

Non-Serious Serious Games

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Abstract

Serious games have been shown to promote behavioural change and impart skills to players, and non-serious games have proven to have numerous benefits. This paper argues that non-serious digital games played in a 'clan' or online community setting can lead to similar real world benefits to serious games. This paper reports the outcomes from an ethnographic study and the analysis of user generated data from an online gaming clan. The outcomes support previous research which shows that non-serious games can be a setting for improved social well-being, second language learning, and self-esteem/confidence building. In addition this paper presents the novel results that play within online game communities can impart benefits to players, such as treating a fear of public speaking. This paper ultimately argues that communities of Gamers impart 'serious' benefits to their members.

Keywords

Online communities; digital games; clan; social play; serious games; non-serious games



Introduction

Serious games have been shown to promote behavioural change and impart skills to players (Lampton *et al.* 2006, Wouters *et al.* 2009), and non-serious games have been shown to have numerous benefits (Granic *et al.* 2014, Jones *et al.* 2014). This paper argues that non-serious games played in an organized 'clan' setting can lead to similar real world benefits to serious games.

This paper reviews the benefits of serious and non-serious games before reporting the outcomes from an ethnographic study and an analysis of user generated data from an online gaming clan. The outcomes support previous research which shows that non-serious games can be a setting for improved well-being (Vella *et al.*, 2013), second language learning (Peterson, 2010), social and emotion support and self-esteem/confidence building (Jones *et al.*, 2014). In addition, this paper presents and discusses the novel results that organized play within online game communities can result in benefits similar to simulations and serious games designed to treat a fear of public speaking.

In 2014 a number of articles on websites related to digital gaming pronounced the Gamer identity to be harmful, unpleasant and unnecessary. These articles lead to the event known as Gatergate (Mortensen, 2016). The outcomes of this study suggest that communities of Gamers, rather than being inherently negative, are supportive and deeply helpful places, providing not only social support, but 'serious' benefits to their members.

Background

Serious Games and Games Seriousness

Susi *et al.* (2007) note that the definition of serious games varies greatly across domains and literature, and state that generally "serious games usually refer to games used for training, advertising, simulation, or education that are designed to run on personal computers or video game consoles". Serious games span a huge range of different technologies and styles of gameplay which necessitates very general definitions when speaking about serious games in general. For example, Marsh (2011) defines serious games as "digital games, simulations, virtual environments and mixed reality/media that provide opportunities to engage in activities through responsive narrative/story, gameplay or encounters to inform, influence, for well-being, and/or experience to convey meaning".

Digital games have been applied to a wide range of training scenarios. In some cases the games are designed specifically for training purposes and thus fall under the category of 'serious games'. In other cases

standard commercial-off-the-shelf are pressed into service and training tools.

The use of digital games as virtual environments for learning and training is an active field of research, studies have been conducted to investigate using games to train people for dangerous situations (Lampton *et al.*, 2006) and have been shown to improve cognitive abilities such as improving visual search skills (Castel *et al.* 2005). Other studies on using games as training environments include fire drill simulators (Chittaro & Ranon, 2009; Smith & Trenholme, 2009) designed to test if games can be used to train players in evacuation procedures. Game and game engines are often used as the basis for virtual training environments as they are often far more efficient to use than formal simulation software. Lenoir & Lowood (2005) argue, once military technology trickled down to civilian use, but in the field of virtual environments, it now usually lags behind digital games.

Serious games have been designed to teach second languages (Berns *et al.* 2013), and games have been shown to be effective in knowledge acquisition/content understanding, and in improving motivation of learners in general (Connolly *et al.*, 2012). In a review of other studies Wouters *et al.* (2009) concluded that "serious games potentially improve the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills" in addition to showing potential changing attitudes of players and for the transfer of fine motor skills. Granic *et al.* (2014) argue that digital games provide immediate and concrete feedback which rewards continual effort and keep players within a "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1980) or "motivational sweet spot" (Sweetser & Wyeth, 2005). By having players "work towards meaningful goals, persevere in the face of multiple failures, and celebrate the rare moments of triumph after successfully completing challenging tasks", Granic *et al.* (2014) argue that digital games promote a view of incremental improvement and may "cultivate a persistent, optimistic motivational style". For a review of the motivational benefits of digital games see Granic *et al.* (2014).

