Videogaming and Exploring EFL Students´ Literacy Practices in Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)

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Abstract

It is for sure that media play a tremendous role in our current lives. Specifically, in the last decade the implementation and use of videogames have created a significant gaming culture among young people. The state of the art about this field of inclusion of videogames, specifically MMOG and MMORPG, in the Colombian educational context suggests that despite the existence of many studies dealing with ICT´s, there is little academic research on MMOG in our country. Besides that, many parents and teachers believe prohibition for students from playing videogames is the most suitable solution to literacy-related problems in different subjects such as English. This paper aims to review a research experience of an after-school context that adopts World of Warcraft, a popular MMOG, for English language learning. Through game-play inside World of Warcraft students performed different language challenges inside the virtual world. Observation, the collection of participants´ artifacts and interviews were used to collect data about the literacy practices that emerged when video gaming and the effects on literacy skill development with learning English as a foreign language. The results of the research show that students engage in two categories of EFL literacy practices: *literacy practices inside the game* and *literacy practices beyond the game*. The conclusion can also be drawn that students learned language determined by the engagement in multiliteracies. Finally, these research results unveils in higher details if the idea of using virtual worlds will fulfill the requirements of the 21st century education.

Key Words: videogames, MMMOG, literacy, technology, alternative texts, multiliteracies, EFL learning.

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Chapter 1: The Study

Introduction

"All play means something"
(Huizinga (1949).

By the time we are witnessing all the changes that technology and globalization bring upon, we are also becoming highly dependent on media—Internet, music, radio, videogames, TV and others. It is for sure that they play a tremendous role in our current lives and more advanced technologies are expanding and spreading within the world we actually live in. According to the National Institute on Media and the Family (2007) more than 80% of students who attend kindergarten level use computers and 50% of children under the age of 9 use internet connection. Indeed, mobile phones, digital television, computers and videogames are creating different ways of communicating, sharing experiences, playing, entertaining and even learning (Steinkuehler, 2004). It is evident then that between all the options the immersive, interactive and digital world offers, videogames have arisen as a major entertainment. Specifically, in the last decade the implementation and use of videogames have created a significant gaming culture among children and young people. A survey found that 92% of children from 2 to 17 years old play video and computer games (National Institute on Media and the Family, 2007).

Although every time new technologies appear and change or adapt the media and social environment we belong to, I believe videogames represent a powerful and popular medium. Nowadays, playing videogames has more preference by children and teenagers as an entertaining activity rather than watching television (Squire, Giovanetto, Devane & Durga, 2005).

Besides, some new trends should be taken into consideration when doing research in the 21st century, especially in the field of technology blended with language education (Richards,

2009). In Colombia, researchers such as Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) encourage EFL teachers and the ELT community in general to try to implement Massively Multiplayer Online Games as extraordinary laboratories where students experience language learning opportunities in a different setting from the traditional classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The idea of exploring the range of literacy practices that students engage in when interacting in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game such as World of Warcraft raised as a consequence of three major events that took place in the workplace context but also during the time I was taking graduate classes at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

First, as an English teacher, it was very frequent for me to denote in the school environment and as free time activities students speaking and sharing about different topics but I usually talked to the ones who spoke about videogames. They spoke about how they usually played and interacted with other young ones, strategies, tips, things they learnt and perceived when video gaming, among others. Therefore, it is not a secret that today young people spend more time immersed in digital worlds than they do reading, watching movies or even television (Williams, 2003 as cited in Squire, 2006). Besides that, new genres of videogames become more and more popular and the diversity and range of games seem not to end, for instance, popular genres include action, adventure, dancing, driving, fighting, maze, music, puzzle, role-playing, simulation, sports and strategy games.

However, Gee (2006) asserts that videogames can be distinguished between two major types, he calls one “problem games” and the other “world games”. The first, problem games are more focused on giving a problem or issue to be solved (e.g Tetris, Pac-Man) while in world

games there is a simulation of a big world where the videogame player can solve many different types of problems (e.g Half-Life, World of Warcraft).

Subsequently, as explained before, I have evidenced how many of my students felt interested and connected with those worlds, known as Massively Multiplayer Online Games, which Gee (2007) suggests, in which they can play many roles and feel free to do as many things as they prefer. In other words, Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs, for brevity) is the most popular type of videogame among young people and teenagers nowadays rather than the classic early arcade games like Super Mario Bros or Donkey Kong. Basically, this fact of witnessing how my students were really engaged in game-based conversations started to trigger my interest in this area.

The second relevant event took place during an observation carried out in a general parents-teachers meeting, which I attended, at Colegio de Educación Técnica y Académica Celestin Freinet. There, the English Department discussed a common concern in the school environment: Academic Failure. The main topic discussed was that some students were at risk of academic failure because they did not know how to do the exercises and activities teachers required for the English subject and some others; according to teachers´ report most of them were written. Parents provided many reasons like not having parental control and support at home, living in a single parent family, children´s lack of interest and responsibility, among others. However, there were two curious aspects that really caught my attention. First, parents showed a broad concern because they reported their children spent a lot of time playing videogames in front of the PC screens instead of doing the assigned homework, reading or studying for tests. Second, the solution proposed by many parents and teachers was prohibiting

children playing videogames at home because this issue was not permitting the practices of the school-based learning such as doing homework taking place appropriately.

The third major event took place as part of the literature we read in the Seminar on Methodology from the Masters in Applied Linguistics to TEFL at Universidad Distrital. During the Seminar, an important academic sent a recent and particular attractive invitation to researchers and educators around the world. In the state of the art about Research on Applied Linguistics published in 2009, Richards suggests that some new trends should be taken into consideration when doing research in the 21st century. Although qualitative research has contributed in a significant and potential manner to the development of many important areas in language teaching his state of the art article paper could precisely identify that more research has to be done in one of these areas: technology use in language education. He finally asserts that this area of research deserves closer attention in future works.

In this sense, the rise of digital technology has attracted the idea of using these technologies as a tool for teaching and learning. Obviously, videogames have caught the attention of researchers and teachers for learning purposes. Many studies about videogames for learning have arisen in the last years by important academics and researchers (Gee, 2003, 2007, 2011; Prensky, 2001, 2006, 2007, Shaffer, 2007, 2008, 2011; Squire, 2006, 2011; Steinkeuhler, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011). Gee (2003) leads this growing body of researchers who see videogames as a powerful tool and component of the education we need in the 21st century.

In 2003 Gee wrote in his book *What Videogames have to teach us about Learning and Literacy* that games should be seen as "multimodal texts" because they combine words, sounds, music, signs and graphics. He states that when children are playing, at the same time they are

learning to become a member and to participate in a specific "semiotic domain". Gee defines semiotic domain as "any set of practices that recruits one or more modalities (e.g. oral or written language, images, equations, symbols, sounds, gestures, graphs, artifacts, etc.) to communicate distinctive types of meanings" (p. 18). However, Gee in this book suggests that more research has to be done in terms of the impact and importance of digital games have in the educational context and an invitation for researchers and educators to see videogames as an alternative for learning and literacy development is also included. He claims that "the theory of learning in good videogame fits better with the modern, high-tech, global world today´s children and teenagers live in than do the theories (and practices) of learning that they see in school" (Gee, 2003, p. 7).

There is a very highlighting state of the art on videogames and more specifically on Massively Multiplayer Online Games done by Castañeda-Peña et al (2013). In this latest state of the arte they nominate MMOGs as JMLMJ in Spanish and evidences that although there has been a significant growing number of studies about videogames in different perspectives and topics, it becomes necessary to look for advances and knowledge gaps with the purpose of enhancing future research.

After having seen the growing body of research and researchers aiming at investigating the importance of gaming in education in international studies, I decided to take a personal search and look at how this field of videogames as educational tools has been researched in our Colombian context. I decided to explore many important academic journals of language teaching in Colombia such as CALJ, Signo y Pensamiento, IKALA, PROFILE, among others, in order to find academic articles related to the use of videogames in Colombian educational settings. However, I could only find two studies related to videogames: "Using Video Game-Based Instruction in an EFL Program: Understanding the Power of Video Games in Education" by

Héctor Alejandro Galvis Guerrero in 2011 and "Videojuegos: Máquinas del Tiempo y mutaciones de la subjetividad" by Nina Alejandra Cabra Ayala in 2010.

The first study, carried out as a small scale action research examines the perceptions of four students in a military academy in Colombia undergoing the process of using the GTA "Grand Theft Auto", a role play videogame in their EFL classes instead of classic forms of instruction. This study was conducted on the grounds that computer technology offers the possibility of enhancing EFL instruction by means of simulating and augmenting the target language context.

The second study, proposed by Cabra (2011), I found is not directly related to EFL teaching and learning processes. However, this research is focused on the impact videogames have on the relation time-subjectivity-knowledge, through narrative transformations and their subsequent alterations of cultural and social sensibilities, whose focus is more related to the anthropology field.

Evidently, although a decade ago academic research on Massively Multiplayer Online games started around the world with a growing body of researchers led by American academics, more research has to be done as a new research domain in education. The state of the art about this field of inclusion of videogames, specifically MMOG and MMORPG, in the Colombian educational context suggests that despite the existence of many studies dealing with technology and ICTs as tools for different goals and scopes, "there is little profiling academic research on MMORPG" (Castañeda-Peña et al, 2013).

According to Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) in Colombia, it is necessary to start thinking about the use of MMOG as tools for teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Moreover, taking into account the National Program for Bilingual Education (GNP) led by the Ministry of Education, since they offer a rich variety of options (new ways of teaching and learning, free access to the language with multiple scenarios, language levels and natural interactions) different from the ones a traditional classroom offers.

As mentioned before, the fact of seeing how my students held long conversations speaking about different videogames, parents´ concerns and researchers´ invitations made my interest on searching information related to videogames studies stronger. However, I also found a second fascinating aspect that shaped my interest and proposal on researching on videogames, especially MMOGs.

I used to work for "Celestin Freinet" a private, catholic mixed institution located in Suba - Bogotá. The school´s philosophy initiated 23 years ago with the purpose of offering humanistic and educational services for children and teenagers from diverse places of the city with high educational purposes and goals aiming at fostering students capable of performing the role of agents of change of their society.

As an English teacher, I could evidence how in the school almost all the literacy-related classes were mainly based on reading and writing printed texts. This means students were rarely given the opportunity to interact with digital readings or texts, even presenting assignments or homework computer-typed was forbidden in some school subjects and by some teachers.

In this sense, literacy continues to be seen as the engagement with printed texts (generally books) although many linguists and theorists have provided contemporary notions and definitions, different from merely the ability to read and write printed texts. But as Owston, Wideman, Ronda and Brown (2009) assert, the education of the 21st century needs a rethinking

of the kinds of literacy skills which students will necessitate for full social and economic participation in today´s world. The fact that children and young people are spending a high amount of their leisure time playing videogames (Livingstone, 2002) and the alternative literacy practices boys and girls continue practicing are of concern to nowadays´ parents and educators.

Owing to the previously mentioned facts I would state that information about what students actually do when they play videogames, the literacy practices that comprise playing a game, specifically a Massively Multiplayer Online Game and the influence of computer gaming on students´ literacy development in EFL in our Colombian context is scarce.

Taking into consideration that the digital era computer and console and computer games have become very popular and familiar to most of young learners, certainly playing computer games is chosen by young people as a recreational activity rather than watching television (Squire, Giovanetto, Devane, & Durga, 2005) and also gaming has become a new literacy (Gee, 2003; Squire et al., 2005). It is very important to take into consideration the inclusion of new forms of contemporary digital literacies into the curriculum and the use of videogames as pedagogical tools to explore and promote the new literacies found when navigating rich multimedia environments (Beavis, 2002; Lotherington, 2004 as cited in Owston et al, 2009).

To address the need to promote the newer digital literacy practices in students and taking into account that literacy is defined as a situated social practice. Then, as a social practice, it involves how they construct their identities and values (Baynham, 1995; Gee, 2000) and to engage students more fully, I intend to use an online game-based environment as a way to examine the literacy practices that emerge when video gaming and the effects on literacy skill development with learning English as a Foreign Language.

Therefore, as a researcher and agent in this pedagogical proposal I decided to pose the following research questions:

Research Questions

What literacy practices emerge when EFL students participate in Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)?

What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world?

Research Objectives

As previously mentioned with this pedagogical proposal, I also aim at gaining understanding about the literacy practices found in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game but also the effects that video gaming has on literacy development in EFL, consequently, I pose the following objectives:

- ✓ To identify the literacy practices that emerge when students participate in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG).
- ✓ To describe the literacy practices in which EFL students as video gamers routinely participate.
- ✓ To examine the language learning opportunities computer gaming offers on students´ literacy development in EFL.

To summarize, on the one hand many parents, educators and previous research have blamed videogames as the culprit of students´ lack of success in print and digital literacy practices. On the other hand, this research proposal tries to implement and create a digital

game-based learning environment for EFL students to investigate the literacy practices that constitute playing this type of videogame but also to see how these environments can serve as a way for students to engage in important literacy practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

> "There are huge benefits from the simulation in games. Things that we just had to assume in the past, we can now simulate. Things that we had to read about, we can now live" (Prensky, 2004).

With the general growth of popularity of videogames among teenagers and young learners, specifically Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) are becoming the new trend in research areas such as economy, engineering, social studies, philosophy and even in education. According to Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) it becomes necessary to identify lines of research and knowledge gaps in order to keep moving forward in this field.

Therefore, important researchers led by Gee such as Steinkuehler and Squire with their latest studies have focused on identifying the impact that using videogames as educational tools might have in adolescents' process of learning and the effectiveness that MMOOGs might have as teaching tools in the 21st century.

However, most of these studies placed emphasis on collaboration, problem-solving skills, literacy and critical thinking abilities. These studies have been carried out in different fields such as economics, mathematics, engineering and language teaching in international contexts, mainly USA, but there is no much said about local investigations related to the use of videogames to explore the literacy practices that comprise playing a type of videogame as a MMOG with EFL learners.

Many theories have been provided to explain literacy practices and acquisition in videogame play. Although the literature covers a range of such theories, this review will focus on three major topics which are relevant to the study and emerged throughout the reviewed literature. These themes are: Massively Multiplayer Online Games, Videogames and Learning,

Videogames and Literacy. Although EFL teaching and learning is the focus of the investigation, this paper also presents these themes in different contexts.

Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs)

Interacting with people in online communities and social networks have become very popular activities throughout the world for millions of Internet users. Although there are different genres of video and computer games such as strategy games, adventure, role-play games (RPG), action and sports games, and others, a new and powerful type and genre of videogame has become very popular among children and teenagers: Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs). From now on I will use the abbreviation MMOG or MMOGs to refer to this game genre in order to be as brief as possible.

According to Delwiche (2006) the convergence of high-speed Internet connections, sophisticated graphic cards and powerful microprocessors have become crucial for the immersion in virtual environments such as MMOGs populated and crowded by thousands and millions of user throughout the world at the same time. In contrast to the classic arcade games such as Super Mario Bros or Tetris, MMOGs are quite demanding in software and hardware requirements, which at the same time make them items of full entertainment and appealing for our young people due to the fact that the video graphics and sound systems of these games are high quality. Certainly, I would find this characteristic very related to the increasingly popularity these virtual worlds have gained in my students´ lives.

This leads to a very important question in trying to identify the characteristics that MMOGs and these virtual worlds have which make them attractive for children and teenagers, what is a MMOG?

Steinkuehler (2004) who has written about Massively Multiplayer Online Games describes them as:

> Imagine an entire 3D world online, complete with forests, cities, and seas. Now imagine it populated with others from across the globe who gather in virtual inns and taverns, gossiping about the most popular guild or comparing notes on the best hunting spots. Imagine yourself in a heated battle for the local castle, live opponents from all over collaborating or competing with you. Imagine a place where you can be the brave hero, the kingdom rogue, or the village sage, developing a reputation for yourself that is known from Peoria to Peking. Now imagine that you could come home from school or work, drop your bookbag on the ground, log in, and enter that world any day, any time, anywhere. Welcome to the world of massively multiplayer online gaming. (p.1)

The relevance of Steinkuehler´s (2004) description previously mentioned is crucial for understanding the attractiveness and connection of MMOGs with our students´ game playing. However, it is also important to take into consideration the fact that Massively Multiplayer Online Gamers enter these worlds by creating a digital person with different and personalized physical characteristics called "avatar". The most popular Massively Multiplayer Online Game is called *World of Warcraft* which total number of subscribers is estimated at 12 million, there has not been an equivalent for another game of this type before. Wow was originally made in 2004 and it has been continuously remade since that year. It is a game that can be only played using a computer and internet connection. Therefore, any console such as Play Station or X Box can run it since it is exclusively played in PCs. The objective of the game is to create an avatar which wears medieval clothes and weapons to fight the enemy and conquer the lands of Azeroth. To create the avatar the player has 10 options (classes) ranging from a warrior to a mage. Each

avatar has its own story inside and approaches the game in quite different ways. Since the beginning players start giving solution to quests which are completed to receive a reward (gold and armor) that is used to enhance the avatar abilities to make it stronger and more ready for the battles against the other side.

Once you create your avatar in Warcraft you immerse in a virtual world with amazing environments created by the MMOG designers where you can chat, write and interact with other different avatars handled by other people in different places of the world. This particular feature attributed to MMOGs has been of great importance and relevance for social studies since it has been defined as a powerful tool for developing situated understanding, promoting social interaction, political systems and culture (Shaffer et al, 2005).

In 2004, Constance Steinkuehler stated a significant reason why virtual works are useful in education. She claimed, "the virtual worlds of games are powerful because they make it possible to develop situated understanding" (p.105). According to Shaffer et al (2005) videogames permit people participate in new worlds where they can think, act and talk in new ways. What is more, players can perform roles that are not accessible to them in other environments. These rich virtual worlds are very meaningful to state that videogames are powerful contexts for learning. In these worlds, "learning no longer means confronting words and symbols that are separated from the things those words and symbols refer to" (p. 106). In these virtual worlds, players experience the precise realities that words and symbols mean without losing the connection between difficult ideas and the real problems. This is the reason why virtual worlds make possible to develop *situated learning.* In other words, they create "new social and cultural worlds- worlds that help us learn by integrating thinking, social interaction, and technology, all in service of doing things we care about" (p. 105).

Shaffer et al (2005) also explain that in schools the measure of good teaching and learning is the extent to which students can answer questions about these facts on tests from different subjects. On the contrary, they defend the idea that we, human beings, learn by doing, but not only by doing per se but also by doing something as a member of a large community, which share common goals, a community of practice. Obviously, different communities of practice have different ways of thinking and acting. For instance, lawyers think and act as lawyers; doctors see the world as doctors and so on. Then, the ways of thinking of the members of a community of practice determine the *epistemic frame*. Therefore, the epistemology of practice is organized by the situated understandings, effective social practices, identities and shared values of the group with a local culture. Since students learn how to perform different roles and assume multiple identities inside these virtual worlds, we can determine these worlds as communities of practice where apprentices learn to think and act in multiple ways when they become part of that culture.

My own view of this is that situated understanding is crucial in the process of learning any concept or content. Then, if we as educators train our students to think in the solution of real-problems that happen in real world situations, then our students will learn to use and apply the knowledge in a more meaningful way.

I also agree with the interaction principle and main characteristic that MMOGs offer to our students and game players in general since I believe that interacting with different players inside the game makes the video gaming play even more interesting than merely playing against a machine or computer controlled avatars.

Therefore, it is of great advantage that although a player might be in a different part of the world MMOGs enable thousands of players to interact among themselves. Meanwhile MMOGs

engage them in a variety of different activities at the same time offer rich social platforms for players to interact and socialize, something that is defined as a social sphere (Tang, Man, Hang, Cheuk, Kwong, Chi, Fai & Kam, 2007). It seems that multiplayer games have learning potential, and a very key element is that interaction permits players to communicate and collaborate by the time they are playing in the virtual world.

Although I found interaction and collaboration were key aspects in MMOGs attractiveness and popularity among teenagers I decided to expand my discoveries about the advantages and effects of MMOGs in young teenagers. Surprisingly, by comparing the results of different studies some other positive characteristics might be attributed to MMOGs, they are seen as engaging and immersive worlds rather than prescribed where users feel interested and enjoy navigating because MMOGs are community-based rather than individualistic and permit problem-solving through cooperation with others (Schrader & McCreery, 2007; Squire, 2006; Steinkuehler, 2005).

Also, it is within these virtual worlds of MMOGs where players can create, build, use and share things that might be useful for others then you have real opportunities to share many things with other people (Foreman et al, 2004). In relation to this, Dickey (2006) asserts that MMOGs provide a flexible environment for problem solving and foster intrinsic motivation because such environment is persistent, networked, interactive where players collaborate, strategize, plan and develop critical thinking with other players.

The weight of evidence presented suggests that implementing and using a Massively Multiplayer Online Game might be a pedagogical innovation which may lead to successful and positive outcomes if used properly leading to educational changes in our nowadays educational system. As stated by Wang Yu (2009) the idea of using virtual worlds is relatively new to most

of educators but it is up to them the innovation and creativity of using virtual worlds to extend the limits of teaching and learning. All in all "what is worth fighting is ultimately the needs of learning among and caring for students" (p. 37).

Personally, I think that the problem with this is obviously the resistance to change the traditional philosophy of education where there is a negative position towards videogames and fun in general, specially by educators and parents, where they state or believe that if one is having fun then one is not really learning. However, it is important to acknowledge that a noticeable body of theorists has concluded that MMOGs and recreational games comprise many principles of effective learning.

Videogames and Learning

The widespread, popularization and appealing of computers and videogames to our students has motivated many research studies and researchers to find out about how learning and videogames are connected and how videogames can be used as tools for educating in the 21st century. Well-known and important educational theorists have stated that many videogames create and give the opportunity to immerse in effective learning (Federation of American Scientists, 2006; Gee, 2003; Prensky, 2006, Shaffer, 2008, Shaffer, Squire, Halverson & Gee, 2005, Steinkuehler, 2004). The success of complex and different genre of videogames show that games can teach many important thinking skills of high order such as strategic thinking, analysis and interpretation, planning and adaptation to changes (FAS, 2006).

