vs. success</td>
<td>A game cannot be too easy or too difficult. The balance between success and failure is critical to making this happen. Means to achieve this balance include, for example, increased difficulty with success, speed of play, various layers of challenge, and player choice in the difficulty level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful choices</td>
<td>Choices should be meaningful and have a direct impact on the outcome of the game. This requires a careful balance between the number and type of choices given and their direct impact. Triangularity can help achieve this balance (i.e., low-risk choices equal lower rewards, whereas high-risk choices result in higher rewards).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill vs. chance</td>
<td>There must be a careful balance between what happens to a player as a result of chance and as a result of his or her own abilities. This balance is highly dependent on individual play styles and player preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head vs. hands</td>
<td>There must also be a balance between the physical skills needed to play a game (&quot;hands&quot;) and the thinking that is needed (&quot;head&quot;). This is distinct for different types of games. For example, a driving game might have more hands than head and an adventure game more head than hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition vs. cooperation</td>
<td>In a digital game, there must be balance between the amount of competition and cooperation. Team competition represents a strong example of balance between the two, as players cooperate with their team members but are united in competition against opponents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short vs. long</td>
<td>Designers need to be cautious of the length of gameplay. A game that is too short does not provide a meaningful experience for the player, whereas a game that is too long can become boring or too excessive in the time it requires to play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewards vs. punishment</td>
<td>Tied to the balance of challenge and success, a game must also provide a balance between rewards (positive things given to the player) and punishments (things that happen to a player that often create challenge). Common rewards include praise, points, skills, gateways, powers, and resources. Common punishments include shaming, loss of points, terminated play, and removal of powers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom vs. controlled experience</td>
<td>A careful balance of what players can control and what is controlled by the game itself is necessary. Too much player control can be uninteresting and not enough control can be too challenging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple vs. complex</td>
<td>A good game should be &quot;simply complex.&quot; In other words, the simplicity makes the gameplay experience clear and enjoyable to play and the complexity makes it interesting, but not too confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail vs. imagination</td>
<td>A designer has to make choices about how much detail to include and how much to give over to the player's imagination. Some ways to achieve this balance include detailing only what can be detailed well, giving details that can spark imagination, and not providing details about the familiar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX 3
Digital Game Evaluation Guide for L2 Teaching and Learning

Prior to evaluating any digital game, you should play the game for a minimum of one hour. Two to three hours would be preferable. For game evaluations using this framework, visit http://games2teach.wordpress.com.

1a. Game specifications and parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Game Title</th>
<th>2. Developer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Game Platform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Location (e.g., link, purchase site)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cost to Play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Player Configuration*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Game Type*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Game Genre*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Summary of Previous Reviews of This Game (e.g., links, key points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Language(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Appendix 2: Guide to Game Types and Genres for examples.

1b. Game basics

1. In general, what do players do in the game?
2. What is/are the primary objective(s) of the game?
3. What is the setting of the game? How does this fit with L2/L1 objectives?
4. How do players learn to play the game? How difficult is it to play?
5. How does the game teach players how to play? Does this mechanism seem effective? How much language is involved?
6. Approximately how long does it take to reach the end-game point, if there is one?

2. Goals and in-game tasks

1. How is the game divided into in-game tasks and other divisions (e.g., levels, quests, cycles)?
2. How do the separate tasks combine into larger activities?
3. How does the player determine the goals and activities?
4. What does the player have to do to complete the in-game tasks and reach the goals?
5. Are there different ways the player can reach various points in the game and complete different tasks?
6. What language skill areas are used for the in-game tasks? Consider the necessary lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, cultural, and strategic knowledge that is necessary and/or peripheral.
7. How might the above considerations be leveraged for L2 learning activities?

3. Interaction(s)

1. How are interactions with, through, and around the game afforded by the game?
2. Consider the following aspects of cognitive interactivity:
   a. How well does the game environment engage the player?
   b. Describe the graphical and visual feel of the game.
   c. Describe the music and sound of the game.
3. How does the game promote interaction among the players either in or out of the game? If it is a single-player game, how practical would it be to create a pair or group activity around the game?
4. Is there a community of players for this game? If so, what sorts of activities do they engage in? Include relevant links and resources.
5. Does the player feel that his/her choices make a difference in the game?
6. How might the above considerations be leveraged for L2TL?

4. Feedback

1. How does the game provide feedback to players?
2. How many levels of feedback are in the game?
3. Are there other sources of feedback related to the game?
4. How is the feedback individualized for each player?
5. What mediums (i.e., behavioral, image, text based) are used when giving feedback?
6. How might the above considerations be leveraged for L2 learning activities?

5. Game context and narratives

1. What is the context-in-the-game in this game? In other words, what is it about?
2. How does this context fit with (L2/L1 curricular goals) (i.e., what type of objectives would best fit with this game)?
3. How are the narratives in the game told or experienced? How do these relate (or not relate) to L2/L1?
4. Note some of the specific vocabulary, grammatical, pragmatic, cultural, and strategic knowledge needed to play the game and understand the narratives. Which are most relevant to L2TL?
5. How much knowledge of the in-game narratives is necessary ahead of time to play successfully?
6. Approximately how long does it take to reach the end-game point, if there is one?
7. How appropriate is the language for instructional goals? Where is it most appropriate and inappropriate?

6. Motivation

1. Is this game motivating? In what ways? Do you want to keep playing? Why or why not?
2. Have you/do you experience flow when playing this game? If so, in what way? If not, what could be improved?
3. Is this game engaging? Why or why not?
7a. Summary

1. What are the most relevant aspects of this game as related to L2TL?
2. In what L2TL areas will this game (and its associated attendant discourses) be most relevant?
3. In what L2TL areas will this game (and its associated attendant discourses) be least relevant?
4. Overall, how useful would this game be for the creation and implementation of game-enhanced activities?

7b. Other considerations

1. What are the institutional constraints that might limit (or enhance) the use of this game for L2TL (e.g., lab setting, hardware, software limitations)?
2. What are the contextual/cultural constraints that might limit (or enhance) the use of this game for L2TL (e.g., perceptions, administration, theme of the game)?
3. Is there any other pertinent information related to the use of this game for L2TL?

CHAPTER 2  Game design activity: Design a digital game to learn [insert language]—Focus on goals

You have been given a grant to help build a digital game that will help students learn [insert language]. One step in the design process is coming up with the types of tasks and goals the game will have. As a group, design the goals of your game by answering the following questions. Be sure to include as much detail as possible.

1. Basic information:
   a. What will you learn?
   b. What type of game is it (e.g., simulation, adventure)?
   c. What is the object of the game (what a player does to win)?
   d. What is the context of the game (setting, characters, etc.)?

2. Tasks
   a. What sorts of activities and tasks can a player do in your game?
   b. Choose one task and describe it by answering the following questions:
      i. What is the task?
      ii. What is the object of the task?
      iii. What does the player have to do to complete the task?
      iv. Why would the player do the task?
      v. What does the player need to do to the task?
      vi. What else can the player do instead of the task?
   c. What rewards do completing the task give the player?
   d. How are your tasks designed to help people learn [insert language]?
   e. Why do you think these tasks will be especially effective?
   f. Do you think players might do something different from what you intended? Why?

3. Storyboard: Create a storyboard in which you illustrate the experience the player has while doing one or more of the tasks you described.

4. Dialogue: Write a conversation between an in-game character and the player that focuses on the task you described.