In the defence domain digital games are used for a wide range of training applications (Mead, 2013), and have been used to effectively teach 'change detection and situational awareness' (Stinchfield & Caldwell, 2011) in infantry, increasing participant's detection rates while reducing false alarms. In multiple small scale infantry studies Brown (2010) found that serious games were at "least as effective as traditional training methods such as the sand table for preparatory tactical training", and found that participants felt better trained after using the virtual environment. However Brown (2010) also found that a serious game does not eliminate the need for a trainer, and that left alone with a virtual environment, participants (in this case Marines) would simply play with the technology and 'fool around' rather than learn.

It has been shown that the digital games used to transfer training need not be highly realistic in every way. A study by Reber & Bernard (2012) used the simulator game Ship Simulator Extreme. The study found that students exposed to the game following their standard training performed at a higher level in two key indicators of ship handling proficiency of 'Standard Commands' and 'Margins of Safety Maintained'. However the study also showed that novice students "encountered difficulty in unlearning the handling characteristics of one model and learning a new one through the course of their instruction" (Reber & Bernard, 2012). Therefore it would seem that digital games can effectively train some skills, but may produce problems if their model of real systems is inaccurate. Raybourn *et al.* (2010) found that serious games enhanced trainee intercultural communication, interpersonal skills, and adaptive thinking. Additionally the study found that not only playing but also observing someone playing the game were both engaging learning modalities. Pelletier and Kneebone, (2015) suggest that games might not just be used as a tool for translating current training styles into virtual forms, but be used to transform how people think about their domain.

However in an infantry training study Whitney *et al.* (2013) found that, unlike their traditional field-based condition, participants involved in game-based training showed no significant changes in performance. This highlights that while many studies have proved digital games can produce positive training transfer, it is certainly not always the case. Therefore, the need for further empirical investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of serious games and a standardized way of evaluating them is needed (Caird-Daley *et al.*, 2007; Bellotti *et al.*, 2013). Caird-Daley *et al.* (2007) argue that there must be more studies which can demonstrate behavioural change within an operational environment.

There have been a number of literature/meta reviews of the evidence of training effectiveness of digital games (simulation games, serious games, etc.), however Sitzmann (2011) warns that their review provides "strong evidence of publication bias in simulation games research". In a review of serious games literature Fletcher & Tobias (2006) states that "there is more enthusiasm about the opportunities for learning provided by computer games and simulations than there is for conducting empirical studies investigating whether these opportunities are actually realized". Fletcher & Tobias (2006) go on to argue that merely playing a game with superficial similarities to a task will not result in training transfer, but that training "transfer seems to be a function of the similarity in cognitive processes engaged by the game and the transfer task". In a meta-analysis of simulation game literature Sitzmann (2011) argues that simulation games provide increased training transfer when the game was directly relevant to the training material: "trainees could access the simulation game as many times as desired, and the simulation game was a supplement to other

instructional methods rather than stand-alone instruction" (Sitzmann, 2011), a sentiment echoed by Caird-Daley *et al.* (2007). However games need not always be directly relevant in theme or task to a task to provide some useful skill development, more abstract games which have no direct relevance to a training task have been shown successfully enhance team skills (Caird-Daley *et al.*, 2007; Hussainetal, 2008).

The Benefits of Non-Serious Games

In this paper we define the concept of a 'non-serious' game as any digital game which was designed purely as entertainment, with no intended training or learning intent. For example, online First Person Shooter (FPS) games such as the 'Counter Strike' (Valve Corporation, 1999) series were designed to be enjoyable for players, rather than impart any lasting benefit to them.

Previous research has suggested that as well as competitiveness and challenge, social reasons such as the possibility of cooperation and communication are strong motivators for people to play online FPS games (Jansz & Tanis, 2007, Frostling-Henningsson, 2009).

Team-based online games are highly social environments, filled with creative humour and social interaction (Wright *et al.* 2002). Kowert & Oldmeadow (2015) argue that online games can provide a social outlet and sense of closeness for individuals with high attachment avoidance, allowing these individuals to avoid social isolation. In addition to online interaction, online games can lead to offline friendships, offline support, and the maintaining of links with old friends (Domahidi *et al.* 2014, Trepte *et al.* 2012). Indeed, social interaction, fun, friendship, and providing a place for personal expression have been shown to be core benefits of non-serious online games (Cole & Griffiths, 2007).