Delwiche (2006) states that in games that are well-designed the players can just advance to levels that are more difficult if they use a range of strategies. Some games such as *The Sims* or *Grand Theft Auto* teach allow users to analyze, interpret, simulate and modify the levels of

difficulty but also some objects or situations from the environment. For instance, moving cars or elements of the house, design and use many items in an experiential way that some others games do not. As Gee (2003) states, good videogames teach players "to solve problems and reflect on the intricacies of the design of imagined worlds and the design of both real and imagined social relationships and identities in the modern world" (p. 48).

Obviously, there are some games that are considered more likely to promote high thinking skills than others. For example, traditional games such as Pac Man or Tetris compared to titles like Grand Theft Auto or Age of Mythology do not develop the same levels of thinking skills. On top of that research has shown that some genres such as simulations, puzzles, strategy, adventure and RPGs (Role-playing Games) present better results for educational purposes.

From my own experience as a videogame player, I have experienced videogames that require an investment of time in planning, interpreting situations and building strategies that might lead to successful or failure inside the same videogame. For instance, Age of Empires, Rise of Nations, Tomb Raider, to mention some, are good examples of how strategy and high thinking skills are part of playing videogames.

Age of Empires and Raise of Nations are games categorized in the genre of strategy. The main purpose is to collect different resources from the nature such as copper, gold, wood and rock in order to use them to create a powerful army. Then, by using battlefield strategies such as formation, defense/attack and weapons players are challenged to defeat some other armies. These types of games contain a lot of text with conversations and facts about history of wars and civilizations of humanity.

Tomb Raider is an adventure game in which the main character is a female heroin called Lara Croft. The game consists on completing different quests through looking for ancient

treasures and rare items since she is a raider of tombs. The game takes place mostly in Egypt with different scenarios such as caves, tombs, pyramids or big tunnels. In the majority of the scenarios many puzzles, mysteries and anagrams take place before you can get the jewel you are looking for.

Either if you choose to be the leader of an epic army or civilization in Age of Empires and Rise of Nations to conquer different territories or a successful looter in the ancient Egypt. In both cases the strategies and puzzles that these titles entail require high thinking levels to overcome the multiple situations which video-gamers have to face through the development of these virtual worlds.

According to Gee (2003), in videogames we learn a new semiotic domain in an active way rather than a passive one due to the fact that we learn to experience the world in a new way, we gain potential to join social groups with distinctive social practices and we also prepare for future learning. Besides, a huge amount of attributes are considered to be positive in regards to the effects of videogames for problem-solving (FAS, 2006; Gee, 2003, 2006). Due to the fact that videogames are external simulations of worlds with some problems to be solved, this allows game players to see the world in different ways and prepare for actions that can lead to solve the situation or problem encountered within the virtual world in a successful way. This problem-solving attribute also leads to the opportunities and chances videogames provide for exploring and developing identities through the inclusion of role-playing (Gee, 2003, Squire et al, 2005).

Games give the opportunity for situated learning, as detailed before (page 14), because they give opportunities to immerse in a variety of activities performed in motivating contexts where the skills can be developed and practiced in order to have success (Gee, 2003; Shaffer et al, 2005). Many of the previous positive characteristics reinforce the interest and engagement of

researchers about studying the effects that computers and videogames have had and are having on the way we learn and the new ways we might create new and more powerful approaches to learn in schools.

In this sense, computer games have become a popular and familiar medium to most of young learners who find more interesting the fact of playing videogames than doing traditional schooling. Students are facing the new challenges of the 21st century in different fields but mainly in access and use to technology. These new changes require a great effort and work from educators and schools to become active promoters and developers of a new education system capable of facing the challenges of the 21st century world. Learning goals include cultivating critical thinking, life-long learning, collaborating with others and enhancing social awareness (Yu, 2009). Sadly, in my personal opinion, nowadays education and the way in which classroom teaching and learning seem to be based (content-oriented and teacher-centered) requires more work and understanding of the power and impact videogames have on our students.

In regards to this, I think Gee´s opinion in an interview made by Joel Foreman (2004) is quite relevant when he states that "kids today are seeing more power-performanced learning in their popular culture than they are seeing in the schools" (p. 53). Besides, if we believe kids are reading books and studying outside of the class, it is wrong. Modern children spend very little time studying out of the school context. In fact, videogames are part of the everyday lives of children and young people outside of the school rather than books, pointed out as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2006). Additionally, Foreman (2004) interviewing James Gee claims that "Colleges still give information out of any context of demand-big blocks of information that students cannot tie to experience, or when they get the experience, it is far detached from when they got the words" (p.58). In this sense, videogames are very important because they let people

and players participate in new worlds, think, talk and act in new ways and indeed videogames let players experience new roles that are inaccessible to them which are key items for learning in an effective way (Shaffer et al, 2005).

I agree with the principles and ideas presented by Shaffer et al (2005) since I believe that once you enter a virtual world your attitude, body, senses and mind in general assume a different vision and position. That position is taken in order to understand what is going on in the virtual environment where the main focus is everything that surrounds the actions and performance of your character or avatar inside the game. After having revised these statements and reflected on the moment I enter these digital worlds I realize I totally get immersed and concentrated on performing the new role I am assigned inside the world. I could become part of the digital world since to carry out the project I created and used with many months of anticipation a level 85 warrior called Vieri. A deeper description of my avatar will take place in the further chapter (page 40).

From theorists and experts on education and videogames like Shaffer, Squire, Halverson and Gee (2005) the classroom work rarely has a meaningful impact outside the classroom because the real audience is just the teacher. In contrast, game players gain reputations in online communities; cultivate audiences by writing on discussion forums and pretending to be professionals on game designing in important game industries such as Microsoft, EA or Eidos. In Shaffer's et al's (2005) words, the virtual worlds offered by videogames are very powerful because through playing games people develop a set of "*effective social practices"* (p.106).

Videogames and Literacy

Educators and parents have stated that students are playing video game, it is not benefit for the development of their literacy abilities, and that playing videogames is replacing meaningful literacy activities for their children such as doing homework or reading books. However, it is evident that this argument does not clearly specify what definition of literacy is being taken into consideration to support this statement.

Let us take a look at the traditional definition provided by UNESCO (2006) for Colombia as "the ability to read and write simple sentences" (p. 157) which is usually associated with printed texts. However, in communities of gamers as the one this study focuses on demonstrated that gamers do read and write simple sentences and also goes beyond (Gee, 2003; Steinkuehler, 2004).

On the other hand, the New London Group, a body of ten academics and experts on research espoused a different definition of literacy that goes beyond the mere ability of decoding letters and symbols on printed texts. They define it as:

> the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral and so on… particularly important in the mass media, multimedia, and in an electronic hypermedia. (New London Group, 1996, p. 64)

Gee (2003) in his book *What Videogames Have To teach Us about Learning and Literacy* addresses a body of work which is called New Literacy Studies that implies reading and writing not only as cognitive achievements in people´s heads but also as social and cultural practices. The previous idea is supported by Baynham (1995) when he states that literacy is a "concrete human activity" which involves not only what people do with literacy but how their values and ideologies are constructed, which is what Shaffer (2006) points as cultural and social changes.

The intersection between these three academics about literacy is very remarkable in order to understand the connection between literacy, cultural, ideological and identity constructions in online environments. Through Discourse Analysis it is possible to infer that these worlds are socially constructed due to the fact we make sense of certain aspects such as actions, situations and people immersed in the virtual world. Also, during the game-play the identity of the player may be shaped by those events happening inside the digital environment.

Now it is important to mention that Gee remarks the impact and application of gaming skills in education. He is considered the main defender of including videogames in our educational contexts as an alternative way to engage children develop their literacy practices In his book, Gee (2003) focuses on the idea that videogames are not better or worse than stories in books. On the contrary, most of the videogames focus on a story which has the same elements of a traditional one –character, theme, setting, beginning, middle, end- and that players immerse in this story connecting the text to the game. In other words, videogame players do read. Besides that, Gee (2003) states that videogames not only promote reading but also games include writing. Teen gamers write fan fiction activities like posting on discussion boards, studies of the characters, chatting in sessions with other fans, poetry related to the game and modifications or improvements for the game story.

In addition, Gee (2003, 2007) points out that if we use video and computer games in an appropriate way they can encourage the soul just as poetry and literature used to do some decades ago. Also, most of the videogame genres are story-based that keep and share the most narrative elements such as characters, beginning, middle and end with traditional forms of texts like novels. In this way, the player immerses and becomes part of the story (Cheng &McFarlane, 2006; Gee, 2003).

According to initial research findings on games it was seen that videogames could be a means to increase motivation and engagement. Student engagement is a very key aspect in academic performance and especially to reading and literacy (Learning Point Associates, 2005). Since videogames seem to produce motivation and engagement among children and adolescents I think it would not be a bad idea and sounds reasonable to use videogames as a powerful tool to explore literacy practices and probably formal literacy development in English language learning contexts. Also, according to Partington (2010) we may learn to read games in a similar way to reading a novel or a poem considering the skills of technique and a motivational factor such as enjoyment.

Some other positive aspects in regards to the use of videogames as educational tools for literacy development should be taken into consideration. Although it has been reported that students are not reading and writing successfully some research studies tell a different story (Gee, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2004, 2005) many boys and girls are finding enjoyment, engagement and success with alternative literacies. Literacies such as internet, chat rooms, cell phones, videogames, blogs which are only some of the many new and different literacies that students are engaging and investing their time out of the school.

According to Sanford and Madill (2007) students enjoy different types of reading in videogames: fiction, fantasy, realism, and adventure. They also read online guides and books about characters, online discussions about the game, histories about the setting or characters involved in the game and fiction that fans of the game write (Braun, 2006). In general terms, in a less traditional way of reading, they "read" TV, videos and games. They write and create different types of texts showing they have sophisticated vocabularies, concepts and multi-modal

literacy structures posting on discussion boards and chatting rooms and sessions (Braun, 2007; Gee, 2003, Sanford &Madill, 2007).

To sum up students look for spaces which are appealing, active, fun and meaningful. According to Gee (2003) terms while playing videogames students are "learning a new literacy" (p.13). Moreover, videogames is a new literacy among all the representations of literacy we can find and are required for the learners of the 21st century.

In this chapter I have presented theoretical foundations and recent international and local research to take a look at the different ways of doing research when using game-based contexts for learning purposes. Examining international studies I did not find any study which explicitly linked both Massively Multiplayer Online Games and English as a foreign language learning. The majority of the studies developed literacy skills in native users of the language, mainly in USA. In our country there have been some experiences with the use of videogames for language learnings, though any of them use a Massively Multiplayer Online Game but different genres.

At the local level, Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) enlightened the path conducting a state of the art about the use of MMOGs and MMORPG in different fields. However, they invite researchers and English teachers to think about the idea of using these types of virtual worlds for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language.

Chapter 3: Research Design

"Research shows that if you teach and test fact and formulas, students learn facts and formulas but if you teach through problem-solving, they learn problem-solving skills"
(Gee, 2003)

This chapter provides relevant information about the research design and its different components with the intention of answering the following research questions: 1) What literacy practices emerge when EFL students participate in Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)? 2) What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world? The first element includes a description of the videogame, the scope and the particular method used for the project. Then, a description of the research context and participants of the project are included. Finally, this section is followed by defining and describing the process of data collection and the design and validation of the different instruments and the avatars students created.

Other essential information such as the research context, participants and the role of the researcher take such an important place in this research design that I found relevant to include them in order to give the reader an idea about the place(s) and people involved in the study.

Description of the game World of Warcraft

First, World of Warcraft or WoW is a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) which is mainly based on the idea of a war between two sides: The Horde and the Alliance in which each party looks to dominate and control the lands of Azeroth and conquer the world through a huge range of battles.

When players start the game they can choose which side they want to belong to and players can also select among ten different races (Night elf, Dwarf, Human, Troll, Orc among others) and classes (Mage, War, Druid, Hunter, etc.). In that way the story, armor and abilities of

every avatar or character players choose inside the videogame varies according to the race and class gamers choose.

Once gamers are immersed in the virtual world, they are able to select two professions to level up by the time they collect or produce some items. In addition, players can also make decisions on the type of role they want to perform with their avatar. This means, they can do damage or be healers according to the talents they select. Within each chosen class, the player has to decide which type of class he or she wants to be. This choice is made by using the talents tree, in which with the passing of time the player can unlock special skills and strengths by using the talent points earned with effort and experience in the game. Each class has three different talent trees, for instance, warriors have the trees of Fury, Arms and Protection and each tree defines a particular style of playing and using the avatar. Then, deciding which talent tree to use and the investment of the talent points absolutely defines the game style and powers avatars have inside the virtual world. Finally, there is a wide range of decisions that gamers can access to like the type of armor they want to wear, the weapons they want to get or the powers they want to spell. The following figure 1 shows the initial interface of World of Warcraft. In other words, this is how the game is seen through the eyes of the player, when he or she is controlling the avatar through the virtual world.



Figure 1. *Interface of the Game.*

Source: *Own*

Thus, considering how students see and perceive the virtual world and all of the elements that compose the interface is useful towards understanding, in the first place, how the interface of Warcraft shape students´ EFL literacy practices and the type of literacy practices students engage in this digital context. The discussion on this aspect will be developed in a further chapter of this research.

Type of Study

The idea of exploring the range of EFL literacy practices that language students engage in when interacting in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game raised as a consequence of an issue or problem identified in the context of the workplace I used to work: Colegio de Educación Técnica y Académica Celestin Freinet (See Chapter I). Given the fact that I have always been a

videogame fan and player and a novice researcher I started to become very interested in planning to carry out a research that matches the pedagogical problem found at the school and my personal interest and experience as a videogame player. So, I decided to present this proposal asking about the literacy practices that emerge when EFL students participate in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) and also asking about the ways a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provides opportunities for language learning when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world.

As a starting point, I was able to choose between qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach for the design of my proposal. However, as suggested by Creswell (2009) several factors such as the nature of the addressed issue, my personal experience and the audiences for the study had an influence on the decision of selecting one above the others.

So, given the nature of the problem addressed during the implementation of this research study I decided to conduct **qualitative research.** Hence, I found it quite appropriate for the purpose of my study Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) definition of qualitative research when they state that:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field-notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

In this case I used qualitative research because I wanted to study and understand the context or setting (Massively Multiplayer Online Game) in which a group or population (EFL learners) addressed a problem (literacy practices). In addition, I used qualitative research because quantitative methods and the statistical inquiry did not fit this particular issue. Creswell (2007) supports this idea by arguing that interactions among people are difficult to capture with existing measures because these measures (in quantitative studies) are not sensitive to gender, race, economic status and individual differences issues.

In this sense, this research proposal espouses a **social constructivist** philosophical standpoint in which individuals develop meanings of their experiences. These meanings are varied and negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism), so the goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the views of the participants towards the situation being studied in which the researcher generates meaning from the data collected in the field (Creswell, 2009).

After having mentioned the qualitative approach and the social constructivism philosophical stance as foundations of my research proposal it is now important to mention the type of study selected to provide direction to the research design. Among all the alternatives available for qualitative methods, I selected **ethnography** as the type of study applied. Ethnography is known as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies a whole cultural group in a natural setting over a period of time by collecting, mainly, observational and interview data (Creswell, 2007).

I have considered elements of this type of study taking into consideration that videogames and in this case, Massively Multiplayer Online Games are seen as communities that share a number of

features as real world communities do with the exception that they are online and members interact through their avatars (Gee, 2003; Steinkuehler, 2008). Patton (2002) supports this idea by stating that "guiding the assumption that any human group of people interacting together for a period of time will evolve a culture" (p.81). Lastly, ethnography is appropriate if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language and behaviors of it (Creswell, 2007). However, the concept of ethnography has evolved from its origins and the way new cultures have arisen had an influence on the idea of adopting a more contemporary concept. This study can be framed into the concept of using virtual ethnography or cyber-ethnography. Virtual ethnography is a development of ethnography in which the researchers use interpretive methods to examine the lively culture of online communities or virtual worlds (Crowe & Bradford, 2006; Thomas, 2007).

Context and Participants

Since studying these communities require a specific population and setting to be addressed, I consider it is now pertinent to give an idea about the second major component of the research design: context and participants in which the research was carried out. I used to work for a private, catholic mixed institution located in Suba -Bogotá. The school´s philosophy initiated 20 years ago with the purpose of offering humanistic and Christian educational services for children and teenagers from diverse places of the city with high educational purposes and goals aiming at fostering students capable of performing the role of agents of change of their society.

This school works in the morning shift with an average population of 5000 students in different branches. Besides that, the school works with a special English program based on the division of the English learning into different abilities classes (e.g. Listening, Conversation,

Reading, Spelling and English). In this sense, students from the same grade classroom take different English classes with different teachers. Furthermore, *Get Real* Student´s Book and Workbook was the name of the book we used at the school for the English program and classes at the different grades.

The physical structure of the school was composed of one branch in which some resources like tape recorders, dictionaries, DVD´s, visual material and books were available for the teaching of English, but they were not enough for the different English subjects in the school. Although there was a computer lab in the school it was not accessible to English teachers and learners as additional spaces for English teaching/learning tasks because they were seen as tools for the technology class only.

This particular characteristic about the school policies in regards to the use of the computers room also influenced on the decision of taking the project to become an after-school context, which means students using their own time and resources such as computer and internet connection at home to carry out the activities of the project.

The group of seven participants who were included as part of this study are students whose average ages range between 13 and 16 years old and living in middle-income families who were attending literacy-related classes and highly motivated by videogames.

The participants were selected using purposeful sampling in which they are selected because they are "information rich" since they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). In this case only a *convenience* sample was suitable because I as a researcher had to rely on formed groups of volunteers- videogame players, as the individuals could not be randomly assigned.

Ethical issues

As a final point in regards to the participants of this study some ethical issues were taken into consideration by the length of time this investigation was carried out. However, because of writing space some of the most relevant will be mentioned in this chapter. First, this study was intended to benefit the individuals that were selected and not to put participants at any risk. Secondly, I as a researcher developed an **informed consent form** for parents and participants to sign before they engaged in this research since they were minors (under the age of 18). This form I guaranteed that the rights of the participants were protected during the collection of data. Finally, guarantee of confidentiality was given to the participants of my research so that I allowed them to retain ownership of their voices and disassociated names from responses during the coding and recording phases.

Instruments

The third major element in the framework was the specific data collection techniques which involved instruments for the collection of data. In this case, I used nethnographic methods for collection of data within the game and face to face such as observation, the collection of participants´ artifacts (written online texts) and interviews.

It was important to consider the fact of using observations because they permitted recording information as it occurred as well as unusual aspects that could be noticed during observation. The observations were carried out almost everyday at different hours, especially during the afternoon and nights, when students logged on the game. On weekends, for the main guild events were recorded using Camtasia Studio, a especial software for screen recording. Langer and Beckman (2005) believe that observations should be complemented with transcripts

copied from the computer-mediated conversations and interactions. Therefore, transcripts taken from the observations of students´ gameplay were kept in formats such as word or .jpg and video recording (.mp4) for later analysis.

The collection of participants´ artifacts provided an opportunity to directly see and evidence the reality but also it was a creative and appealing way to collect data since it was captured in a visual form. In this case some emphasis was given to the production of written online texts within the game captured by the use of specialized computer screen capture software. The screenshots with the production of students were saved in .png format to be analyzed afterwards in *Atlas Ti.*

As a final instrument qualitative face to face and online interviews were conducted with participants in which individual and focused groups interviews were used. These interviews involved unstructured and semi-structured with open-ended questions intended to stimulate views and opinions from the videogame players. The interviews were designed following Patton´s (2002) model of interview in which he includes six types of questions to good quality interviews and were validated by peer and expert review. Each interview was carried out after every single event celebrated on weekends. Therefore, there were a total of 9 interviews done to the participants of the project. It is remarkable to highlight that any interview was hold inside the game but always out of the virtual world, that is to say students never used their avatars to provide data for the interviews.

Role of the Researcher

In this case, I took the **role as avatar-researcher** or **observer as participant** due to the fact that my role was known by the participants within the game and outside of it. It is important to mention that this ethnographic aspect in these investigations about videogames is related to netnography in which the researcher might take this role of avatar-researcher (Bowler, 2010; Kozinets, 2010). Avatar-researcher means the researcher involved in a virtual world possibly interacting with other avatars or participants.

Avatars of the participants

It becomes now pertinent to introduce the different participants of this research with their respective avatars inside the World of Warcraft. Seven potential participants were identified from among those who were mostly active during the project. For different reasons, primarily time, the rest of them could not finish or participate in all of the activities from the project. Erick *(Maxworgen)*, Jose *(Sicodelic)*, Diego *(diegogarzon)*, Andres *(Eloisaca)*, Juan *(Adhemi)*, Felipe *(Woltrax)*, David *(Lastonedavid)*. All of these participants became active members of the "Inmortal Gods" guild.

In World of Warcraft a guild represents the group of players who play regularly together or against them (duels) sharing common goals inside the game. What is more, there are different roles inside the guild depending on the avatars professions (page 30), classes and abilities. Furthermore, communication among the members of the guild is vital to carry out all of the activities that lead them to reach all of the goals. For this purpose the Guild chat becomes the most powerful communication tool inside the game. Thanks to this, coordination and group work is enhanced during gameplay. In this case, we all belonged to the *Inmortal Gods* guild.

Erick, a 14 years old boy who loves videogames and describes himself as “a very fan of epic videogames” (Interview, August, 25th, 2014). He used Maxworgen (Figure 2), a black hairy wolf hunter character inside WoW. This race of wolves is known as Huargens in WoW.



Figure 2. *Maxworgen.* **Source:** *Own*

Jose is a 15 years old boy who, in his words “I am an average student, not good not bad but I like learning new things” (Interview, August 24th, 2014). He created *Sicodelic* (Figure 3), a white skin human mage to participate.



Figure 3. *Sicodelic.* **Source:** *Own*

Diegogarzon (Figure 4) was the avatar controlled by Diego, a 14 years old boy who did not have any experience with any MMOG before the project. He considered himself as a good English learner. *Diegogarzon,* a warrior, was a brown hair and big beard dwarf.



Figure 4. *Diegogarzon.* **Source:** *Own*

Andres was in charge of controlling *Eloisaca* (Figure 5), a black and tall Huargen (the wolf race such as *Maxworgen*) with great powers as a warlock. Fabian is a 1 years old who confirmed he was an experienced player in Warcraft because "I have played WoW with my friends before" (Interview, August 23rd, 2014).