Research is increasingly revealing the positive relationship between digital games and player wellbeing (Jones *et al.* 2014, Vella *et al.* 2013). Digital games have been shown to improve mood (Granic *et al.* 2014; McGonigal, 2011; Russoniello *et al.*, 2009; Ryan *et al.*, 2006), reduce depression (Aldao *et al.*, 2010; Rosenberg *et al.* 2010), promote relaxation, and reduce stress and anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi *et al.*, 1993; Russoniello *et al.*, 2009). Playing digital games can increase self-esteem (Csikszentmihalyi *et al.*, 1993; Dandeneau & Baldwin 2004; Hausknecht 2013; Jones *et al.* 2014) and is used by players as a form of escape, relief and distraction from real-life difficulties (Gamberini *et al.*, 2008; Nap *et al.*, 2009). Jones *et al.* (2014) echo previous research, stating that "videogame play has been found to lead to improved mood, reduced emotional disturbance, improve emotion regulation, relaxation, and stress reduction" but go on to state that playing games can lead to "flourishing mental health".

In addition to the wide range of evidence that suggests that digital games can improve quality of life (McGuire, 1984; Jung *et al.*, 2009;

Wollersheim *et al.*, 2010), previous research has sought to explore if games configure real world benefits akin to training. Peterson (2010) argues that Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs) can help players learn a second languages by providing “valuable opportunities for vocabulary acquisition and the development of communicative competence”. Lee & Gerber (2013) share this view, suggesting that the large communities and in-built voice communication make it easy for people to find speaking partners and that the need to communicate to accomplish goals in these environments provides motivation for players to learn.

Studies such as Feng *et al.* (2009) have shown the potential for digital games to improve spatial cognition, however in terms of online games, research has often focused on the concept of leadership in MMORPGs. Mendoza (2014) state that “game leaders have begun [harnessing] the inherent complexities in MMOs to “practice” leadership concepts by running a guild “like a business”. By doing so, they have gained valuable in game insights and later [apply] them in the workplace.” However, Mysirlaki (2011) argue that MMORPGs do “not teach leadership, but rather that leadership is practiced in an interaction between players, paratexts, and the game.” While there has been speculation that players might learn real world skills such as leadership from participating in MMORPG communities, a study by Lisk *et al.* (2011) suggested that there is no generalizable link between leading a clan/guild within these games and real world transformative leadership, in some games there was a link and others there was none.

A Non-Serious Study

This section documents the analysis of user generated data from the online gaming clan the 29th Infantry Division (29th). To explore the issue of serious benefits from this non-serious game, the project gathered three different types of data from 29th members. Found user data, farmed user data, and ethnographic observations. Specifically this project focused on what could be considered transferable skills such as public speaking, social skills, and leadership qualities.

In this section the results of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) of the found and farmed user data are presented. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis consists of six steps or phases, as outlined by Braun *et al.* (2014). Phase 1 consists of familiarizing one’s self with the data, in this study this meant carefully reading through the found and farmed data, and immersing one’s self in the data to gain a broad understanding of the topics. Phase 2 involves generating the initial codes, distilling the topics of various user statements throughout the data into words or phrases. In Phase 3 the researcher searches for overarching themes in the codes, “reviewing the coded data to identify areas of similarity and overlap between codes”.

Braun & Clarke (2006) define a theme as capturing "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represent[ing] some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set". The fourth Phase consists of reviewing the potential themes, checking if the themes have substantial presence in the data and if they are cohesive enough to be a single theme. The final phases involve more formally defining the themes and reporting the outcomes of the analysis.

In this study these outcomes are discussed in more detail in the discussion section, informed by and triangulated with the ethnographic observations. There have been a number of ethnographic studies in the field of online gaming (Ducheneaut *et al.*, 2004; Golub, 2010; Taylor, 2009) and could be considered "virtual ethnography" (Hine, 2000). Ethnography involves participating in activities in a 'natural setting' for an extended period of time and the success of ethnographic studies "is due to the richness in social (and interactional) detail they unravel and the contextualized nature of the data they create" (Wagner *et al.* 2009). Ikeya *et al.* (2002) state that ethnography offers a chance to remind researchers the actual ways people act and interact.

The 29th I.D.

The ethnographic observations of the 29th were based on the author's two year membership of the clan. The 29th Infantry Division is a realism-based gaming clan with around 200 members (at the time of the study). The clan is named after a real U.S. army infantry division and primarily play the 'Red Orchestra' (Tripwire Interactive, 2006) series of team-based online FPS games set in the World War 2.

The 29th clan is highly organised and structured with a military style hierarchy, with members being part of a squad and a company within the clan. For example, the author was predominantly in Able Company, First Platoon, Second Squad (AP1S2).