Figure 5. *Eloisaca.* **Source:** *Own*

Juan, a 14 years old boy, created *Adhemi* (Figure 6), an avatar who was a very powerful female Night Elf and mage. However, it was highly curious the fact he decided to choose a female avatar rather than a male one. When talked about it he stated "I watch animes a lot and I prefer the girls, the way they look like" (Interview, August 26th, 2014).



Figure 6. *Adhemi.* **Source:** *Own*

Woltrax (Figure 7), a tall and strong mage whose race was a Draenei, was created and used by Felipe. He considered himself a very "talented player in PVP (player vs player)" (Interview, August 26th, 2014). Felipe is a 16 years old boy with difficulties in literacy related classes such as English, social studies and Spanish.



Figure 7. *Woltrax.* **Source:** *Own*

Lastonedavid (Figure 8) was the last student to join the project. However, David, a 15 years boy, with his effort and willingness could participate and learn many things from the game. *Lastonedavid* was a Night elf warrior who "likes action and adventure games" (Interview, August 25th, 2014).



Figure 8. *Lastonedavid.* **Source:** *Own*

Finally, the Guild Master of Inmortal Gods was *Vieri* (Figure 9), the avatar-researcher. I controlled *Vieri*, a powerful 85 level human warrior. *Vieri* was created with many months of anticipation before the start of the project for two basic reasons. First, to be familiarized with the

whole world of Warcraft so I could answer and solve any possible doubt from the participants in terms of locations or game-play in general. Secondly, to improve *Vieri´s* abilities at its highest level and obtain a good armor and mounts, then, I could easily transport my students through the online world if necessary.



Figure 9. Vieri. **Source:** *Own*

Chapter IV: Instructional Design

"In the modern world, print literacy is not enough. People need to be literate in a great variety of different semiotic domains. Any type of videogame is a semiotic domain"
James Paul Gee (2003, p. 19)

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the pedagogical activities carried out during 6 months implementation with seven students from Celestin Freinet School that aimed at identifying the literacy practices that EFL students engaged in when participating in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game. Furthermore, to show the perspectives of curriculum, language, learning and technology that framed my pedagogical design.

The literacy activities proposed through the use of the Warcraft video game consisted of ten pedagogical activities supported with authentic digital and printed material designed by the researcher. The activities were developed with seven participants that were required to log at least 5 times a week to the virtual world of Warcraft. During the week students were assisted to initial steps of the game and on challenges or group activities were hold during the weekend.

Vision of curriculum

The emphasis on the curriculum as a possibility for students to make meaning of their lives and the world that surrounds them, and a vision of language as a means for students to be social actors, carrying out meaningful activities which place them as situated learners of the language in a virtual world. According to Gee (2003) these activities can be connected to similar, useful and meaningful experiences in real life and real world.

Secondly, the scope on learning as experience highlights the fact that there is no need to be part of a formal learning context to learn a language and also that technology can serve as a

tool to link interaction, language use and cultural exchanges among the different participants of this research project.

Now it is important to mention that the English Department at Celestin Freinet School found significant the fact of creating a curriculum based on the development of abilities through separated goals, objectives and topics or contents distributed in different units to be studied throughout the complete year with the support of a text book. These topics are mainly focused on the development of communicative skills but also on linguistic aspects of the language such as grammar structures and academic reading and writing. So, in theory the English Department looks for developing competences in students through language learning. According to the Manual de Convivencia (2014) and Celestin Freinet PEI (last modified in 2014) of the school there were two considerable aspects related to language learning. On the one hand some specific linguistic competences deal with the ability to communicate and identify grammar structures in a written and oral way, and the humanistic ones have to do with team work, collaboration and problem solving which can be also seen in the school´s mission and vision (Current CF Community Handbook, 2014).

Taking into consideration the mentioned context and the objectives of the project, to find out if students engage in a range of literacy activities in a virtual world and this engagement can affect their EFL learning positively. This research spouses a vision of curriculum as practice where the form, function and skills of the language are focused on meaning making rather than on mastering these language skills to be knowledge holders.

From a theoretical formulation of curriculum types I think this vision matches with the one proposed by Green as an interactive view of curriculum which is: “a possibility for the

learner as an existing person mainly concerned with making sense of his own life world" (in Goodson, 1988: p. 13).

In this sense, I think that videogames in the educational field may play a very important and significant role when the intention is to provide students with opportunities to make sense of their lives in the world. As stated before, according to Gee (2003) in videogames we learn a new semiotic domain in an active way rather than a passive one due to the fact we learn to experience the world in a new way, we gain potential to join social groups with distinctive social practices and we also prepared for future learning.

Besides, a huge amount of attributes are considered to be positive in regards to the effects of videogames for problem-solving (Federation of American Scientists, 2006; Gee, 2003, 2007) which is another objective of the school for language learning and a possible reason to see games as tools for educational purposes. Due to the fact that videogames are external simulations of worlds with some problems to be solved, it allows game players to see the world in different ways and prepare for actions that can lead to solve the situation or problem encountered within the virtual world in a successful way. This problem-solving attribute also leads to the opportunities and chances videogames provide for exploring and developing identities through the inclusion of role-playing (Gee, 2003, Squire et al, 2005). Games give the opportunity for situated learning because they give opportunities to immerse in a variety of activities performed in motivating contexts where the skills can be developed and practiced in order to have success (Gee, 2003; Shaffer et al, 2005).

Many of the previous affirmative characteristics reinforced my interest and engagement on studying the effects that computers and videogames are having on the way we learn and the

new ways we might create different and more powerful approaches to learn in schools, especially EFL learning, which is a topic that has not been researched fully in our country.

However, in order to be coherent in my project with the vision of curriculum above mentioned and in the practicalities of language teaching, I needed to make decisions about the way language is presented to the learners.

Vision of language

I think it is relevant to take into consideration Hymes´ perspective when he states that language should be situated in a social context as the medium by which participants of a community "express concepts, perceptions, and values which have significance to them as members of this community" (as in Tudor, 2001).

In this sense, I am a great believer that videogames provide students with opportunities to use the language in a more social and meaningful context. Consequently, I decided to implement a Massively Multiplayer Online Game to find out about the literacy practices students engage in when belonging to this virtual world.

This way, gamers enter these worlds by creating a digital person with different and personalized physical characteristics called, as I have already mentioned, "avatar" or "character". After the avatar is chosen with all the physical attributes you selected for him/her you are ready to interact with other different avatars controlled by real people in several places of the world. As Shaffer et al (2005) claim this particular feature attributed to MMOGs has been of great importance and relevance for different studies since it has been defined as a powerful tool for developing situated understanding, promoting social interaction, political systems and culture.

Consequently, this project intends to provide language learners with a virtual game-based space in which they can feel as members of a community and share different concepts but also provide "students [with] access to another culture" (Tudor, p. 62): the culture of video gaming. Additionally, there is access to learning to see the world through the eyes of a different culture and this might be highly successful in the educational field of learning another language. For this reason a functional vision of language will be implemented in a game-based environment where language is portrayed as a form of social action and where according to Gee (2007) words take situated meanings in terms of the actions, images, and dialogues videogames relate to. In other words, students learn words whose meanings are situated and connected to the experiences they refer to rather than definitions provided in verbal form. According to Gee (2007) games always provide situated meanings for the words they use.

Finally, I think that the traditional way of schooling fails when providing opportunities for language students to learn words as lists of vocabulary or by memorizing; I believe students are poor at learning on this way. From a critical view, Tudor (2001) states that institutions are engaged in conveying knowledge and fostering skills which may not coincide with learners current lives and their present realities and needs.

Vision of Learning

As mentioned in previous lines this project intends to use a MMOG as a means to explore and identify meaningful literacy practices on teenagers in EFL. I think it is important to take into consideration that this research follows an experiential vision of learning due to two relevant reasons which I will explain as follows.

First, according to Tudor (2001) "…it is clear that people can and do learn the languages without the type of support associated with a formal learning context" (p. 78). In this sense, this project intends to create an after school context in which students will be asked to log in the videogame at home because of availability of the necessary technological equipment and time to carry out the project that was not found inside the school environment.

However, as suggested by Tudor (2001) learning a language in a naturalistic way involves two factors. The first, the exposure to input to language learning should be substantial. In this sense, Gee (2003) asserts that games should be seen as "multimodal texts" because they combine words, sounds, music, signs and graphics. He states that when children are playing, at the same time they are learning to become a member and participate in a specific "semiotic domain" with many modalities (explained in page 6). In other words, videogames offer students exposure to different features of the language in many different ways.

The second factor deals with the use of the language for communicative purposes. In this sense videogames, especially the one intended to be used in this project (MMOG) allow thousands and millions of people to communicate through in-game chat sessions. Generally, these conversations are carried out with the purpose of problem-solving, making agreements, asking for information, etc.

Secondly, according to Tudor (2001) taking as a reference this experiential vision of learning a language implies the fact that students use the language which they may not fully master in a more or less controlled environment. For this reason the experiential perspective of learning adopts five main principles:

1. Message conveyance stimulates the learner to develop their communicative skills.

2. The center point of learning is the ideas or task to be done rather than the language elements that should be achieved by performing these tasks.

3. The use of authentic materials to provide learners with a meaningful model of language use.

4. The use of strategies for communicating to develop strategic skills which may go beyond their current classroom and TL resources.

5. An emphasis given to learning activities which involve collaboration among learners.

Now, it is important to connect the previous principles described by Tudor with videogaming. First, MMOG involve learners in producing messages with meaningful content for them rather than concentrating on formal aspects of the language. Secondly, the type of videogame and online documents used for this project are a clear example of an authentic material in an educational setting in which students will use the target language for different purposes. Finally, MMOG per se involve collaboration and group work among the different videogame players or participants. Although a player might be in a different part of the world, MMOGs enable thousands of players to interact among themselves engaging in a variety of different activities, in this sense, MMOGs offer rich social platforms for players to interact and socialize, something defined as a social sphere (Tang, Man, Hang, Cheuk, Kwong, Chi, Fai & Kam, 2007).

As a general idea, Barbara Means (1995) would define this perspective of learning as *constructivism*, a view that "…advanced skills of comprehension, reading, composition, and experimentation are acquired not through the transmission of facts but through the learner´s interacting with content" (Means as cited in Office of Technology Assessment, 1995, p. 5). In this sense, students are expected to learn in a no formal context, an online game-based virtual

world that is called World of Warcraft, the most popular MMOG Record Guinness with ten million subscribers around the world.

Vision of Technology

In general terms, this research is basically EFL students interacting inside of a virtual world, the role that technology plays in this project is as important as the role of curriculum, language and learning previously mentioned in different sections of this chapter. Mainly, because the idea of creating an after school context for the feasibility and development of this project requires a lot of commitment, engagement and knowledge. This knowledge has to do with computer-based programs and software in the utilization of a massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) as World of Warcraft.

However, as previously mentioned the original idea was to provide students with school in-doors computers in laboratories of English where they could interact with the videogame and with other participants at the same time. Nevertheless, because of school policies for English and technology classes it was impossible to establish the project as a project taking place inside the walls of the schools. This issue was seen as a great disadvantage. According to OTA (1995) access to technology in the school is of great relevance in light of increasing disparities in technology access outside of the school and families that can purchase computers are giving their children an educational advantage, through supplementary learning activities and additional opportunities to do school work at home.

Therefore, with the collaboration, energy and willingness of my students to carry out the project I decided to take the project at a different level, students using their own free time and computers at home to gaming. For this reason, I decided to design an activity (see Appendix 1)

and work only a 2 hours School Lab session in which the purpose was to make students be familiarized with the content and story of the WoW videogame and technical questions about the game and technological features took place during this lab session. To carry out these two sessions I took my personal computer and a video-beam and we hold the initial steps, tutorials and instructions of the project in the 9th graders classroom.

Thus, this vision of technology deals with the importance of including technology in my project playing its role as mediation because technology "provides a site for interpersonal communication, multimedia publication, distance learning, community participation, and identity formation" (Kern, 2006). This way the use of computers and the videogame called World of Warcraft permit interaction and cultural exchange among the participants and as previously stated in my vision of language, access to a different culture (Videogaming culture).

The Pedagogical Intervention

Considering the above ideas, I describe the goals, methodology and stages of the pedagogical intervention. The goals of the intervention are the following:

- ✓ To provide a meaningful context for the practice and development of communicative skills by means of a game-based space.
- ✓ To develop EFL literacy skills through game-play, interaction and designed activities inside a virtual world.
- ✓ To explore the World of Warcraft and its components and report it by means of the foreign language.

To achieve these goals, I designed a pedagogical intervention outlined within the game-based learning framework. The reasons for selecting this framework deal with the educational context

and population plus the coherence of this framework with the goals of the intervention. As stated before, the school mission promotes cooperation and problem-solving among students in their pedagogical objectives. Besides, I found the principles of game-based learning to be coherent with my vision of learning.

In 2005, James Paul Gee introduced 16 learning principles he believes are key for students engagement, learning and success. These principles are summarized in the following chart.

Learning Principle	Description
Identity	The players commitment to their new virtual identity in the new virtual world.
Interaction	The player talks and the game talks back offering feedback and the possibility of new challenges.
Production	Player help co-design games through their decisions.
Risk Taking	Videogames allow for players to explore with a calculated risk of failure.
Customization	Games have different difficulty levels that players can adjust to their playing capabilities.
Agency	Players feel a control over what they are doing.
Well-ordered Problems	Problems are ordered from easy to difficult, allowing players to develop skills.
Challenge and Consolidation	Games use a system that allow players to master skills before they are guided to the next level, enabling them to become experts.
"Just-in-Time" and "On Demand"	Games information is given to players just-in-time for accomplishing the task or when they request for it.
Situated Meanings	Player learn through context rather than formal directed learning.

Pleasantly Frustrating	Games manage to stay on a level of difficulty that is doable for the player, yet remains pleasantly challenging.
System Thinking	Games encourage players to think about how their actions might affect future actions and the actions of other players.
Explore, Think Laterally, Rethink Goals	Players are encouraged to think thoroughly before making moves, not only thinking linearly allowing for the fastest way to achieve the goal.
Smart Tools and Distributed Knowledge	Game characters carry skills and knowledge that can be given to players.
Cross Functional Teams	Players create teams with a common purpose that are not necessarily associated with race, class, or gender and enables players to understand each others specializations and how that integrates into game play.
Performance Before Competence	Games allow for players to perform before they are competent with the help of smart tools that give information concerning the play and with the help of other more advanced players.

Chart 1. *Gee´s (2005) Learning Principles.*

Source: *Kong et al (2010) Figure 1.*

In this sense, I decided to carry out some in-game special events in which the main idea was to have students work individually or collaboratively with different objectives and purposes for the activity to be accomplished. On the one hand, the different language objectives for the English subject. According to the duration of the project multiple topics such as using directions

in English, acquiring vocabulary about places, prepositions and food, answering How much & How many, differentiating Countable & Uncountable, using WH Questions and describing people were selected. On the other hand, objectives to get better at the virtual world. These objectives included obtaining a better armor, sword, axe or longbow for their character, improving skills, leveling up, etc. All in all, students were encouraged to represent with honor and respect the name of the guild "Inmortal Gods" they belonged to.

Week	Objective	Date	Pedagogical Activities	Outcomes	Instruments
Week 1	To make students get familiarized with the story of the video game through a workshop.	June 7th	"Lab Session 1"	Students get familiarized with the video game´s story.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 2	To answer to technical difficulties or possible problems when installing the game.	June 10th	"Lab Session 2"	Instructions about how to install the game and technical questions are answered.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 3	To simulate the process of living in a city and reach several places inside the virtual world.	September 28th	Challenge # 1 "A Tour around Stormwind"	Students will locate and name different places inside the "Stormwind" city and the use they give to each one.	+ Online Observation + Interview

Week 4	To provide a map, instructions, hints and directions for students to get 1st position in a Guild Race.	October 4th	Challenge # 2 "Run Forrest, Run Epic Guild Race"	Students will read instructions like hints and directions to get through different places in a map and reach a finish point.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 5	To make students work cooperatively to collect items and then describe the quantity and objects they got.	October 11th	Challenge # 3 "Did you find it? Looking for 60 items Race"	In groups students will use a visual aid (Digital Flash-Cards) to collect different items found in the World of Warcraft and classify them into countable and uncountable nouns.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 6	To work cooperatively to defeat some bosses in Dungeons inside the World of Warcraft.	October 18th	Challenge # 4 "Leveling in Dungeons" (Lvl 20 or +)	Students will read online information about some Dungeons. Collect armor and weapons and classify them into countable and uncountable nouns.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 7	To provide a map, instructions, hints and directions for	October 25th	Challenge #5 "Horse Race"	Students will read instructions like hints and directions	+ Online Observation + Interview

	students to get 1st position in a Guild Race.			to get through different places in a map and reach a finish point.	
Week 8	To provide instructions, hints and directions to find my character inside the virtual world.	November 2nd	Challenge # 6 "Looking for the Guild Master"	Students will read instructions like hints and directions to chase and find the avatar "Vieri" inside the Online World.	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 9	To show their acquisition of battle abilities gained after all the process of leveling up and getting armor.	November 9th	Challenge # 7 "PVP (Player Vs Player Tournament"	Students will ask (using WH Questions) about the others Guild members abilities and powers to get to defeat them in personal battles and configure their "talents tree".	+ Online Observation + Interview
Week 10	Students will visit special places like Raid Dungeons and finally provide a physical description of their characters.	November 16th	Challenge # 8 "Let´s draw our Avatars"	Students will provide information about avatars using adjectives and personality vocabulary through a handcraft.	+ Online Observation + Interview

Chart 2. *Pedagogical Activities designed for the EFL project.* **Source:** *Own*

The 10 weeks activities planned for the pedagogical intervention had to be carefully designed, conceived and organized. Instead of selecting among the multiple quests that the game offers for the players, I decided to create new quests to complete called *Challenges* (8 in total) to meet the pedagogical goals of the project. Every weekend students received a different *Challenge* to be accomplished. The majority of these challenges were accompanied with a lesson plan and an online document (Guide with instructions) designed as an authentic material. In this sense, activities from week 1 and 2 were out of the game laboratory sessions intended to familiarize students with Warcraft and attend their possible technological issues by the use of tutorials, videos and online guides. The first in-game activity from the chart was held on week 3, *Challenge #1 " A Tour Around Stormwind"* where students were expected to acquire and use the vocabulary related to places, prepositions and directions.

It becomes pertinent to mention that every single challenge planned for the pedagogical intervention was followed with a digital guide for students as well as a lesson plan for the teacher-researcher. The digital guides were uploaded to the Facebook Group (Figure 10) and students gave solution to them to receive feedback about it.

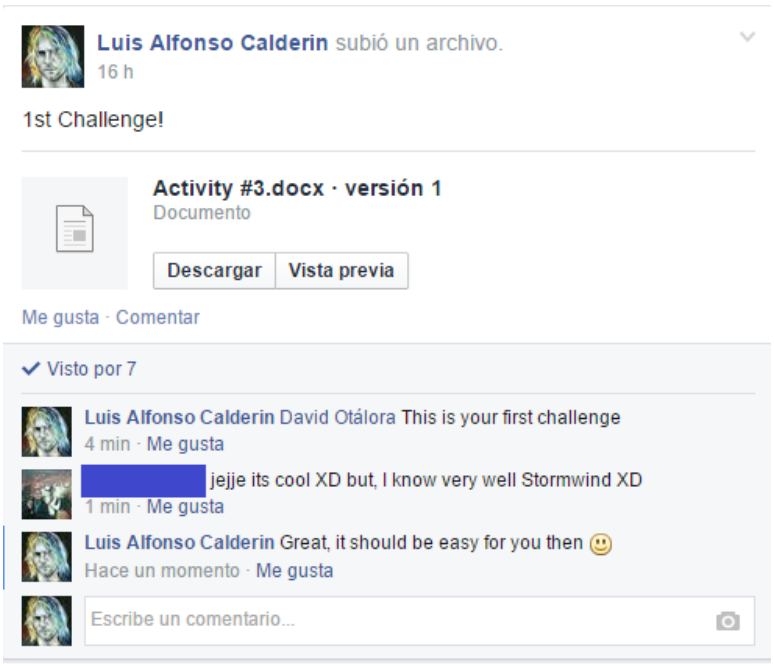


Figure 10*.Challenge #1 Online Guide uploaded to Facebook Group.*

Source: *Own*

Next week on *Challenge #2 "Run Forrest, Run"* students reinforced on directions and prepositions in the target language. On the next C*hallenge #3 Did you find it?* students were asked to gather 60 different objects in a specific zone of the game. Subsequently, they answered *How much/How many* questions in relation to the gathered items. After that, students engaged in *Challenge #4 Leveling in Dungeons* where they will enter into two dungeons from the game and collect items such as armor and weapons to classify them into countable or uncountable. Trough *Challenge #5* called *"Horse Race"* students were demanded to put into practice their directions and use of prepositions abilities in a final epic race with the same format from the previous one but also with substantial modifications. During week 8 and challenge #6 "Looking for the Guild Master" students had to read live hints on screen to get to the place where my avatar Vieri was hidden. The use of Wh Questions was the main pedagogical objective of this Challenge #7 called PVP Tournament. This competition encouraged students to ask and respond to questions about

their avatars´ abilities and spells. Finally, for week 10 students provided a physical and personality description of their avatars during *Challenge #8 "This is my Avatar"* which helped them to use adjectives and vocabulary about body and attributes.

Hence, there are grounds for believing that implementing and using a Massively Multiplayer Online Game might be a pedagogical innovation in my context, which may lead to successful and positive outcomes if used properly leading to educational changes in our nowadays educational system. As stated by Wang Yu (2009) the idea of using virtual worlds is relatively new to most of educators but it is up to them the innovation and creativity of using virtual worlds to extend the limits of teaching and learning. All in all "what is worth fighting is ultimately the needs of learning among and caring for students" (p. 37).

Stages of the Pedagogical Intervention

The activities implemented with 9th graders are explained individually to have a better understanding of the range and development of literacy practices throughout the study.

Laboratory Sessions – The initial objectives of these two laboratory sessions (See Chart 2, page 52) were to get students contextualized with the story of the videogame and to provide assistance to the possible technological issues and setting up of World of Warcraft. The first session was held on June 4th and started with all of the necessary instructions and methodology (hardware, software, time, objectives, events, parents´ permission, etc.) to start the project. Students were asked about their gaming interests and experiences as a way to break the ice and generate interest among them. Finally, students watched three introductory cinematics of Warcraft and a video-tutorial on how to create their characters inside the game. For this purpose, I decided to carry with me a video-beam, computer and some speakers to the classroom.

The first video we watched was an introductory cinematic trailer which is originally found at the beginning of the videogame when you play for the first time only and shows a broad view of the war between the Alliance and the Horde. In many occasions, I decided to stop the video and explain to them some features and characteristics that I found key, relevant and necessary for students first steps in the game. For instance, we all had to create our avatars in the side of the Alliance because the game did not allow written communication nor belonging to the same guild inside the game between the two parties. Therefore, for the project to be carried out in a proper way we needed to be in touch as a Guild or community. My participants listened to these instructions carefully.

After the first video students started to make questions such as: “Teacher, are the graphics of the videogame pretty similar to the ones you displayed in the video? This immediately evidenced that these experienced videogamers consider many details when making the decision of playing a game. This means, they do not only choose a game because they feel interested by the story that surrounds it, but they also pay attention to hardware characteristics such as graphics and sounds quality to finally decide if that game is a good one.

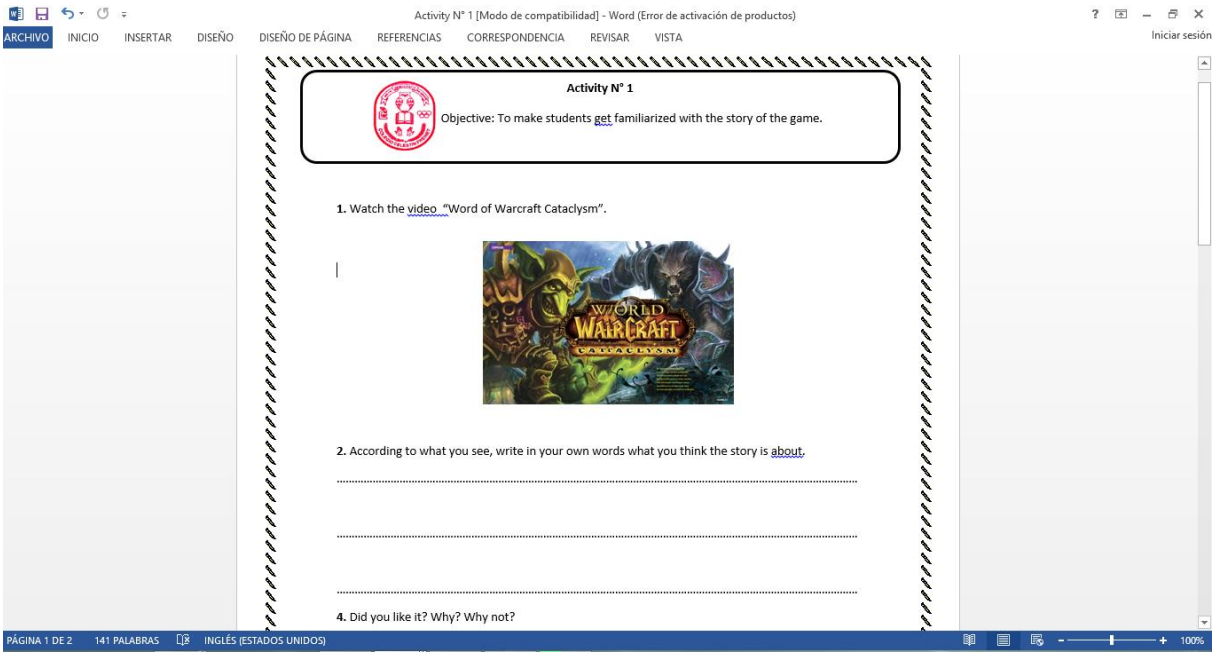
Then we continued with the second cinematic in which the main objective was to show how students were going to create their first avatar. The video lasted 07 minutes and mainly portrayed the different races and classes students could create once they entered the virtual world. While the video was running, I explained to them first the Alliance side (blue party) and all of the races (Human, Dwarf, Night Elf, Gnome, Draenei and Worgen). Afterwards, the 10 classes to choose after selecting the race were warrior, paladin, hunter, rogue, priest, death knight (you can create this one if you have another avatar in minimum level 57), shaman, mage, warlock and druid. Sometimes, students interrupted my explanation because of the curiosity of

getting to know what the main characteristics of some races were or classes with questions like "Teacher, what does the war do? Is it powerful? Does it carry a sword? among others. When students asked these questions I paused the video and started giving solution to their curiosity. After that the same procedure was done with the Horde side (red party).

It was satisfying to see how each phase of this first session motivated my participants more and more to belong and start with the project. Their body language evidenced it when I saw how they rubbed their hands or put their arms up as a sign of victory or happiness. I could see they were excited and probably anxious to play the game.

The last part of the session corresponded to a reading and writing activity about the story of the videogame based on the videos and an assigned reading taken from the official website of World of Warcraft. This activity was the last step into making my students get familiarized with the game. Besides that, it was a strategy to start fostering literacy practices through the use of input related to World of Warcraft. In this case, students were going to respond to some open-ended and semi open-ended questions about the story of the video game based on the videos and an assigned reading taken from the official website of World of Warcraft.

After students watched the videos they started reading and answering to the different questions (Figure 11). When providing their answers they asked for the teacher´s support and help either by calling my name or by raising their hands. The questions were mostly related to vocabulary by using the prompt "Teacher, how can I say (Spanish word) in English?" or looking for my approval to check understanding and well grammar use.



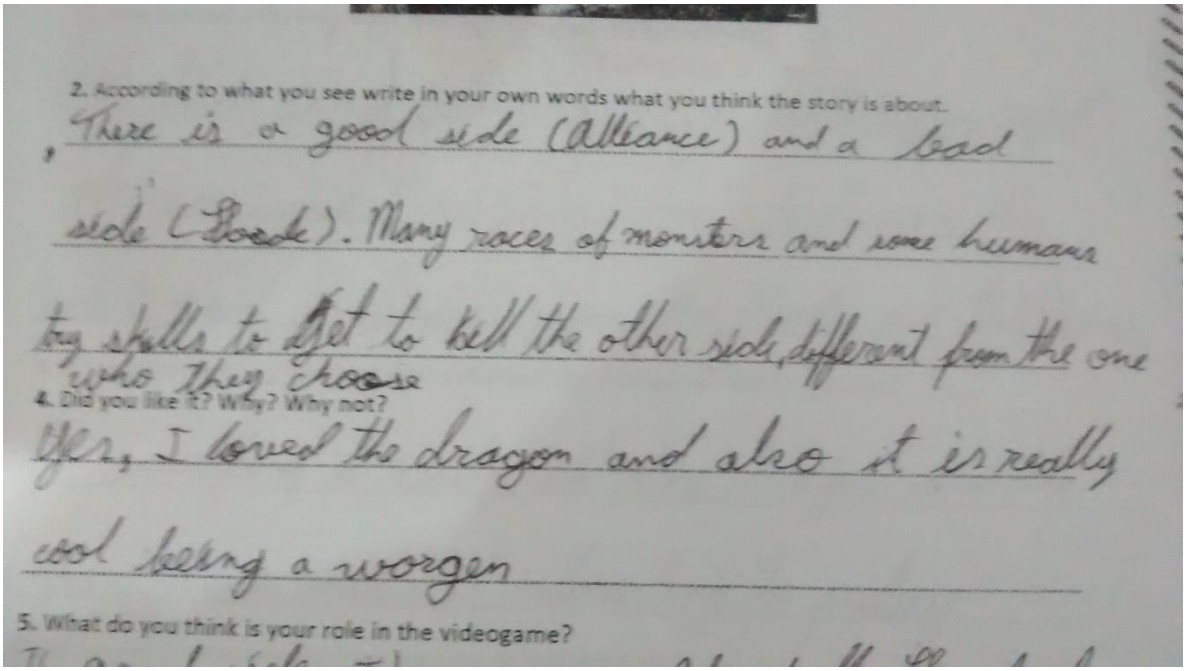


Figure 11. *Question and a student's answer to WoW written workshop.*

Source: *Own*

These questions were formulated with the intention to promote basic literacy practices on students´ initial perceptions about the videogame. The tendency on students´ answers was accurately characterized by the war between the two sides (Horde & Alliance) they could observe in the videos and confirm through the reading section. They also showed awareness on their role inside the game and the fact they had to choose a side to fight against the other one,

create an avatar that had particular characteristics such as race, gender, special and unique powers. After this initial activity the answers students provided helped me understand that students´ engagement, willingness and effort to read and write in the target language is somehow related to the connection with their personal interests and experiences. What is more, students were also opened to ask for and receive needed information, accept feedback and make corrections on tenses, punctuation, spelling and vocabulary if the activity seems truly engaging for them.

The second session took place on June 7th and was mainly focused on covering the different possible issues in relation to the setting up of the game on students´ computers. For that reason, I decided to support my explanations with video-tutorials and an authentic material, a PDF file with screenshots and pictures created in an accessible and understandable way for students.

I started with the procedure and steps to install the game. The first step was to go to the www.wow-colombia.com webpage address and enter into the Downloads section (Figure 12).

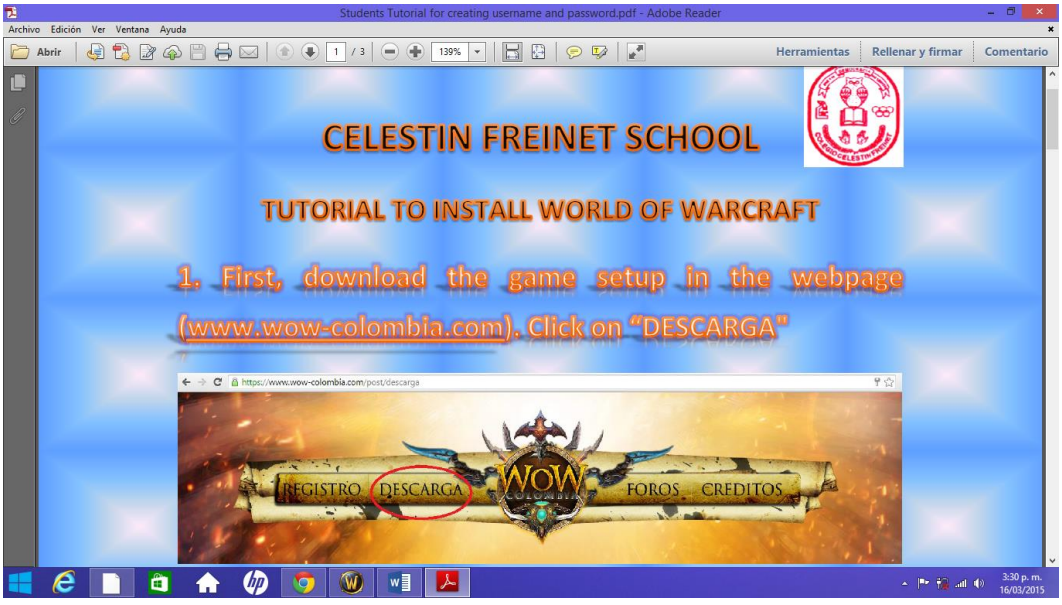


Figure 12. *Screenshot of the Tutorial Document to install the game.*

Source: *Own*

After that, students had to choose one of the two options in regards to the language. However, I explained to them that even though the game could be played in Spanish (Figure 13) the configuration of the game had to be in English and the conversations we were going to carry out inside the game were in the target language as well.

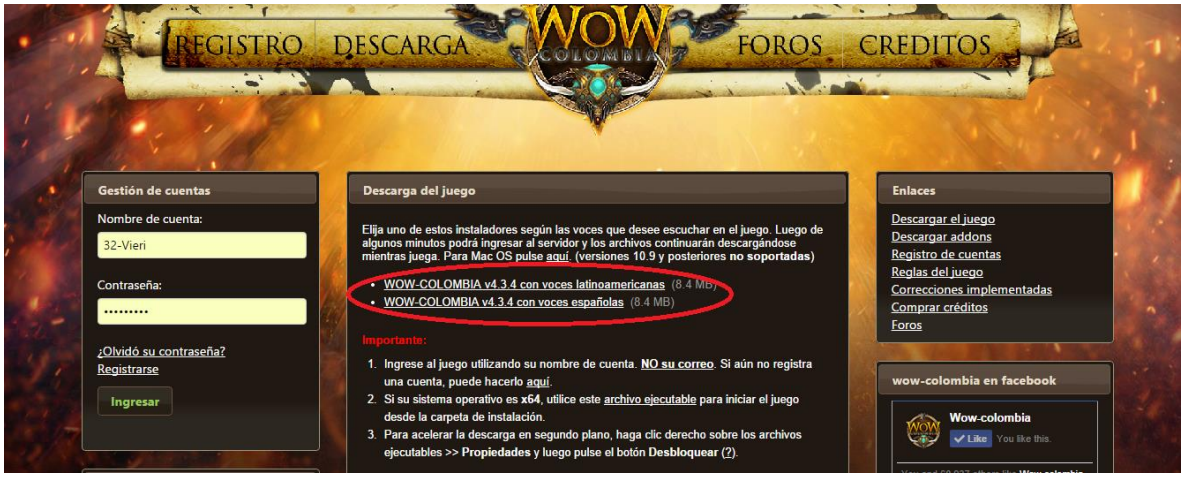


Figure 13. *Screenshot of the Tutorial Document to install the game.*

Source: *Own*

The last steps I explained to my students were the way they were going to create their personal accounts to start logging in the game and how to change the language to English just in case it appeared in Spanish as default as we can witness in Figure 14.

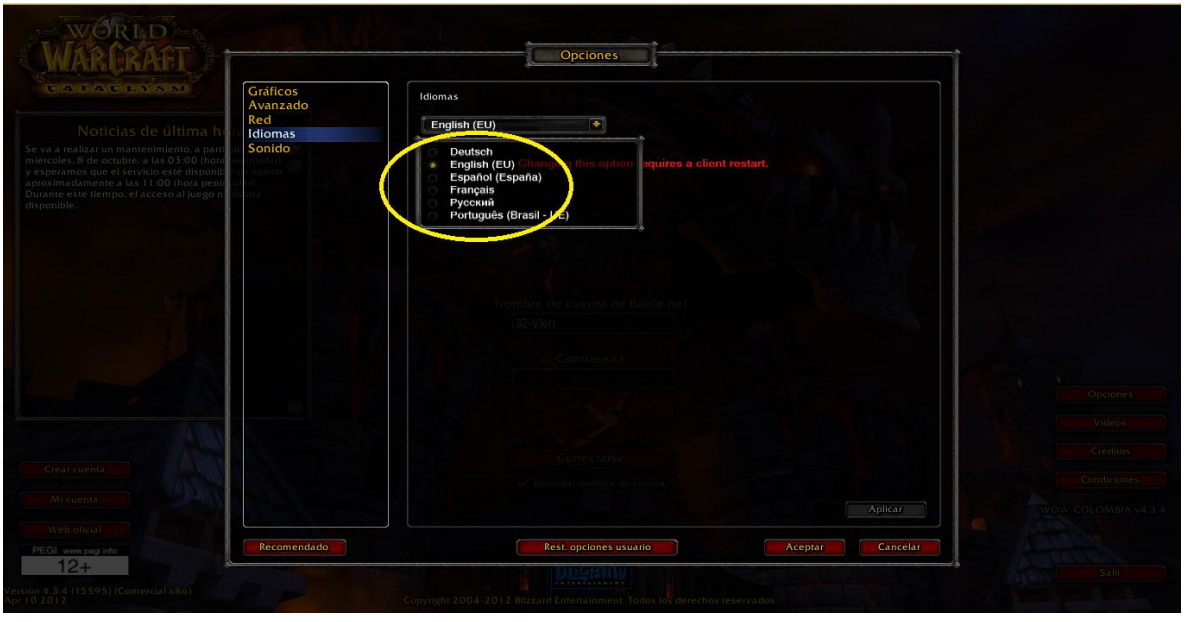


Figure 14. *Screenshot of the Tutorial Document to install the game.*

Source: *Own*

Finally, I could finish with the explanation of the steps and the demonstration as well. We followed all of the procedure in a computer that did not have the game installed and we did it. We could run the game, so in that way students evidenced how they could do the same process at home.

In some steps students made questions or asked for repetition of a particular step and I did it very kindly. It was very curious to notice that some of the students even wrote information I put in the Tutorial or took personal notes about my presentation.

Then I proceeded to open a questions and answers space to make sure that everything was understood and students could not have difficulty with the process later. Then, it was here when a very interesting challenge popped up, two students called Mariana and David told me they had a Mac or Apple Computer and the explanation I just gave was useful for Windows users. They were totally right, I did not consider that fact when preparing my presentation and tutorial. Therefore, what I did was to tell them to be patient while I investigated about the procedure for Mac users because their operating system and requirements was totally different from the Windows users, who were the majority of the participants of the project. By the end students received my personal email just in case they had any question or trouble with the game installation.

After this session, I considered the problem we encountered about Mac Users and I started to find out a solution to it. Meanwhile, I started to ask my students whether they could run the game at home or had any kind of difficulties as well. Some of them argued that the game was downloading with no difficulties so far while others said they were about to try it in a few days.

Then at home, I received an email where the student David asked for help to finish the installation process of the game because there was an error message on screen every time he tried to enter. He wrote his statement and attached the screenshot of the error message on screen to the email (Figure 15).



Figure 15. *A student´s e-mail reporting a complication*

Source: *Own*

Then, what I immediately did was to send the tutorial PDF file that I designed for my presentation to him (Figure 16).

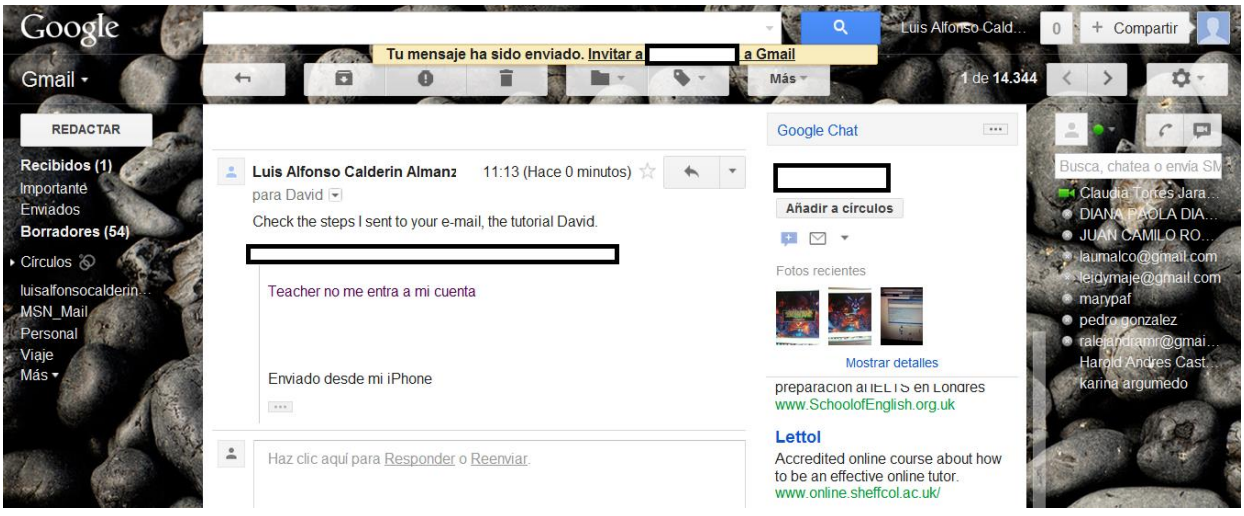


Figure 16. *E-mail answering to the student´s report.*

Source: *Own*

After some minutes the following e-mail confirmed that after reading the tutorial I sent to David he was capable of giving solution to his problem. In his message (Figure 17) he was thankful but also revealed he was already playing the videogame when he stated: “a woman warior kill me ☹”.



Figure 17. *E-mail confirming that David could finally solve his problem.*

Source: *Own*

David kept providing me information he found relevant for the project such as his avatar´s name and the decision he made in terms of the class. He chose a warrior type character (Figure 18) .

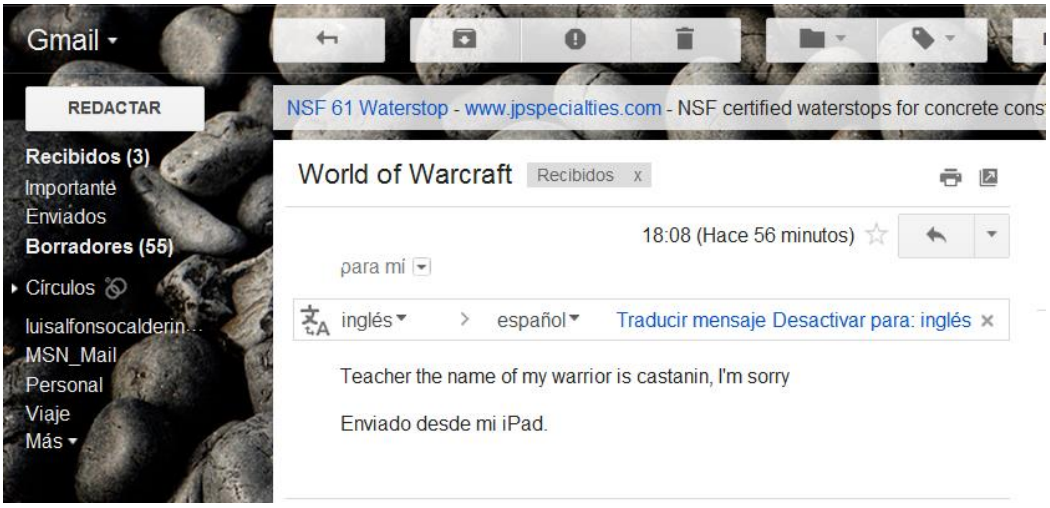


Figure 18. *David´s another e-mail with information about his avatar.*

Source: *Own*

Then, literacy practices such as reading the online tutorial, instructions provided through e-mails exchanges and writing as a means to look for assistance allowed David to solve his initial difficulty before he could enter the game, create his first avatar or character and start playing.