Members join as Privates and some advance to the roles of Sergeants, Corporals, Lieutenants, etc. The clan runs squad and company 'drills' and 'skims', these are organized weekly events in which squads of players take part in organized battles with predefined victory conditions. Before these events the members are briefed, split into teams, then play for an hour or two, and finally are debriefed. During these organized events the squads within the 29th use private channels within a Teamspeak server to communicate. Teamspeak is a popular voice-over-IP (VOIP) communication tool, which allows users to join group of over players in private or public voice chat. Groups such as the 29th rent their own private servers and restrict access to only allow members.

In their own words the clan members describe the 29th on their forum as "competitive online gaming", "a realism unit", "military role-playing", and an "organised, realism based community".



Figure 1. Hudson (2011) The three squads of the 29th line up before a game.

Found Data: Community Forums

The 29th's official Internet *forum*, or message board, is split into publicly accessible and clan member's only areas.

The community forums of the 29th were searched for evidence of tangible benefits that members may have discussed. The forums were searched three times: before, during, and after the author's membership of the clan.

The 29th forums contained very little public discussion of tangible real world benefits of gaming which could contribute to the codes and themes related to the research topic. The forums contain a number of threads which celebrate the social aspect of the clan, from threads which contain creative humour and social play based on the clan experience ("You know you are a member of the 29th when..."), to threads which celebrate the friendship and camaraderie ("Whats the best part of the 29th?"). In terms of serious benefits, the forums only contained two threads which explicitly express vague benefits. For example, in a thread (8 posts 1600 words) entitled "From a Brother in the 29th ID to Another" the opening post contains a video tribute to the clan. A number of members replied stating how the clan had affected their lives:

"I've always said that the 29th is one of the best things to happen to me, and I love everyone in it" (Lacey, 2016)

"Its changed my life I have become a stronger and more mature person then I used to" (Sylvester, 2016)

"The 29th has done great things for me as well, and I love this community!" (Stear, 2016)

Possibly the most specific case of tangible benefits to players was mentioned in a thread entitled "The 29th helped in a profound way". In this thread the opening post recounts a story of how the 29th clan helped them overcome alcoholism, slowly cutting down drinking when their squad leader requested they not drink during drills. This thread (16 posts and 2800 words) contained a number of replies which hinted at similar experiences for other members:

"I want to write about something similar but can't bring myself to do it. All I want to say is: You guys are like brothers to me."
(Roebuck, 2013)

"I actually had a similar problem that the 29th helped me overcome in its own way." (Brewer, 2013)

"Long story short, [a 29th member] created a whole new perspective on life for me; practically saved my love life... haha"
(Hillard, 2013)

Along with more general statements of benefits such as:

"I have noticed a slight improvement in my public speaking skills since joining the 29th. I think we can all say the intensity of this unit has improved us in some way." (Lawrence, 2013)

"[...] being in the 29th was great because you always had a band of friends to talk to on any subject because you feel a large amount of comfort with them. Since they're not "actually" in your personal life, you [feel] you can tell them anything." (Hillard, 2013)

Although there was very little data in the forums openly expressing benefits of the 29th outside the expected social elements, the small amount of posts did suggest some real world effects on some of the members of the clan. The theme established from this data was one of general social well-being. However, with such a small dataset found in the forums, further investigation into the clan experience would be required to confirm this theme.

Farmed Data: Community Survey

The second set of data was gathered using an online survey of the members of the 29th, conducted half way through the author's membership of the clan. To gain feedback about potential benefits of gaming within the 29th, the survey asked an open question: "Has being part of something like the 29th taught you anything, help you develop skills, etc?"

The question was part of a larger survey which asked members of the 29th about their gaming habits and motivations for playing within a gaming clan. The survey was created using Google Forms and was posted on the member's area of the 29th forums. The survey received 82 respondents of the 200 clan members, and over 2000 words of data. The survey was anonymised so that feedback would not be linked with any clan members. The mean age of the respondents was 26 (standard deviation 9.9), there were 80 male respondents and 2 female, and 79% of the respondents identified as 'Gamers'.

Unlike the forums, the survey data provided information about a wide range of benefits that members had felt they had gained from playing digital games within the clan. These benefits fall into four broad themes: general social well-being, confidence and/or leadership qualities, language skills, and social skills. General social well-being is a theme carried over from the forum data.