Challenge # 1. A Tour Around Stormwind – This tour was the first event or challenge we performed as a group. At the beginning, I planned to do the activity with all of the students at the same time, but later on I changed my mind since it was difficult for me to keep track and provide high-quality assistance during the whole challenge. Then, students were asked to participate in couples at an arranged time inside Warcraft after school time.

For this activity, the objective was to simulate the process of living in a city and reach several places inside the virtual world similar or almost close to the ones we usually visit in real situations. Students identified, located and named different places inside the "Stormwind" city and the use they gave to each place. They also provided information to get to a place by having an adequate language use (prepositions of place and directions) based on the lesson plan designed for the activity.

Since the school adopted communicative competences as a goal for the EFL classes the corresponding lesson plans were designed taking into consideration the format proposed by Coordinación Área Pedagógica from Universidad Javeriana (2010) based on the concepts of Brown. In this case, the lesson plan for Challenge #1 is presented (Chart 3).

INSTITUTION: Celestin Freinet School

Teacher's name: Luis Calderín	**Grade:** 9th	**Term:** Second	**Date:** Sept 28th	**Allocated time:** 60 minutes
Unit in the syllabus:				
Relevant recent work:	*Students installed the game already and created an avatar ready to be performed around the virtual world.*			
Topic of the lesson:	**The City**			
Standards to work on[1]				
Brown, D. proposes the following[2]:				
Goals: *To develop literacy skills in EFL students by using a virtual world.*	**Terminal objectives:** *To simulate the process of living in a city and reach several places inside the virtual world.*	**Enabling objectives:** *Students will identify, locate and name different places inside the "Stormwind" city and the use they give to each place. They will also provide information to get to a place by having an adequate language use.*		
Key words: *Places in a city, prepositions of place, addresses, directions.*				
Materials/equipment: *An online document with visual aids and information, World of Warcraft Videogame, Internet connection.*				

[1] Stated according to the MEN document or the European Framework if the school follows one of these policies, or the ones the school has adopted, i. e. communicative competence (linguistic competences, pragmatic competences y socio linguistic competences), depending on the institution.

[2] BROWN, D. (2001) Teaching by Principles: An interactive Approach to language Pedagogy, 2nd ed., White Plains: Longman.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES: *the steps to be followed during the lesson, which include anticipation (unexpected problems), modification (changing the activity), and extension (further development of the activity).*			
Lesson stages	Interaction	Skills involved	Time
A focusing event / lead-in /warm-up activity: *A brief description of the city and main characteristics of Stormwind will be given. Moreover, students will be asked about the most relevant places in the real world cities.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting Online Pictures*	*10 min.*
Teaching procedures (lesson core): *Students will be placed at the same time in the Trade District ready to receive instructions about Challenge #1. There will be prizes according to position and neatness of the work.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting Understanding Instructions*	*5-10 min*
By using an external source of storing documents students will receive the Digital Document where they can see the instructions of Challenge #1 and start ***(See appendix)***	*Teacher-Students Students-Students*	*Understanding Information*	*5 min.*
Students read the Document and start giving solution to the quests found in it at the same time they start discovering the places in the virtual world.	Teacher-Students	Problem Solving	15-25 min
Assessment: *Students will present their work once they are done to be checked by the teacher. Individual assessment and feedback will be provided. Lastly, the positions of the event are selected according to time devoted and accuracy of the answers.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Reading & Writing*	*15 min*
Closure: *Students will receive feedback for their work and the announcement of the event takes place.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting*	*5 min.*

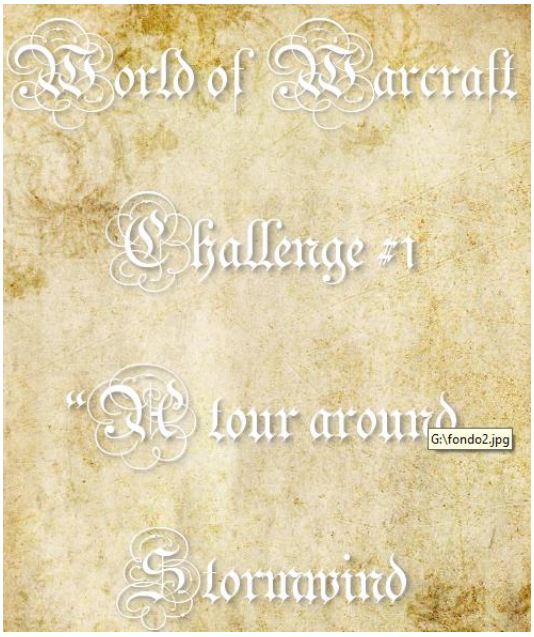
Chart 3. *Lesson Plan Challenge #1 "A Tour around Stormwind".*

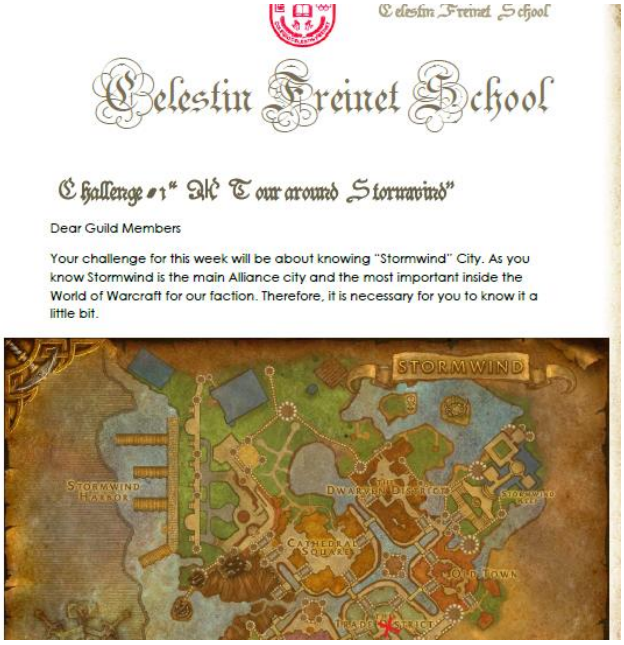
Source: *Own*

According to the model stated by Universidad Javeriana (2010) in order to meet the pedagogical achievements proposed for Challenge #1 there were established through *Goals*,

Terminal Objectives and *Enabling Objectives* being the general one the former and the specific one the latter. Secondly, key words for the unit and the required equipment or materials also made part of the planning. Then, some essential lesson stages such as a warming-up activity, followed by the teaching procedures or core of the lesson were also included. Finally, the assessment and closure of the lesson were key to the success of the intended challenge. On top of that, every lesson stage incorporates the type of interaction; skills involved and devoted time for each activity of this Challenge #1.

Apart from this, the Challenge #1 included an Online Guide (Figure 19) that was designed with the purpose of promoting literacy practices that could orient students into their gaming and pedagogical objectives. In other words, this first guide contained all of the information of what the challenge consisted about, the actions to perform with the avatar, the places to visit, the grammar-based questions and exercises students had to give solution to through the complete task.





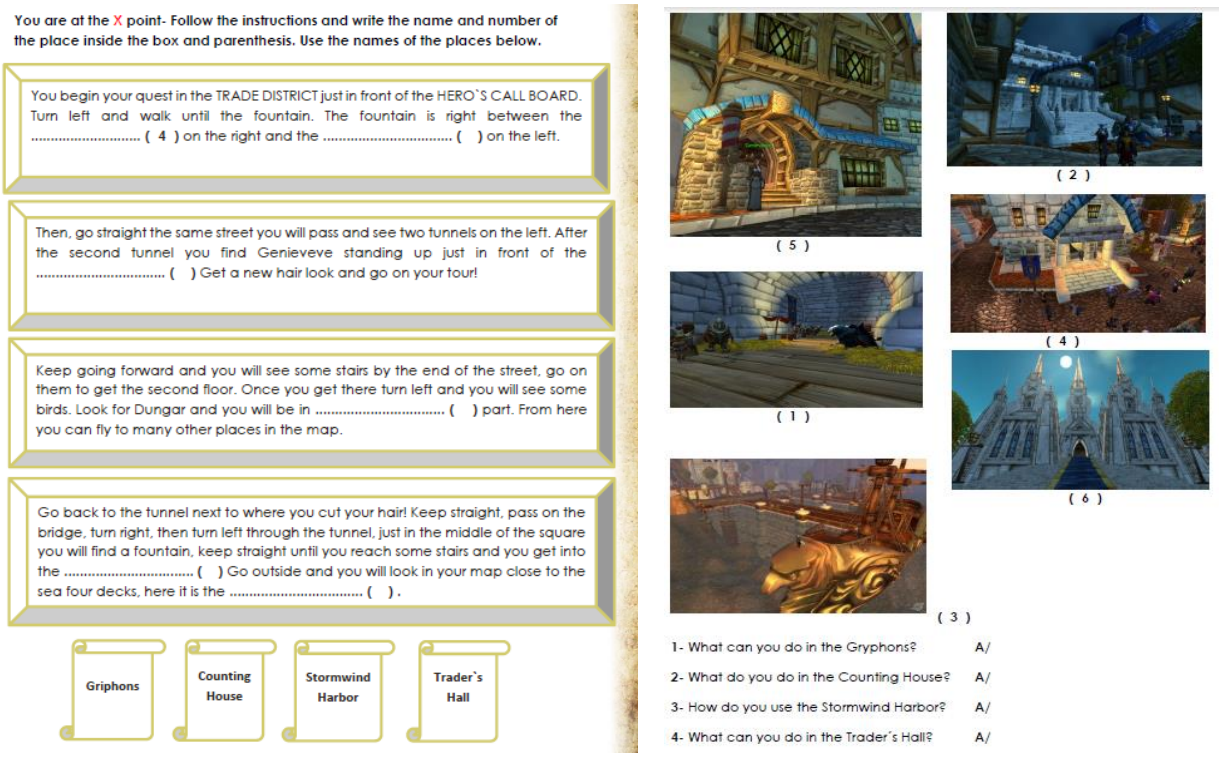




Figure 19*.Screenshots from Challenge #1 Online Guide.* ***Source:*** *Own*

The participants received the guide where they could see the instructions of Challenge #1, then they read the document and started giving solution to the quests found in it at the same time they began discovering the places in the virtual world. Finally, students uploaded and presented their work once it was done to be checked by the teacher. Individual assessment and feedback in terms of linguistic competences and accuracy of the answers were provided.

The activity was divided into two parts with individual and collective assessment. The first part of finding the 6 places was done initially with *Adhemi* and *Woltrax* (character´s names inside the virtual world) at the same time. It was not a competition, rather a cooperative work. The second part (reaching the King Varyan) was done individually. My role was observer as participant through the use of my avatar Vieri, a human war level 85. My interventions were focused on observing how the event was occurring and guiding *Woltrax* and *Adhemi* in any rising difficulty or doubt they had during the activity.

We started in front of the Heroes Call Board and then they stopped walking in front of the fountain. I had to be patient because it was evident they were alternating their time between the digital workshop and the videogame. They were surely reading the descriptions of the places they had to find and at the same time looking at their surrounding environment to accurately tell me the names of the places and write them into the digital workshop.

In this case, the following lines where *Adhemi* & *Woltrax* participated in the challenge will be of great help to illustrate the complete process and development of the literacy practices carried out during the activity.

In Figure 20 we can see that at the beginning Adhemi said “this hard =S”, some engaging expressions like “Do your best, come on!” was given and student says: “Okay thanks U.U” This

seemed very encouraging for him because he never complained again even though the activity was challenging. Two things called my attention in here. First, the importance that motivation and an encouraging expression to students towards achieving a goal might have in an online environment like Warcraft. Secondly, the symbols he used "=S and U.U" possibly meant confusion when facing the information and the "U.U" might be used as a symbol to demonstrate appreciation for the advice provided by me. I had to get used to them because they use it very commonly during their interventions inside the game.



Figure 20. *Use of emoticons and symbols to convey meaning.*

Source: *Own*

Adhemi asked for a word he didn´t know in English, then he used it in context. "How do you say "guía" in English (Figure 21). After he received the word, he used it to ask if they had to complete the entire guide in English or just part of it.

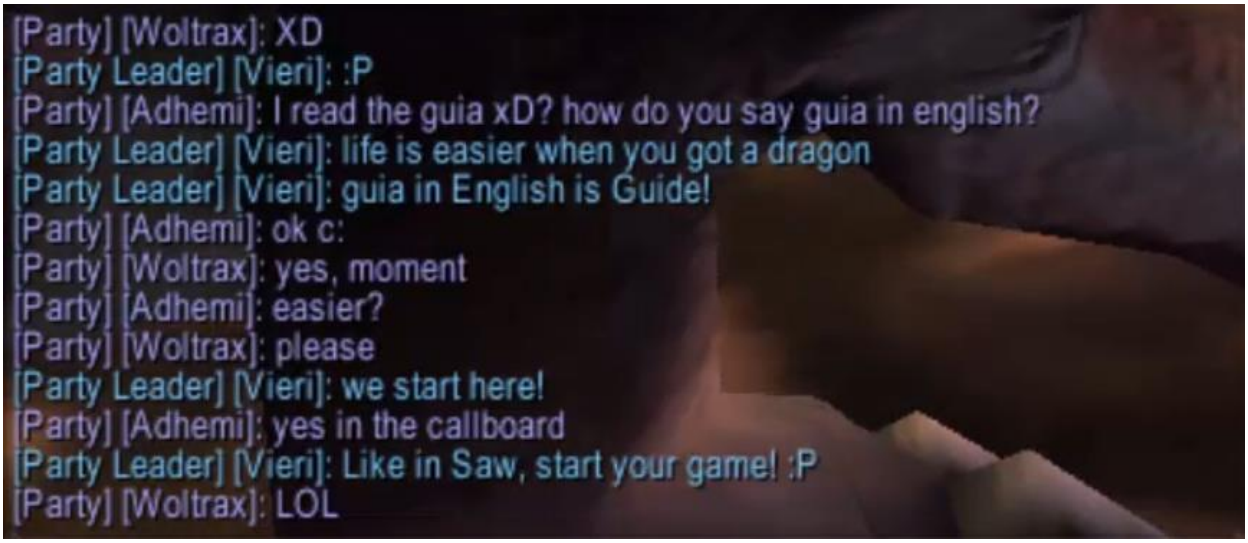


Figure 21. *Student asking for language assistance.*

Source: *Own*

Mostly, during these first conversations they asked about how to solve the guide, clarifications and doubts about the workshop. Some questions were related to vocabulary using the prompt "How do you say (spanish word) In English? or and what they had to do in each part of the activity (Figure 22).

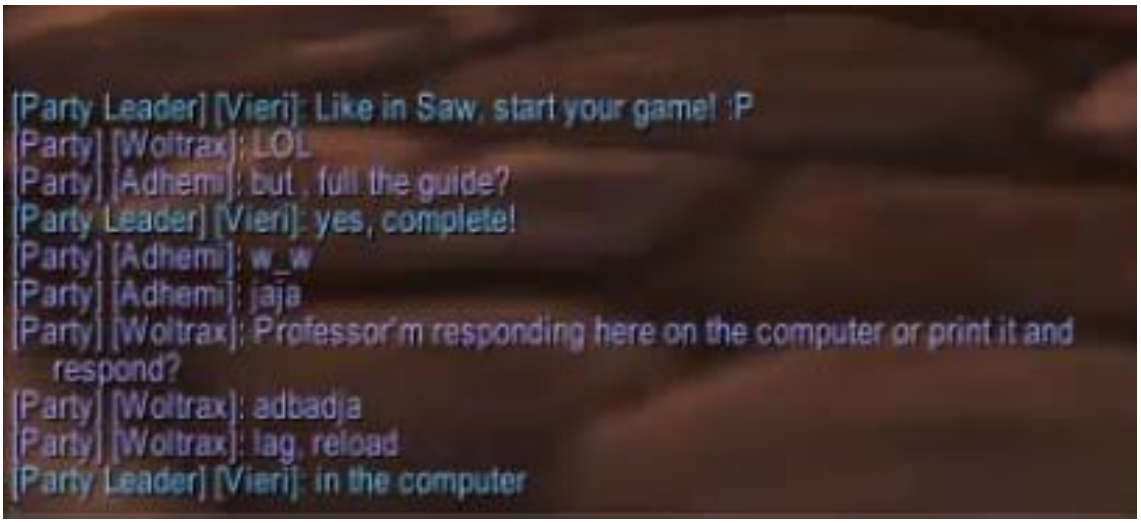


Figure 22. *Woltrax question about how the activity had to be solved.* ***Source:*** *Own*

Then they started joking about Woltrax because he did not have a mount so he had to walk. Inside World of Warcraft you can move faster from one place to another if you have a mount. Then, as a way to cooperate with him Adhemi and I also walked all the way long.

It was exciting for them to "speak" in English about specific and personal things from their characters. However I had to redirect the conversation into the development of the activity. Finally they could found out that the first place was the bank. It was curious to evidence Adhemi used a lot of "em" portraying he was reading and thinking about the first place. What is more, in Figure 23 Adhemi self-corrected his spelling when he said the first correct answer: "The banck is here, bank"



Figure 23. *Adhemi self-correction on spelling.*

Source: *Own*

Adhemi was very curious about the words he did not know the meaning of. I could confirm it when when I said: "cheating is forbidden" and Adhemi asked: "What is forbidden? Probably referring to the meaning of forbidden or maybe he knew it but did not know what cheating meant. I did not cover the two possibilities and I just responded: "Cheating" assuming that he knew the meaning of forbidden.

It was evident they were reading the guide and performing the actions in the game. Woltrax said “We go to the next place” and moved on. They walked forward and found the second place “Barber”. They received 50 gold coins to change their hairstyles and made fun of it (Figure 24).



Figure 24. *Adhemi & Woltrax after their haircuts.*

Source: *Own*

Adhemi continued asking for clarifications about giving solution to the guide. I provided some guidance to him to help him in getting the answer and Woltrax gave him a hand. As Adhemi finally made it we went on to the next place: Griphons, the place where they could fly to many other places by mounting on big birds (Figure 25).

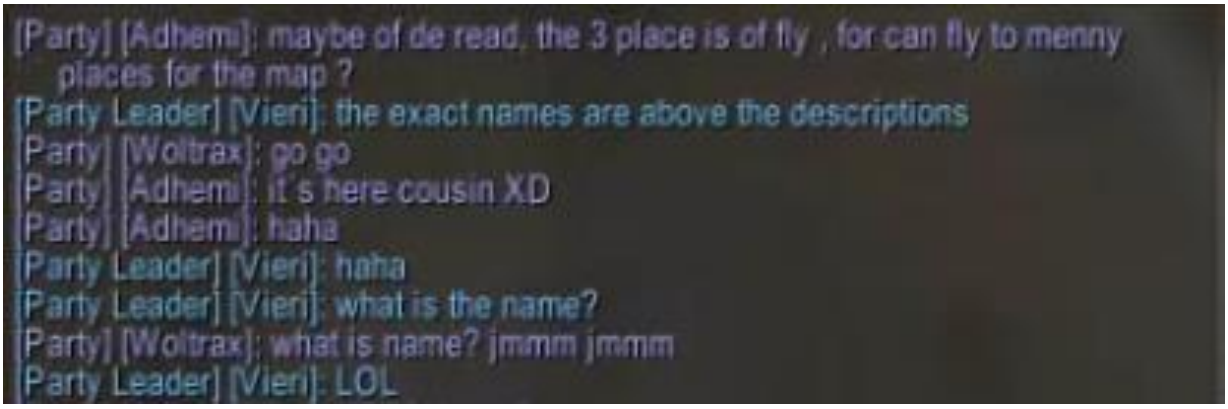




Figure 25. *Students cooperatively achieved the next place.*

Source: *Own*

Finally, in Figure 26 students reached the Stormwind Dock and the Cathedral of Light with any difficulty which evidenced that it was matter of time for them to get used to the dynamic of the activity and understand the descriptions provided in the workshop. Finally, they reached the sixth place (Cathedral of Light) and the activity at its first stage had finished.



Figure 26. *Correct answer by Woltrax.*

Source: *Own*

The second stage of the "Tour Around Stormwind" activity continued on an individual way. Woltrax was the first to achieve the King´s task. It was very curious to evidence how Woltrax got confused during his tour because he was describing the route to get the King but the King was not there. He self- corrected by stating "I got confused". Then I told him the King was in the Palace and he said; "Yes, yes I am sorry" and started the description of his route as can be evidenced in Figure 27.

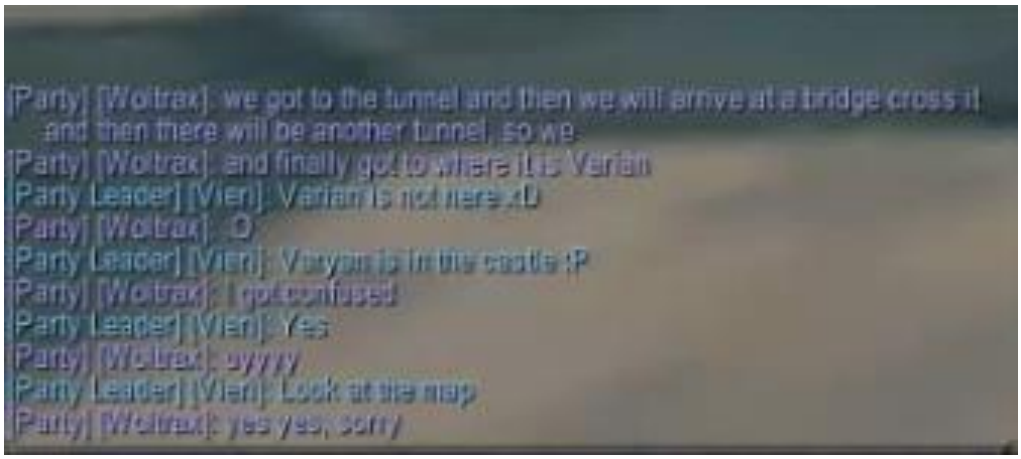


Figure 27. *Woltrax admitted his mistake and apologized.*

Source: *Own*

It is very remarkable to state that Woltrax´s description of his route was effective, he reached the goal and could finally go to the King´s place. His description was good enough to convey the meaning he was trying to, which was describing his path since the Cathedral of Light to the finish point, the Varyan King´s place. He could finally get to the palace and describe his route. However, in terms of formal aspects of the language he concurred in some spelling mistakes and correct use of prepositions when describing his route.