General Social Well-being

As expected from previous literature (Domahidi *et al.* 2014, Jones *et al.* 2014, Treppe *et al.* 2012), one common statement throughout the feedback referred to the social benefits of being in the clan. Despite the survey question not referring to the social benefits of gaming, it was evident as a strong theme within the data.

"Being part of the 29th gives me a sense of belonging I haven't felt since I was a child. It's very much part of my life now"

"It has enlightened me with different perspective on things like subjective values on different matters."

"This is the best that ever happened to me in [an] online world, not so much for the game but for the people I have met. They are real friends to me."

A small number of members explicitly stated that the game provided no real world benefits outside of friendship.

"The 29th has given me a friendship with many whom I would of not known without the 29th, however the 29th had not developed any skills apart from in-game skills."

Confidence & Leadership

The concepts of confidence and leadership were often mentioned together throughout the data.

"The 29th has certainly taught me how to speak confidently in front of other people and lead others in stressful situations."

"Being in the 29th made me more comfortable with assuming leadership and communicating in general."

"I was once in a leadership position for within the 29th. While I was in that position I had people who depended on me and thus I had to work on, and improve; my level of responsibility, and my level of confidence."

"Ability/Confidence to address and instruct large groups of people."

In particular communication and developing ability to speak in public were common codes within this theme. The topics of leadership, confidence and public speaking were usually mentioned together and so were included in the general theme of confidence and leadership.

Some comments referred to specific leadership qualities and how these benefits apply to the real world.

"Planning and problem solving skills."

"Discipline and personal self-worth, by being accountable to someone else."

"These skills are very transferable to RL and are a great way the improve language, self-confidence and personal integrity which are all key attributes in the workplace."

"Being in the 29th, it definitely helped me develop leadership skills and communicating under pressure as much as [an] online video game can."

"I frequently use skills I've acquired in the 29th in my daily life. Problem solving, dealing with people, dispute handling are all things that you find yourself doing in the 29th. Not only when we're actually playing the game, but also outside of the game."

Language Skills

Five of the respondents stated that they were not native English speakers and that being a member of the clan had helped them develop their language skills. In this way the weekly drills of the 29th could be seen as an immersive English environment, in which members must use the language in a task-orientated context for number of hours on a regular basis.

"I first joined the 29th to get better in English and it worked. I can now talk easily in English and I'm not shy anymore when I speak in English."

"Being in 29th has improved my social skills and I have also learned to speak English more fluently."

"It also allows me to practice English speech, since it's not my first language."

Social Skills

In addition to confidence in terms of communicating with large groups of people, a number of respondents stated that being a member of the 29th had helped them develop social skills on a more fundamental level.

“My social skills have certainly developed from my experience in the 29th. I'm also much more responsible and take other people's opinions and motives into account as well as mine in all social environments.”

One respondent stated that their experiences in the clan had helped them deal with their “social phobia”. Giving an example of leading 40 other players on a server ‘scrimmage’, the respondent described how taking part in such activities while not being physically seen by other people gave them more confidence in real situations. Other respondents recounted of how the 29th had helped them, or other members, mature.

“In my three years with the 29th I've seen kids not just develop their skills and tactical awareness but mature as well.”

Discussion

In this section the results of the thematic analysis of the user data is discussed in terms of the previous literature and informed by the ethnographic observations made during the membership of the 29th.

Previous research has already established the social benefits of online games (Domahidi *et al.* 2014, Jones *et al.* 2014, Trepte *et al.* 2012), and the 29th is no different in this regard.

As the core gameplay of the 29th consisted of organized and hierarchical gameplay, casual talk was discouraged during drills. Much of the social bonds within squads were fleshed out in pre-match casual play, in which members would play a more team deathmatch (the only objective is to score the most kills) style gameplay before the large scale organized battles. Members would join their squad-mates in their designated channel within Teamspeak and speak casually, trash-talk, and even discuss serious life choices such as University and employment topics. While the majority of talk centred on digital games and history, these moments of confiding showed great social bonds between the semi-anonymous squad-mates. However, what of the ‘serious’ benefits of this non-serious game?

The majority of responses in the user survey mentioned confidence in communicating with others. In the organized play of the 29th most communication fell into one into two core types, intra-squad communication, and whole team or whole server briefing/debriefing. The former consisted of the following activities: Before organized gameplay the entire group of players would line up into their squads and companies and the leaders would brief the players on the main objectives of the drill; Once the players had split into teams the team

leaders would then address their teams in a similar way; After the organized gameplay the players would gather again and give their opinions and be debriefed. These briefings are likely the type of communication that enhanced the member's confidence with public speaking, while the intra-squad communication may have made people more comfortable with public communication in general.