In regards to Adhemi, the second participant of the event, he omitted some proper conjugations in sentences such as “I wrong maybe”, “what do you say “tunel” in English? and some spelling mistakes in words like “Distric” referring to District. Nonetheless, his description was very detailed since he described almost every move he made using directions and prepositions in English in a proper way (Figure 28).

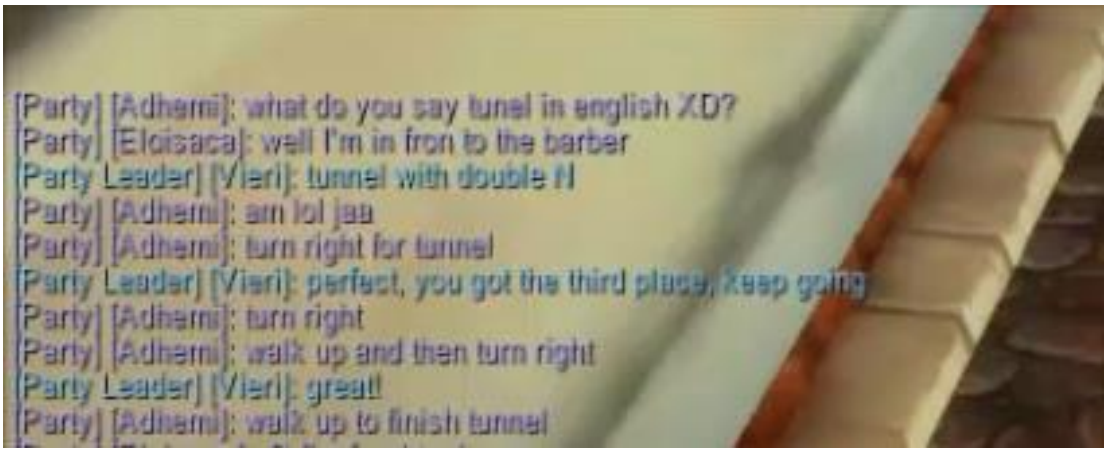


Figure 28. *Ademi´s description of his route..*
Source: *Own*

An interesting aspect I could see was that motivating and engaging phrases such as “You are doing great, perfect, excellent” on small achievements and final goal of the activity were like gas to him to finish his task since from the beginning Adhemi saw the activity as something difficult it was important to keep him focused, motivated and engaged. This situation possibly

led him to self-demand and could be evidenced when he apologized when using a word in Spanish. In other words, Adhemi was conscious that learning a new language implies getting as much vocabulary as possible to convey a message.

Finally, it was very satisfying to observe how this first activity was carried out with many positive moments (Figure 29) and aspects on the literacy practices observed during the challenge and were taken into consideration.

1. Students took time to check, read and reread the guide, think about a possible answer and write it in the chat session of the game. Mostly these answers took the form of questions looking for teacher´s approval which could be seen as the engagement and commitment students had for doing well on this activity.

2. Students´ initial input in terms of reading on screens was very high since they had to read the workshop that was provided plus the interactions which took place inside the video game among the teacher and them. At the same time, their output in terms of writing was also high since they described and shared almost every move, thought and even spare time (jokes) during the game-play through the chat session of Warcraft.

3. As a participant-observer I tried to be a guide and motivator for Adhemi and Woltrax but at the same time, I also tried to redirect their interventions into achieving the final goal of the activity. I felt very comfortable and could evidence how through reading and writing students

could achieve the goal, terminal and enabling objectives proposed from the beginning.

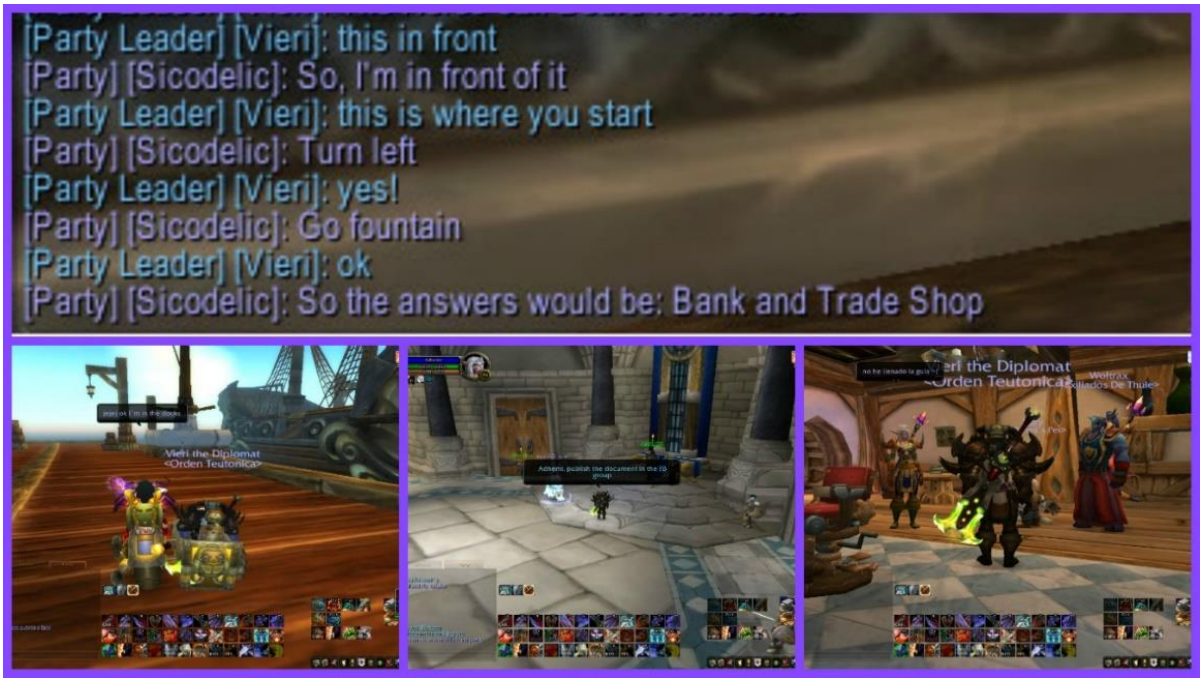
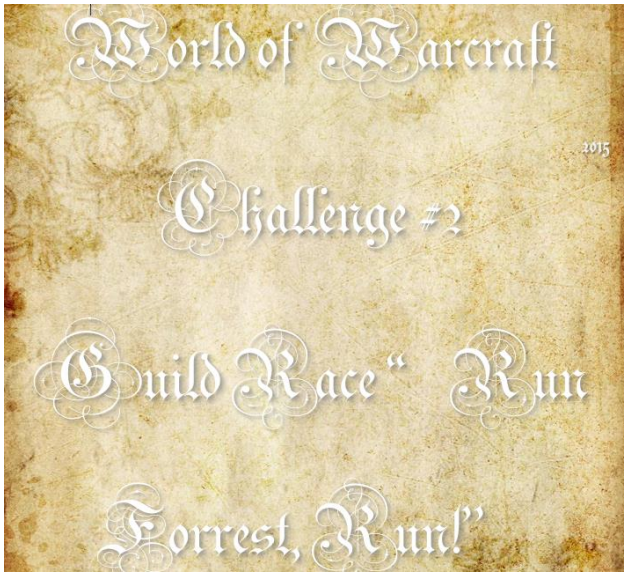
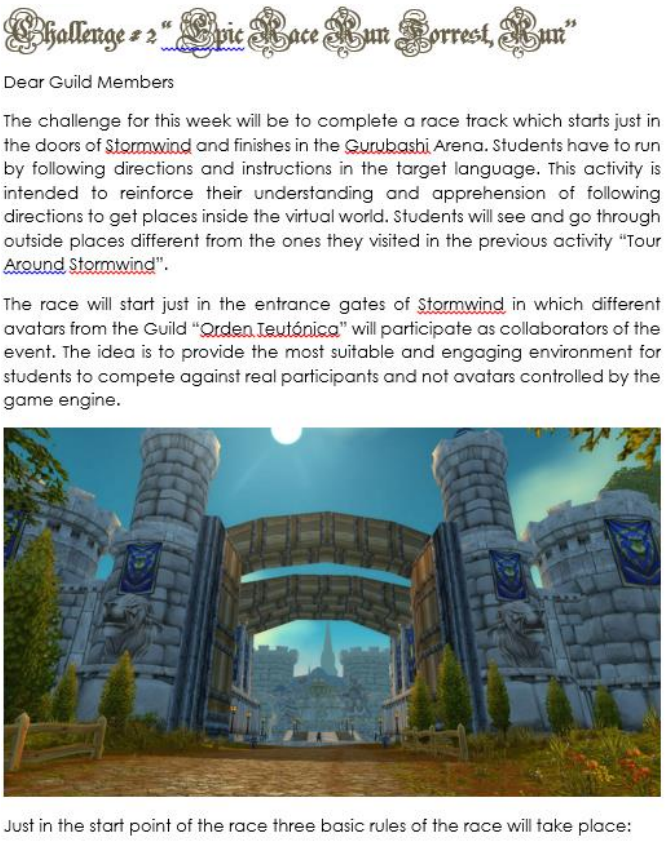


Figure 29. *Collage with different moments of the Tour around Stormwind.*

Source: *Own*

Challenge # 2. Epic Race "Run Forrest, Run" – The second challenge for this week was to complete a race track which started just in the doors of Stormwind and finished in the Gurubashi Arena. Students had to run by following directions and instructions in the target language. This activity was intended to reinforce their understanding and apprehension of following directions to get places inside the virtual world. Students saw and went through outside places different from the ones they visited in the previous activity "Tour Around Stormwind". Just as the previous challenge this one was also achieved through the use of a digital guide for students and a lesson plan for the teacher –researcher. The guide (Figure 30) contained all of the procedures, rules, instructions and zones maps for students to follow in order to achieve the pedagogical goal established in the lesson plan.





Challenge # 2 " Epic Race Run Forrest, Run"

Dear Guild Members

The challenge for this week will be to complete a race track which starts just in the doors of Stormwind and finishes in the Gurubashi Arena. Students have to run by following directions and instructions in the target language. This activity is intended to reinforce their understanding and apprehension of following directions to get places inside the virtual world. Students will see and go through outside places different from the ones they visited in the previous activity "Tour Around Stormwind".

The race will start just in the entrance gates of Stormwind in which different avatars from the Guild "Orden Teutónica" will participate as collaborators of the event. The idea is to provide the most suitable and engaging environment for students to compete against real participants and not avatars controlled by the game engine.

Just in the start point of the race three basic rules of the race will take place:

Figure 30. *Screenshots of the Digital Guide of Challenge #1.*

Source: *Own*

The guide was very specific in terms of the route students had to follow. In Figure 31 we can see the routes determined by a red line going through different maps, zones of the game and the names as well.

2. Always run on the ways! Avatars must not step on the grass to shorten ways.

3. Participants must not use any spell that makes them run faster than others.

4. Watch out for the mobs on the way. 85 players will take care of you.

Students will not be told until almost the end of the race where the finish will be, which is Gurubashi Arena.



The first instruction is: Let´s run to the blacksmith we find in Goldshire.

Keep running! And across the way you will see Tower of Azora

Come on! Go on running straight until the end of the way and we will enter into Red Mountains. Before getting the Three Corners turn right after the tower and run straight!



Figure 31. *Indicators of the route to follow.*

Source: *Own*

The finish point was also provided in the digital guide, so students could see it as a yellow circle in the upper part of the map (Figure 32).

Keep running guys! Across the way you will see Brightwood Grove in your maps! Let´s reach it!



Just close to the way you can see Tranquil Gardens Cemetery, The Rotting Orchard and the Yorgen Farmstead. In the intersection between the Yorgen and Vulgol Ogremond you will turn left and run down! Come on!

Keep running guys! Let´s go over the bridges and the finish point is just ahead Gurubashi Arena! Finally! Do your best!



Figure 32. *Finish Point of the Race.*

Source: *Own*

Lastly, clues about the prizes of the challenge were provided as a way to motivate students to do their best during the completion (Figure 33).



Figure 33. *Final instructions and Prizes.*

Source: *Own*

On the same week before the beginning of the competition a propaganda campaign was done in the Facebook group to encourage students to participate and get 10.000 gold coins as a virtual reward if they finished in the podium (Figure 34).



Figure 34. *Motivating messages on Facebook before the race.*

Source: *Own*

Besides that, the advertising campaign was a reminder for them to meet our online date on the weekend, since the activity required a specific hour to be logged on inside Warcraft, but also to share with them the rules of the competition (Figure 35).



Figure 35. *Rules of the Race.*

Source: *Own*

The lesson plan for the second challenge determined all the pedagogical objectives and procedures to carry out the event (Chart 4).

INSTITUTION: Celestin Freinet School

Teacher's name: Luis Calderín	**Grade:** 9th	**Term:** Second	**Date:** Sept 28th	**Allocated time:** 60 minutes
Unit in the syllabus:				
Relevant recent work:	*Students installed the game already and created an avatar ready to be performed around the virtual world.*			
Topic of the lesson:	**Giving Directions – Prepositions of place**			
Standards to work on[1]				
Brown, D. proposes the following[2]:				
Goals: *To develop literacy skills in EFL students by using a virtual world.*	**Terminal objectives:** *To simulate the process of living in a city and reach several places inside the virtual world.*	**Enabling objectives:** *Students will identify, locate and name different places inside the "Stormwind" city and the use they give to each place. They will also provide information to get to a place by having an adequate language use.*		
Key words: *Places in a city, prepositions of place, addresses, directions.*				
Materials/equipment: *An online document with visual aids and information, World of Warcraft Videogame, Internet connection.*				

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES: *the steps to be followed during the lesson, which include anticipation (unexpected problems), modification (changing the activity), and extension (further development of the activity).*			
Lesson stages	Interaction	Skills involved	Time
A focusing event / lead-in /warm-up activity: *A brief description of the city and main characteristics of Stormwind will be given. Moreover, students will be asked about the most relevant places in the real world cities.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting Online Pictures*	*10 min.*
Teaching procedures (lesson core): *Students will be placed at the same time in the Trade District ready to receive instructions about Challenge #1. There will be prizes according to position and neatness of the work.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting Understanding Instructions*	*5-10 min*
By using an external source of storing documents students will receive the Digital Document where they can see the instructions of Challenge #1 and start ***(See appendix)***	*Teacher-Students Students-Students*	*Understanding Information*	*5 min.*
Students read the Document and start giving solution to the quests found in it at the same time they start discovering the places in the virtual world.	Teacher-Students	Problem Solving	15-25 min
Assessment: *Students will present their work once they are done to be checked by the teacher. Individual assessment and feedback will be provided. Lastly, the positions of the event are selected according to time devoted and accuracy of the answers.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Reading & Writing*	*15 min*
Closure: *Students will receive feedback for their work and the announcement of the event takes place.*	*Teacher-Students*	*Chatting*	*5 min.*

Chart 4. *Run Forest Run Challenge Lesson Plan.*
Source: *Own*



Figure 36. *Collage with different moments of the competition.*
Source: *Own*

Challenge # 3. Did you find it? - In this third challenge, which was a competition, students had to look for and collect different items, which were placed around the **Dark Shore** map in Kalimdor. Most of these items were food or meat taken from the animals around the zone. Therefore, students had to pay attention to the exact names, time and quantity of the objects they had to collect to complete their test. All of this information was presented in an online document or guide I designed for them, which included the instructions, questions and items students collected throughout the event (Figure 37).



Figure 37. *A student´s answers in the Online Guide after collecting the items.*

Source: *Own*

At the end, students brought the different items to me and feedback on their digital works and competences in terms of the use of the target language and linguistic objectives was given according to the answers provided.

Challenge #4. Let´s Draw Our Avatars – After having collected and reclaimed different items as rewards from the several quests that students completed in the game, the physical appearance of the students´ avatars changed. To fulfill the expected linguistic competences proposed in the Pedagogical Activities Chart (page 52) where students were required to provide a physical description and personality of someone. I decided to implement these competences on the avatars that students had in the game.

In this way, students developed their artistic and linguistic abilities to represent their avatars´ description. They put into practice all the input and lessons we studied about physical description and personality given in classes. In other words, they took the time to draw and color their characters through a handcraft or poster (Figure 38).

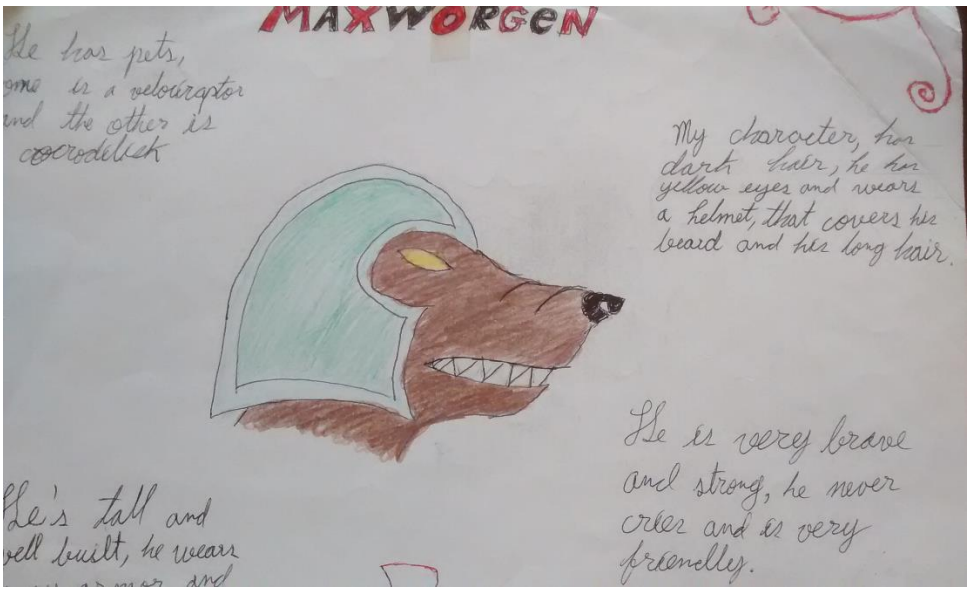


Figure 38. *Student´s handcraft about physical and personality description of his avatar (Maxworgen).*

Source: *Own*

According to the topics from the 9th grade syllabus to be covered during the project, it is significant to highlight that the other challenges presented some adjustments in terms of places, items, locations and time. However, the objectives and dynamic of the different events remained similar to the ones presented and described in the previous lines and were meant to reinforce the pedagogical objectives of the project.

Chapter V: Data Analysis and Findings

"The best way of learning language is not from a book or dictionary, but from applying it to an experience"

(Gee, 2003)

In previous chapters I have presented the theoretical, pedagogical and methodological platforms aimed at analyzing the literacy practices that emerged when EFL students participated in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG). To accomplish these goals I posed two research questions: 1) What literacy practices emerge when EFL students participate in World of Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)? 2) What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world? This chapter contains all the procedures and stages this study went through to analyze the data that answered the questions above: Data Management and Data Analysis procedures. The results of the study are presented into the categories that emerged as a result of the data analysis.

Data Organization and Management

The results of this analysis and description of WoW literacy practices included 6 months of participating as an observer inside the virtual world, transcribing and recording observations, participants´ communications, web-pages about the game and interviews with my informants. At this point, it is important to specify that even though the 10 pedagogical activities were planned to last around 3 months there were some other events that arose and influenced on the final time implemented for the project. First of all, obstacles related to the installation of the game in some students´ computers that wanted to participate but finally could not. Secondly, on some occasions, the school required students to go in the afternoon shift or even Saturdays to

reinforce some subjects and that was the time we usually dedicated to carry out activities from the project. As a third aspect it was always difficult to make all of the students reach some necessary requirements such as getting to a specific level almost at the same time or getting to a specific place and hour inside the game (school duties, internet connection problems, time spent online, unexpected disconnections from the online game, etc). For the previous reasons, we presented delays and some challenges, especially the first one had to be postponed.

In WoW, when you create an avatar they are born in different places depending on the race you choose. For instance, Humans start the game in Elwyn Forest, Night Elves in Darnassus and Huargens in Gilnea city. In this case, for Challenge #1 "A Tour Around Stormwind" the avatars had to travel to the city of Stormwind to begin the task. However, there were some students who created Huargen avatars and Huargens had to reach level 15 before they could get out of that town and meet with me and the rest during the project Maxworgen, Andresnoveno and Dsantiagoc presented this difficulty and we were patient with them as can be evidenced in the following Figure 39.

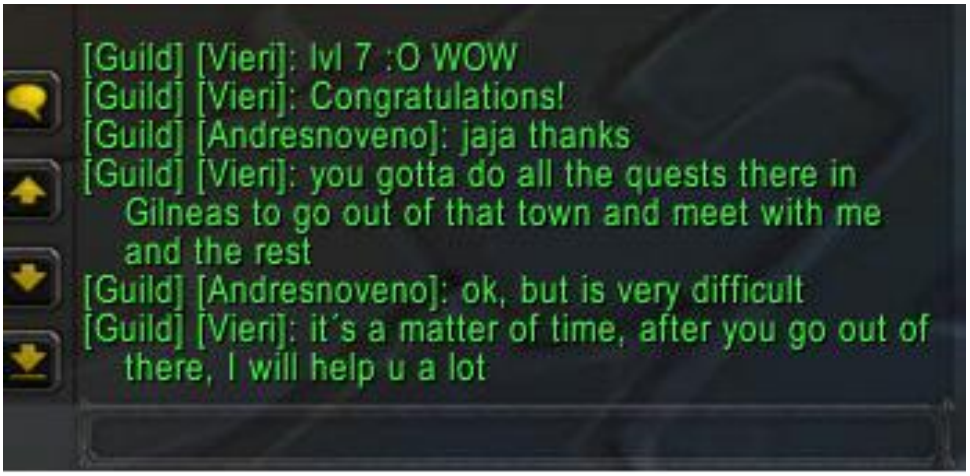


Figure 39. *Huargen race particularity in the game.*

Source: *Own*

Data Analysis Framework

Elements of the grounded approach method were chosen to begin the analysis of my data. According to Freeman (1998), working with ground information implies identifying patterns and categories from data. The researcher has to interpret what is the data is reflecting. It means that the constructs emerge from the analysis done by the researcher in the data analysis stage. Moreover, the interpretation given to the data will be the result of the cautious observation of the information.

I started reading the information collected from my students´ artifacts, video recordings and transcriptions of game-play and interviews. These instruments (See Chapter III) were used to carry out the processes of triangulation, validation and verification of the evidence in order to draw suitable conclusions.

To analyze the data of this study I used special software for qualitative research called Atlas Ti. This qualified program assisted me to organize and carry out the process of codification very properly. The data collected from observations, teacher field notes, students´ artifacts (images and written online texts) and interview transcriptions were uploaded into several Atlas Ti Hermeneutic Units ready to be codified. By using codes, I was after the themes and patterns which were frequently presented and commonly repeated in the different instruments used for the study. The next step was establishing connections between the preliminary categories instead of looking at the data itself. Corbin and Strauss (2008) denominate this as the axial stage or Freeman states it as displaying the grouped patterns. After that, these patterns turned into categories that came up all along the data analysis process.

During the implementation of the project students were asked to log on the game at least 5 hours per week at some determined hours after school schedule. However, before students could enter

into the online environment two laboratory sessions were planned and carried out to solve any doubt or possible technical difficulties students might encounter. After different e-mail messages exchanges, I decided to create a Facebook group to facilitate communication out of the school between my participants and me. Then in this group, students contributed to peer interaction when they published questions, information and pictures. They commented on my posts such as images or videos and their classmates as well. It is important to state that data from the in-game literacy practices was analyzed but data presented in out of the game spaces such as this one were taken into consideration as well.

After students could install the game, solve technical issues and enter into the World of Warcraft Online Game they created a personalized character or avatar and reported the name they used to me. Once students logged on I could make contact with them, send them invitations to join the Guild (an inside the game closed group) and chat with them as well. In other words, students could start playing and I could keep track of their actions inside the virtual world though the online interactions between my avatar (Vieri) and theirs (See Chapter III for avatar-participants' description).

Groupal activities for the players, which included competitions, cooperation, duels, challenges and quests, were planned during 8 weeks inside the game. These activities were carried out when students were all online or at least the majority on an arranged and determined day and hour of the day, usually on weekends to not to interfere with school weekdays. After every event or challenge, I could carry out some focused group interviews but when the school schedule did not help I used individual and online interviews as well. The challenges students faced every weekend were accompanied with EFL Online Guides I designed for them. All of

these activities, the online productions and interactions during the game-play were analyzed and discussed in this chapter.

The installation of the game, students´ initial steps inside WoW, natural occurring game-play, challenges students participated on weekends, posting on Facebook, giving solution to the EFL Online Guides and many other activities. Every of the previous mentioned situations that occurred during the implementation of the project allowed me to discover multiple modes of representations (pictures, videos, music, graphics, images, online texts) through which I identified a range of different literacy practices students routinely engaged in when they were immersed into the virtual environment of World of Warcraft. These literacy practices were multimodal.

Findings

After reading and commenting on all the online data, gathering the initial codes and grouping them, two main categories emerged. The first one answered the first research question and a second one arose to answer the second question.

Now it becomes suitable to take a view to the chart 2 of research questions and categories of the study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	**CATEGORIES**
What literacy practices emerge when EFL students participate in World of Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)?	In-game literacy practices & beyond-game literacy practices
What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World	Warcraft as a space for multiliteracies and EFL learning.

of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world?	

Chart 5. *Research Questions & Categories*
Source: *Own*

Categories

It becomes important in this section to describe the two resulting categories and the way they emerged. Samples from different data sources are also presented to illustrate the range of literacy practices EFL students engage in when they participate in a MMOG such as World of Warcraft. The data that is shown during this chapter reveals the important role that literacy practices play in the context of MMOGs for EFL students to carry out basic and simple activities in the game such as moving the avatar but also more complex and difficult ones like following directions or completing quests to gain experience and gold. Besides that, it is also shown the opportunities that videogames of this type offered in terms of language learning to my EFL students.

The first category called "*in-game literacy practices and beyond-game literacy practices"* has to do with all the moments, situations and sets of practices which implied reading and writing to accomplish several activities related to the game-play. This category encapsulates all of the occasions that granted students to use the target language for multiple purposes within the virtual world and out of it as well. Different stages inside the videogame such as creating the avatar, sending messages through chat box, making decisions, looking for assistance, reading quests, sending in-game letters and interacting with other players are literacy events part of this category. Furthermore, outside activities like doing online research, reading webpages or blogs, commenting on forums, posting on Facebook, consulting online dictionaries, having instant

message conversations and reading online tutorials are also literacy events which could be traced in this category.

Finally, this category explains the process students were involved during the 10 planned and designed activities of the pedagogical intervention (see Chapter IV).

The second category named *"Warcraft as a space for multiliteracies and EFL learning"* illustrates the language learning opportunities students faced through their participation in the Massively Multiplayer Online videogame (MMOG) likewise the pedagogical activities in EFL. This category explains the way in which an after-school context that included game-play situations and challenges encouraged the target language learning. Finally, this category outlines the way students immersed in a virtual world which challenged them to develop multiple literacies in a digital and virtual environment.

In-Game Literacy Practices & Beyond-Game Literacy Practices

The analysis of WoW as an environment of literacy practices resulted from the observation and recording of naturally- occurring everyday game plays interacting with my avatar-participants but also time that I dedicated to play online on my own as avatar-researcher. In this way, I could definitely observe, identify and describe the practices that L2 students routinely engage in when entering these types of virtual worlds.

This first category has relation to the different stages, instants and sets of practices that entailed reading and writing to achieve multiple tasks that has to do with the game-play. This category encloses all of the opportunities students were given to use the target language for distinctive goals inside the online game and beyond. Different stages inside the videogame

described above (page 61). Moreover, outside activities like doing online research, reading webpages or blogs, commenting on forums, posting on Facebook, consulting online dictionaries, having instant message conversations and reading online tutorials. From this category another sub-categories appeared as displayed in the diagram from Figure 40.



Figure 40. *EFL Literacy practices of Warcraft*

Source: *Own*

In-Game Literacy Practices

The literacy practices that I describe in this section of this chapter will be provided with the highest amount of characteristics and details based on the context of the game itself and the previously described activities students carried throughout the whole project.

Once my students became member and participants of the context of a Massively Multiplayer Online Game such as World of Warcraft it became evidently important, relevant and noticeable the amounts of readings that they had to deal with since the very first beginning of the game. In fact, "when children and adults play MMOGs, they read and write copious amounts of texts" (Steinkuehler, 2004, p. 301). In other words, students needed to read if they wanted to succeed once they entered the virtual world. In an interview done to Erick, a 14 years old student, who controlled the avatar called *Maxworgen* he stated:

"Teacher, I remember I had to read many things in the game, like when one is creating his avatar, the guides you gave to us, the speech of the other avatars and also when one is receiving quests in the game" (Interview entry, November 2nd, 2014).

When running the game for the first time the initial step and decision students made was the creation of an avatar or character that permitted their entrance to WoW. In this sense players are given two options to choose: Do you want to be member of the Alliance or do you want to fight for the Horde?



Figure 41. *Students making decision their side and race in the game.*

Source: *Own*



Figure 42. *Male and female versions of some races and classes of the avatars.*
Source: *Own*

In Figure 41 we can see how both sides provide students with 6 different options of races and 10 classes to be selected. Then, in Figure 42 it is shown how the physical appearance of the avatars are modified according to the male or female version available to choose for the character. Finally, a space for titling the avatar is also given.

After students make the decision of belonging to the blue side (Alliance) or red side (Horde) now they are able to choose the race and class of avatar he or she wants to use in the virtual world. In one hand, the classes are the same for both parties, this means being member of the Horde or the Alliance they can strictly select among 10 classes to be Warrior, Paladin, Hunter, Rogue, Priest, Death Knight, Shaman, Mage, Warlock or Druid. On the other hand, when selecting the race the options vary according to the party. For instance, in the Alliance students can choose to be Human, Dwarf, Night Elf, Gnome, Draenei and Worgen while in the Horde they can be Orc, Undead, Tauren, Troll, Blood Elf and Goblin.



Figure 43. *Students decide gender, class and physical attributes of their avatar.*
Source: *Own*

It is remarkable to state that every race and character has its male and female versions, so students have to choose just one of them. The point here is that, for gamers to choose the race and class of their avatar, the WoW game provides a text with main characteristics and a brief history about both: the race and the class (Figure 43). In other words, initial players are given the

chance to read the information (Figure 44) before making a good choice that will have effects on the avatar´s abilities in the virtual setting.



Figure 44. *Textual information about the race and class when creating an avatar.*
Source: *Own*

Besides that, there are available options to change their Skin Color, Face, Hair Style, Hair Color and Facial Hair in both genders: male and female (Figure 45).

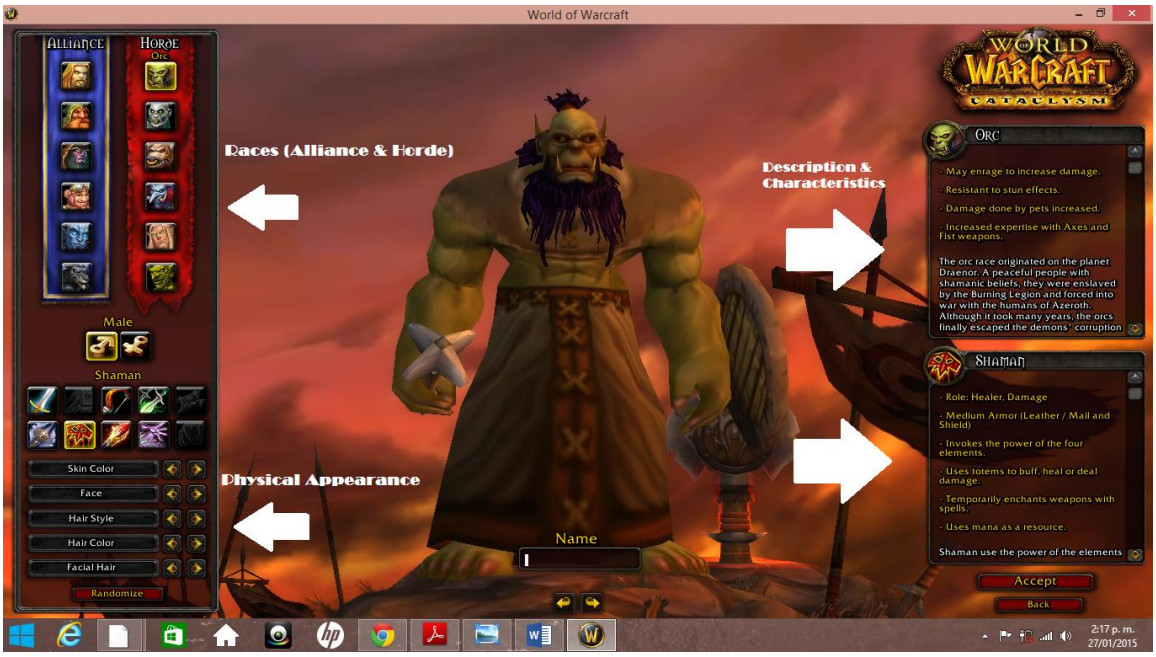




Figure 45. *Overall vision of creation of the avatars (male and female) (White font and symbols indicating Races, Physical Appearance and Description are edited by the researcher).*
Source: *Own*

Once the avatar is selected students write a name or title a nickname for it and they are ready to enter into the virtual environment.

From the seven participants of the study and the avatars genders, races and classes selected (pages 36-40) there was a tendency on the fact that almost all of the boys participating selected male characters except from one. Juan chose a female night elf magician called *Adhemi* which in his words fulfilled more his likes in terms of animation and visual avatars preferences. Secondly, from the seven avatars races 2 created Huargens (*Maxworgen & Eloisaca*), 2 Night Elves (*Adhemi & Lastonedavid*), 1 Dwarf (*Diegogarzon*), 1 Draenei (*Woltrax*) and 1 Human (*Sicodelic*). On the other hand, the predominant class was Mage with 3 avatars (*Adhemi, Sicodelic & Woltrax*), then 2 Warriors (*Diegogarzon & Lastonedavid*) and finally 1 Hunter (*Maxworgen*) and a Warlock (*Eloisaca*).

One of the starting and most common activities to perform is *doing quests* which primarily teaches the player how to basically move around WoW. The results of the study showed that giving solution to doing quests was seen as one of the most challenging tasks for EFL learners to do inside the World of Warcraft due to the considerable amount of text that they have to deal with to reach the goal. The following excerpt shows that reality *"inside this videogame one has to read many instructions and things like that in order to understand missions and the game itself"* (Andres, Interview, October 22nd).

For those who have not played WoW, when you start the game you are a Lvl 1 Avatar and one of your goals is to level it up by gaining experience. One of the most proficient ways to gain experience is by doing quests given by some other avatars controlled by the game. So, after you perform some series of actions such as finding someone, bringing objects or killing a boss, you complete the quest and you receive some experience and armor to improve the abilities of your character.

For EFL learners, it becomes a complete challenge to complete the quests since they argue that they really have to read and comprehend the objective of the quest to complete it and at the same time it is there when they truly test their vocabulary and reading skills. "Woltrax", one of the participants of the study argued that: *"When I am given a quest I have to read it to go and complete it. I have to read it because if I don´t read it I would not know what I have to do. I would not know that, sometimes it is not about killing the monsters but talking to them or something like that"* (Woltrax, interview 12.11.2014).



Figure 46. *Quests or missions assigned inside the game.*
Source: *Own*

In Figure 46 we can see an example of an initial quest at the game. Most of the quests are provided as problems we have to give solution to. Then, a description of the causes of the problem is presented and your role as the problem solver as well. Then, the objective of the quest is given and a final reward awaits for the student if he/she successfully reaches the goal, which usually is to kill monsters or bosses and to collect items to deliver to the quest assigner that in this case is Ilthalaine. Bearing this in mind, quests or missions can be seen as a literacy practice inside the virtual world which requires reading comprehension at a high level.

The next feature of World of Warcraft which implies reading and writing inside the game is the chat room. The chat session is a particular and special characteristic of Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) which main function is to allow interaction and

communication among the players through text, numbers, symbols or emoticons. The chat is used to accomplish several and multiple purposes through specific chat channels. Squire & Steinkuehler (2005) identified that these chatrooms were rich sources of information in relation to literacy studies.



Figure 47. *Chatroom with several chat channels to use inside the game.*

Source: *Own*

In figure 47 we are able to observe there are nine chat channels (*Say, Party Chat, Raid, Battleground, Guild Chat, Yell, Whisper, Emote, and Reply*) in which each of them has a defined function and color to use in different situations. For instance, the say channel (white font) is used to speak in public so anyone around can see.

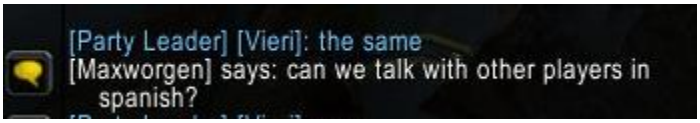


Figure 48. *Say Channel (White Font)*

According to Figure 48, Maxworgen and I were having a talk in the Party Chat (blue font) but suddenly he changed the channel and wrote a question in the Say channel (white font). This means, that any other possible player around us could see the question he wrote to me meanwhile the blue font text could only be perceived by just the two of us.

The Party chat (blue font) is exclusively seen by a group of maximum 5 people while in the Raid chat (orange color font) one can interact with 25 players at the same time. The battleground channel (light orange font) is useful to write to a maximum of 10 people in a field of battles, the Guild Chat (green font) can be exclusively perceived by the members of your guild while in Yell channel (red font) anyone with some meters of distance can read what you shouted. The use of whisper (pink font) is a private message, which can be read just by one person and might be responded with the Response channel and command as well. Finally, emote (font) refers to several actions that the avatar can perform such as dancing, clapping, telling a joke, giving a hug, etc.

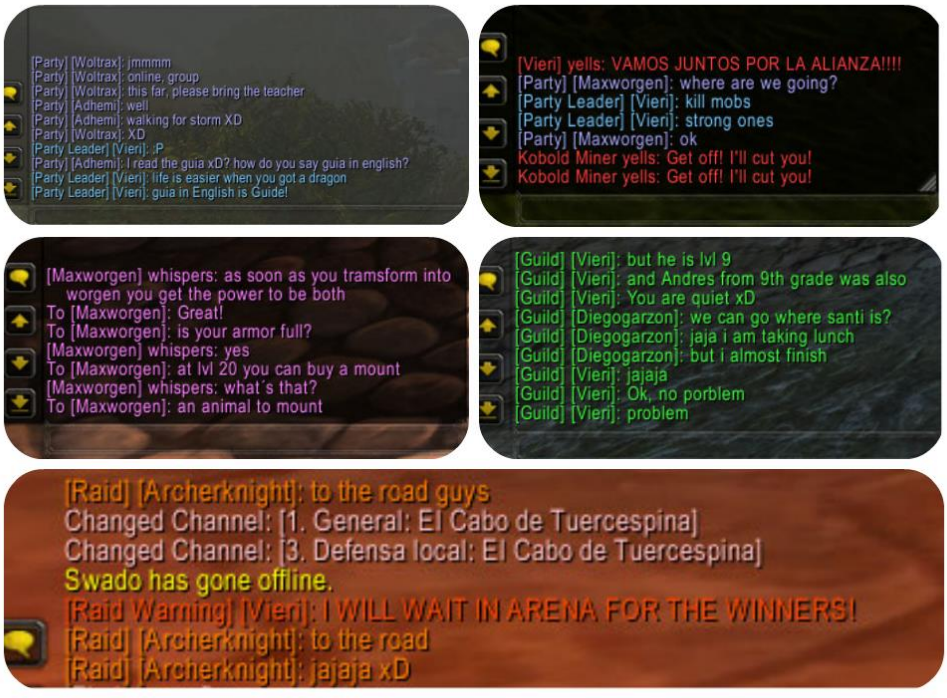


Figure 49. *Students using the different chat channels for different audiences and purposes inside the game.*
Source: *Own*

In Figure 49 it is evident the use students gave to the different chat channels during the natural game-play and the pedagogical activities carried out as challenges. At the beginning (forward on pages 111-112) most of the students presented difficulties to write in the Guild chat or how to handle with the different options the game offers. However, with the passing of time students learnt to acquire expertise on writing in Warcraft. Then, it can be argued that their literacy practices, interaction and communication with others inside the game increased as a consequence of their mastery of the chat channels and engagement.

Consequently, communicating in a MMOG like WoW seems not to be a simple task to do as one might think. For a gamer student to communicate an idea in the chat box it requires them to master all of the different channels or commands but also the ability to switch from one chat to another to read what others write and convey different ideas to different audiences inside the game. I could evidence the mastery of these elements with the passing of game-time with my students as it is displayed in the following sample.

Diegogarzon (name of the avatar) joined our Guild "Inmortal Gods", which was the name we all democratically voted for the Guild´s name in the classroom. Inside the game, the different guilds have a private chat room exclusively seen by the members of it. As soon as *Diegogarzon* and every participant joined the guild, I had to teach them the way they could pass from one channel to another. In this case, how to write in the Guild Chat (green font) so everyone could see the message he wanted to convey to interact since four members were online at the same time (*Maxworgen, Dsantiagoc, Diegogarzon and my avatar Vieri*).

The procedure started when I asked Diego through a private message to try writing in the Guild Chat room, then I provided some initial instructions for him (see Figure 50).

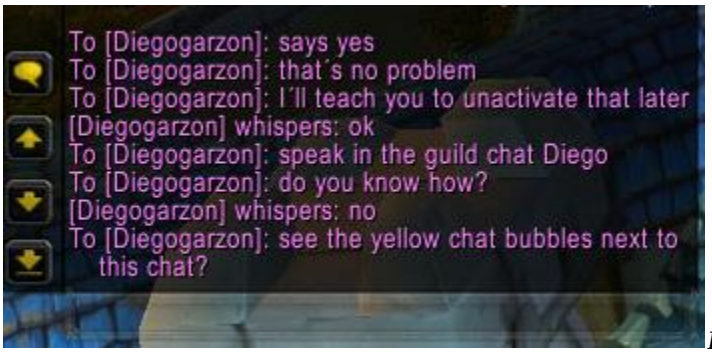


Figure 50. *Initial instructions to write in the Guild Chatroom.* **Source:** *Own*

Later on, I write in the target channel (Guild Chat) as an invitation and example for him to follow. Then, Maxworgen showed up with a question that I immediately gave solution to with another final exchange as can be seen in Figure 51.

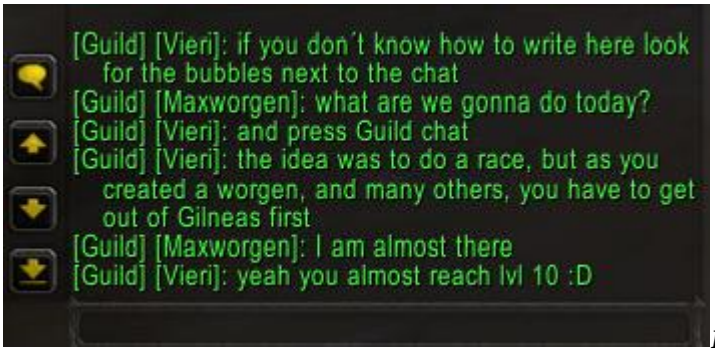


Figure 51. *Invitation and example.* **Source:** *Own*

In Figure 52 we can witness that Diego kept answering to me in the private chat room he already knew how to handle. However, I continued supplying more directions and instructions so he could reach the goal. I tried to be more specific, to go step by step and a final command was given.