Gaining confidence in communication is an interesting outcome from membership of a gaming clan. Public speaking is a common cause of anxiety (Pertaub *et al.* 2002), and speaking in these environments could be seen as an interesting form of therapy, similar to virtual reality treatments (Gorini & Riva, 2014; Pertaub *et al.* 2002). In environments like the 29th the other players represent a real live audience, however are not real-life acquaintances or physically present. Similar to the idea the virtual environments can allow individuals with high attachment avoidance to experience social interaction (Kowert & Oldmeadow 2015), the 29th allows people with a fear of public speaking to talk to groups of other humans without the stress and self-consciousness which comes from physical proximity. By emulating the concept of briefings and debriefings in a military setting, the 29th are exposing their members to speaking in front of large numbers of people. These groups are also not a mass of unorganized players, but are a large group (thirty to sixty) which are patiently lined up, listening, and waiting to begin a match. In the context of public speaking, being part of the 29th could be seen as involving an inherent form of exposure therapy for its members. Using virtual environments for the treatment of public speaking anxiety and training people to be more proficient public speakers has proved to be a promising field of research (Gorini & Riva 2014, Manderson 2015). In addition it may be that enjoyable environments such as non-serious games could enhance the effectiveness of such therapy. Sylaiou *et al.* (2010) found that enjoyment and presence were positively correlated, and in a meta-analysis of literature relating to presence and anxiety in virtual reality exposure therapy, Ling *et al.* (2014) found that presence and anxiety were moderately related. However, such effects would require further investigation.

In terms of leadership, clan members stated the 29th had improved their 'comfort with assuming leadership roles', 'responsibility', 'confidence', and 'problem solving'. Thus rather than directly teaching leadership, the 29th seems to impart concepts on the 'periphery of leadership' (McMahon, 2008) to its members. Observations here seem similar to the findings of Mysirlaki (2011), who found that MMORPGs do "not teach leadership, but rather that leadership is practiced in an interaction between players, paratexts, and the game." In the case of the 29th we cannot know if the leaders of the squads, companies, and platoons have measurably benefited in real-world leadership outcomes. However members reported increased confidence and willingness to engage in real world leadership activities. In the 29th leadership is a

regular feature of the gameplay. During organized events random players are often picked to lead entire teams and so members can practise, become accustomed to taking the role of a leader, and gain confidence in this position.

In terms of language skills, the data suggests that some members appropriate the clan as a language learning tool. In some way this could be seen as a sort of ad-hoc gamification of language learning. The 29th has a large proportion of non-native English speakers, and the gaming environment could be seen as a form of experiential learning (Kohonen, 1992) for these members. Previous research suggests that online games can help players learn a second language (Peterson, 2010; Lee & Gerber, 2013). Research also has shown that online social networks such as Facebook can facilitate language learning as they encourage self-directed learning and contain authentic material (Derakhshan & Hasanabbasi, 2015). In a similar way the Teamspeak servers of the 29th provide a social environment in which non-native speakers are exposed to authentic English language and could practise speaking. In addition to the task-based communication during the organized clan gameplay, members often gather on the Teamspeak servers to talk while playing on public servers or playing casually before an organized event. In this environment non-native English speakers were able to discuss language with native speakers in an informal setting.

Conclusion

Regarding the effects of moderate video game play, Jones *et al.* (2014) state that "There is a lack of negative impact for the majority of young players, and instead videogame play is associated with greater self-esteem regarding intelligence, computer skills, and mechanical ability. The experience of feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness during videogame play has been linked with higher self-esteem and positive affect."

Communities and clans such as the 29th not only impart these effects through the games they play, but also offer social well-being. The outcomes of this study suggest that communities of Gamers can provide their members with both social support and 'serious' benefits. By their social and organised nature, gameplay in a clan environment might "provide opportunities to engage in activities through [...] gameplay or encounters to inform, influence, for well-being, and/or experience to convey meaning" (Marsh, 2011). However, it must be acknowledged that this study focuses on one specific gaming experience, clan based organized play.

In addition to established benefits of games such as well-being (Vella *et al.*, 2013), second language learning (Peterson, 2010), and improving self-esteem/confidence (Jones *et al.*, 2014), the data gathered here suggests that Gamer communities like the 29th can help members to become more confident with public speaking.

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