Figure 52. *Specific instructions.* **Source***: Own*

Eureka! Diego, could finally accomplish the goal of following the instructions and learned how to use the Guild chatroom to communicate with the other members of the project. I felt happy and congratulated him for his advance as can be observed in Figure 53.



Figure 53. Goal obtained by the student. **Source:** Own

Then, Figure 54 shows us Diego noticed Maxworgen wrote "sorry gotta go" because now he was able to see the Guild interactions, use the chat and master the commands to do it, then he asked:

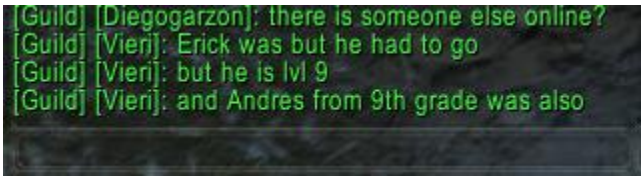


Figure 54. *Mastery of the goal.* **Source:** *Own.*

Steinkuehler (2004) asserts that due to the several communication channels that MMOGs enable to use, some minutes of game play becomes in hundreds of students´ letters and words production when they are holding different conversations (for instance, Guild, Party, Whispers, Public channels) at the same time. In this case, giving solution to a problem of the game that seemed basic to solve required a good amount of teacher and student written production in the target language. For instance, making questions, presenting instructions, answering and motivating were some of the input and output presented during these exchanges.

This exercise with Diego was a good example to illustrate what Gee (2007) named as "situated meaning", one of the good principles of videogames in learning, for all the language used in the game. He asserts that:

> …the meaning of such language is always associated with actions, experiences, images and dialogue. Furthermore, players get verbal information "just in time", when they can apply it or see it applied, or "on demand" when they feel the need for it and are ready for it. (p. 116)

In other words, if I had explained all the procedure in a lab session (class) or just transmitted the instructions with no experience related to it the results of the process would have been different or unexpected. It is reasonable to think that the student facing the problem by himself in a specific context, experiencing failure and success led him to find a solution to the situation rather than if he was given the solution in a handbook or a set of rules.
Additionally, it is evident that whispering, using emoticons, plain text, symbols, abbreviations can be considered as emergent literacies, which are part of what Gee (2003) defines as semiotic domains.

Another form of reading and writing that EFL students engage in when they are playing WoW is the production of letters as a way to communicate among different members of a same guild or any user within the game. These letters have a particular characteristic in the game due to the fact they are written and sent in a "traditional way". This means, for student to send a letter he or she has to reach a mail box, open it and write the message, which has a cost in copper coins. Then, the addressee receives a notification on screen and for him/her to read the mail or reply to it has to do the same procedure.



Figure 55. *Requesting letter sent to my mailbox asking for information of an item by Jose (Sicodelic)*

Source: *Own*

The previous Figure 55 shows an example of an in-game letter sent by Sicodelic, one of the pseudonyms used by Jose, a participant of the project, in which we can find some characteristics of a formal letter such as an initial greeting *"Good Afternoon Sir Vieri"*, a body and a farewell *"Best regards"*. He sent the letter to me while I was not logged on playing WoW with the intention of getting an answer to solve a problem he identified: to enhance his avatar abilities by wearing a more powerful necklace than the one he had. These types of texts help students to make decisions about actions they will or will not take in the game (Gee, 2003).

In this letter, we can see it is a formal request which demonstrates student´s management of formal aspects of English as a foreign language such as: Greetings, Modal Verbs and use of Auxiliaries such as Do and Does to make questions and Present Simple as the main tense to convey ideas. What is so interesting about this sample is that David considered himself in

interviews as “bad at English”. Even though there was a weakness in the use of proper punctuation and question marks in his letter, it is evident he exhibited proficiency at formal aspects of the language (grammar use) and the way a formal request in EFL is presented in Jose´s letter as well.

In WoW, there are multiple ways to get your avatar´s abilities as powerful as you can and many factors such as the tree talents, the armor, the spells, the glyphs, among others determine those statistics of powerfulness.

In that way, the better the characteristics of your armor are, the stronger you get. So, collecting better clothes for your avatar in some way ensures that you reach that goal. In this case, this was what Jose and his avatar Sicodelic were looking for. To do it so, he and all the players had to collect around 19 items (Figure 56) which started from covering their heads, using a necklace and two rings until getting a big weapon or wearing suitable boots for their avatar´s feet. Finally, to make that decision students had to read the description of each piece of armor and choose the one they thought it was most efficient to be stronger in the game.



Figure 56. *Complete equipment, armor and statistics of an avatar in the game.*

The previous issue of how Jose was getting armor for his Sicodelic character in such an engaged way started to trigger more and more my interest and I let him know it in an interview we held. It was a great surprise for me to see how students not only engaged with in-game literacy practices but there was something more, something beyond that I did not expect to happen. Honestly, an online tool that although all of the time that I had been playing WoW, I never knew or accessed to it before, something that changed the knowledge and access to information about this online game. This tool will be discussed fuller forward in the literacy practices students engaged when they were out of the game (page 127).

All of the literacy practices that I previously mentioned occurred during the game-play (in-game literacy practices) but after each observation of events and interviews took place I could identify some other activities (beyond-game literacy practices) that were taking place out of the game itself. In what follows, I identify those practices in deep and the diversity of forms and outlines in which they were represented.

Beyond-Game Literacy Practices

Literacy, in the context of online games, becomes a powerful tool to communicate and carry out many activities while the gamer is playing or even when he or she is not doing so (Gee, 2003, 2007, Steinkuehler 2004). However, there were some other events, which went beyond and moved out of the online game. Students´ abilities to easily collect, store and send pictures, videos and text have changed the way we communicate and make sense of the different ways of communication. According to O´rourke (2005) this situation has created a need for "more complex "readings" and processing of information" (p. 1).

In other words, the capacity we have to communicate through new media, such as videogames, was pointed out as *multiliteracies.* This term was initially used by the New London Group (2009) in response to the changes in communication around the world. These academics pointed out that we are able to communicate linguistically, spatially, aurally, using gesture, visually and in various modes by making sense in a situated community. In this case, I identified and analyzed events which I codified as *multiliteracies to look for additional information*. To exemplify the events that took place during the implementation of the pedagogical intervention some samples are presented.

At the very beginning, students were informed about the necessary requirements (time, a computer and internet connection) to start working on this new project during laboratory sessions (see pages 57-66). In this case, I had the opportunity to work with students who were experienced video gamers but also with no experienced ones.

In a presentation on a lab session 2, I explained to them all of the procedure and steps to install the game and start playing it (pages 61-62). However, after the session was over I could notice how some difficulties still arose and students wrote to me asking for assistance into those technological issues. He attached a screenshot of his PC screen which showed an alert message notifying his issue to log on the game (Figure 57).



Figure 57. *Student e-mail informing about his difficulties to enter the game.*
Source: *Own*

As a consequence and due to the fact this project was an after-school context, little time in the school was dedicated for the game, I decided to design, create and share an online tutorial (Figure 58) which enabled students´ success on their initial steps in the videogame such as installing the game and creating their first avatar.

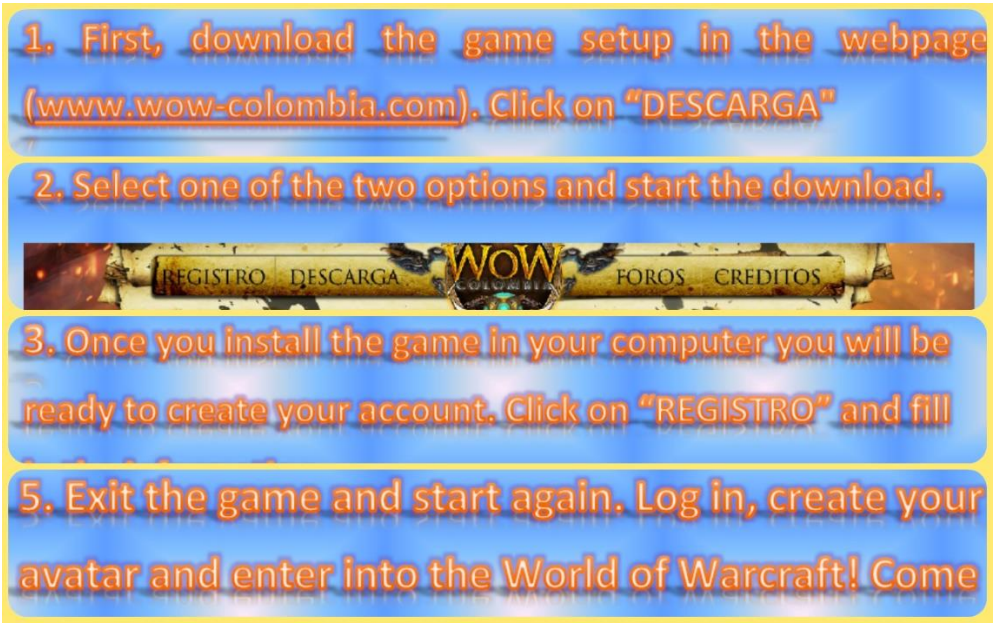


Figure 58. *Collage of some instructions provided in the Online Tutorial.*
Source: *Own*

Those conversations initially took place in my e-mail but then another problem popped up. I started to receive many e-mails with almost all of the same questions and giving response to them in the same way, creating long chains of standard and repeated conversations through e-mails (Figure 59).



Figure 59. *Exchange of e-mails for initial steps inside the game.*

Source: *Own*

Figure 59 shows a very common and usual problem that happened at the beginning of the game. I could not find his character inside the videogame, probably because of spelling mistakes in the name, then the amount of e-mails increased as students found more difficulties in their initial steps in the videogame and I could not keep a track of the different situations in an organized way via e-mail. So that it was there, when we decided to use a different channel of communication. This new tool permitted to cover and share all of the solutions to the technological difficulties we found at the beginning in an easier way. We created a Facebook community or group called: *Inmortal Gods*, which was the name we chose four our Guild inside the game as seen in Figure 60.



Figure 60. *Students with their avatars belonging to Inmortal Gods, the guild name.****Source:*** *Own*

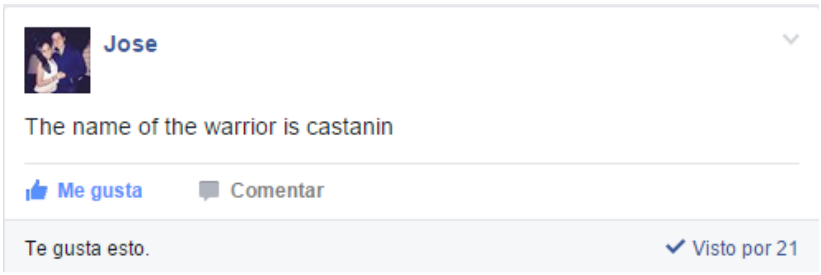
Uploading the Tutorial file to students was done with two purposes: First, in order to help students clarify their doubts or difficulties about the technical complications they may encountered and secondly, to avoid receiving more emails with a body of repetitive questions. So, in this way the creation of the Facebook group was a very accurate and suitable way to accomplish in a more organized way these objectives (Figure 61).



Figure 61. *Tutorial Uploaded in the Facebook Group.*

Source: *Own*

Surprisingly, the exchanges that occurred through e-mail immediately took place in this new way of communication, such as informing the success of the installation process and the creation of the characters (Figure 62).



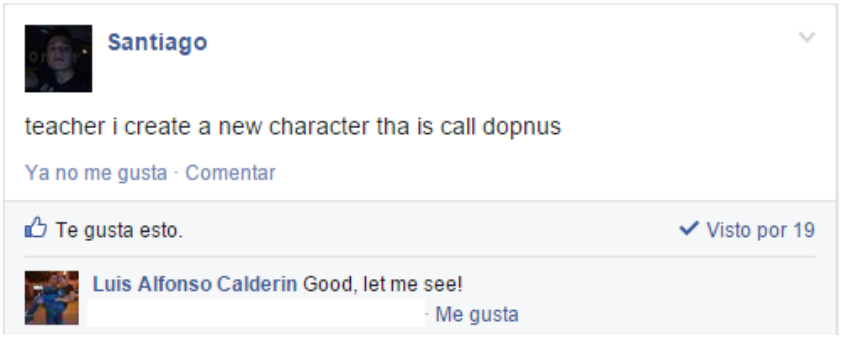


Figure 62. *Students´ posts reporting their characters´ names.*
Source: *Own*

My students started to use the Facebook group more frequently to read about all of the instructions that I gave to them such as meetings time, events dates and rules, online material and technological configurations of World of Warcraft. However, it was fascinating when they started to post, write and comment about some own achievements and events that occurred during their game-play. For instance, "Maxworgen" posted how he learned to mount for the first time when he reached level 20 for the first time (Figure 63).



Figure 63. *Maxworgen´s achievement posted on the Facebook Group.*
Source: *Own*

Then, I started to notice how students were encouraged not to write just to the teacher but also to share their effort and achievements with the rest of the students, who congratulated them using a motivating language. In the previous sample, it is evident how Juan

expressed his kindness about Erick´s achievement in relation to his new mount: a level 20 tiger when he stated "good mount" (Figure 63).

During the project, some events were announced through the use of the Facebook group. Students also posted questions about the dates of the events and dialogic interactions among them could be seen in their posts. These interactions mostly permitted students to receive valuable information in regards of the date and time the events were held for the project (Figure 64).

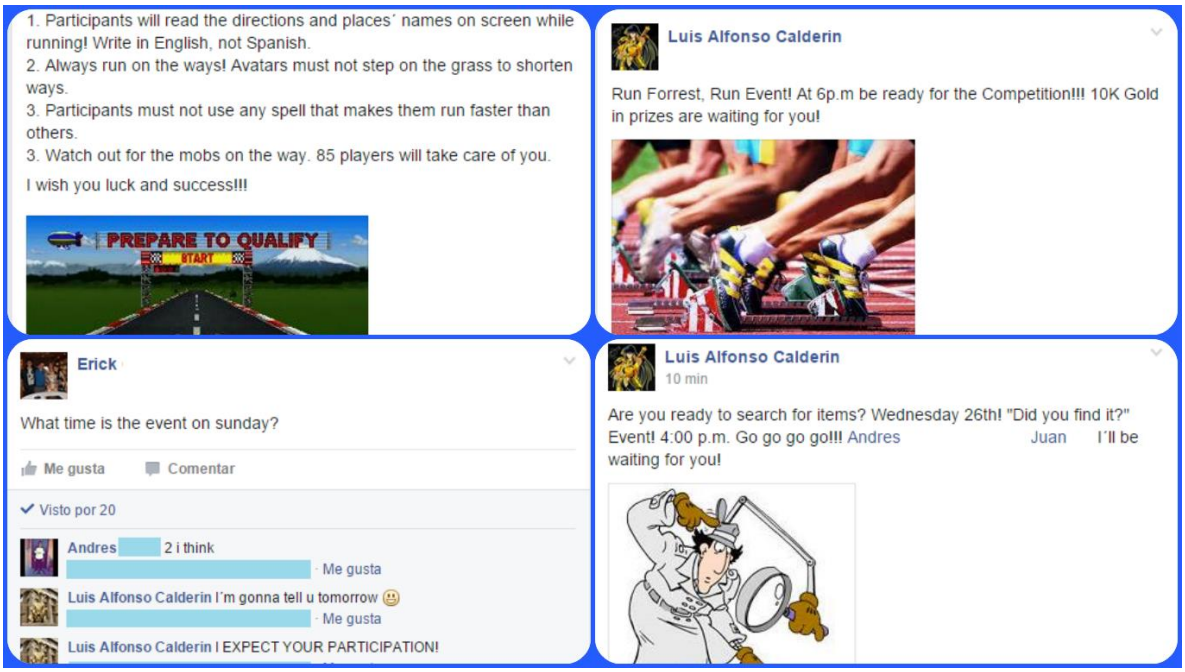


Figure 64. *Collage with different events announcements on Inmortal Gods, our Facebook Group.*
Source: *Own*

Figure 63 is an example of how the outside of Warcraft tool we decided to implement worked in a very effective way. We can see in the upper left part the rules of the second challenge previous to the competition. Secondly, to the right a motivating message and reminder was also posted before the start of the activity. In the lower left side of the figure we can see how Erick interacted with Andres to ask about the time of the online meeting for the challenge. Finally, an announcement about the date and time of an event took place.

The “Inmortal Gods” Facebook Group became a powerful means of communication in the project for those events, such as “A Tour Around Stormwind” (pages 66-80) and “Did you find it” (pages 89-90), which implied extra material as an online guide to help students find the places or objects inside the game. In this way, the online group could suitably accomplish three functions as can be evidenced in Figure 65:

1. The digital guides were uploaded to the group by me as a researcher.

2. Students downloaded the guide from the group to their computers.

3. After the event was over, students gave solution to the guide and uploaded their work to be checked and receive feedback on it.



Figure 65. *Collage with teacher and students uploading their digital works in the group.*
Source: *Own*

Using the Facebook group as a complement for the events or activities we could not carry out inside the World of Warcraft (uploading & downloading documents, share personal achievements, etc.) implied more engagement in literacy practices. Now, my students were not only putting into practice their EFL literacy practices inside the virtual world but also beyond the game. The different images, pictures, videos, graphics and documents students used to read instructions, post, ask and answer questions, comment and propose solutions to issues had determined that students were communicating in a multimodal way. Literacy had become multimodal.

In another previous example we could see how *Sicodelic* sent a letter asking for my assistance because he was looking for a powerful necklace to wear on his avatar (page 114). In this excerpt from an individual interview, he was asked about the actions he took when he needed to find items in the game such as armor or weapons.

> Well, when I wanted something very specific about Warcraft I entered into a webpage that is called Wowhead and there I am given all the specifications of the game, let us say, all the necessary, one is taught how to level the avatar up, the armor, the weapons. In the case of the hunters the pets one has to use, to level the professions up, the maps where one can level up faster. Many things are given to understand better the game. (Sicodelic, entry interview, October 8, 2014)

In a fieldnote entry, done after the observation of an online activity it was also evident that not only Sicodelic but also other students were having access to wowhead as a source of information, especially to look for specific information about the armor as could be evidenced as follows.

> Adhemi specially said one thing that called my attention: "I looked in the Wowhead". Wowhead is an external webpage in which you can find many items and objects like armor, mounts, potions, among others related to the World of Warcraft. It is a source of information similar to a Wiki for WOW players. This meant that Adhemi looked for extra information outside the game in Wowhead about the armor he needed to become "twink". (fieldnote entry, September 28th, 2014).

After the interview, I decided to take a look at the webpage www.wowhead.com to confirm the information that I received from Sicodelic and Adhemi. It was a great surprise to evidence all of the data that was stored in this website. Closer examination of it revealed that, in fact, wowhead serves as a complete data-base that enables WoW players to interact with a lot of functions and have access to several categories.

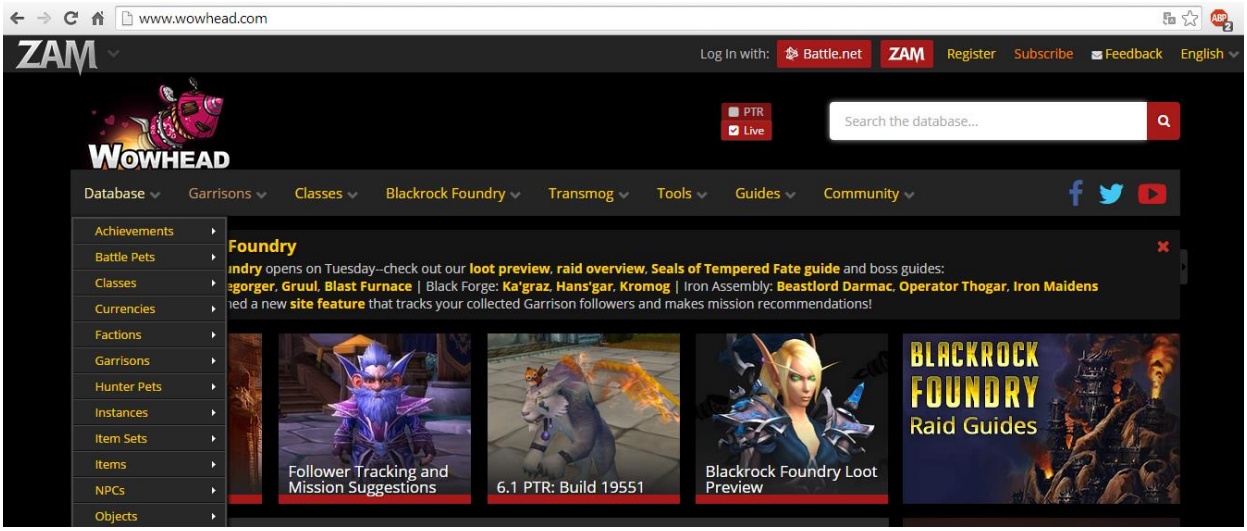


Figure 66. *Wow-head webpage interface.*

Source: *Own*

From the analysis done to the website this research concluded that Wowhead is a community-shared website, which includes a lot of reading to navigate and look for precise

information due to the several categories and data we can find. This webpage includes information such as:

- ✓ A complete guide to reach the individual and group achievements in the game. Every time your avatar achieves a goal the game congratulates it!
- ✓ Full description of abilities, talents and spells of each class and race of the game (Druid, Night Elf, Goblin, Tauren, Warrior, Mage, etc)
- ✓ Characteristics and attributes of all of the items of the game such as armor, weapons, quests items, consumables, mounts, bags, etc.
- ✓ The names of instances categorized by levels in which players can go and defeat their respective bosses.
- ✓ Solutions to all of the quests we find in the game.
- ✓ A rich and complete Battle pets and Hunter pets, the exact places where we can find and catch them.

It is in wow-head, the place where players can absolutely give solution to all of the doubts, questions and difficulties we have about the WoW videogame. Although information in the webpage is mostly presented as text we can also find different modes of representation such as hyperlinks, videos, images and sounds which help to complement or provide a better understanding of the information the gamer is looking for (Figure 67). The fact that the students participating in this project were consulting these data-base webpage just confirmed the idea that their searches unfolded a variety of multimodal ways to look for information about Warcraft.

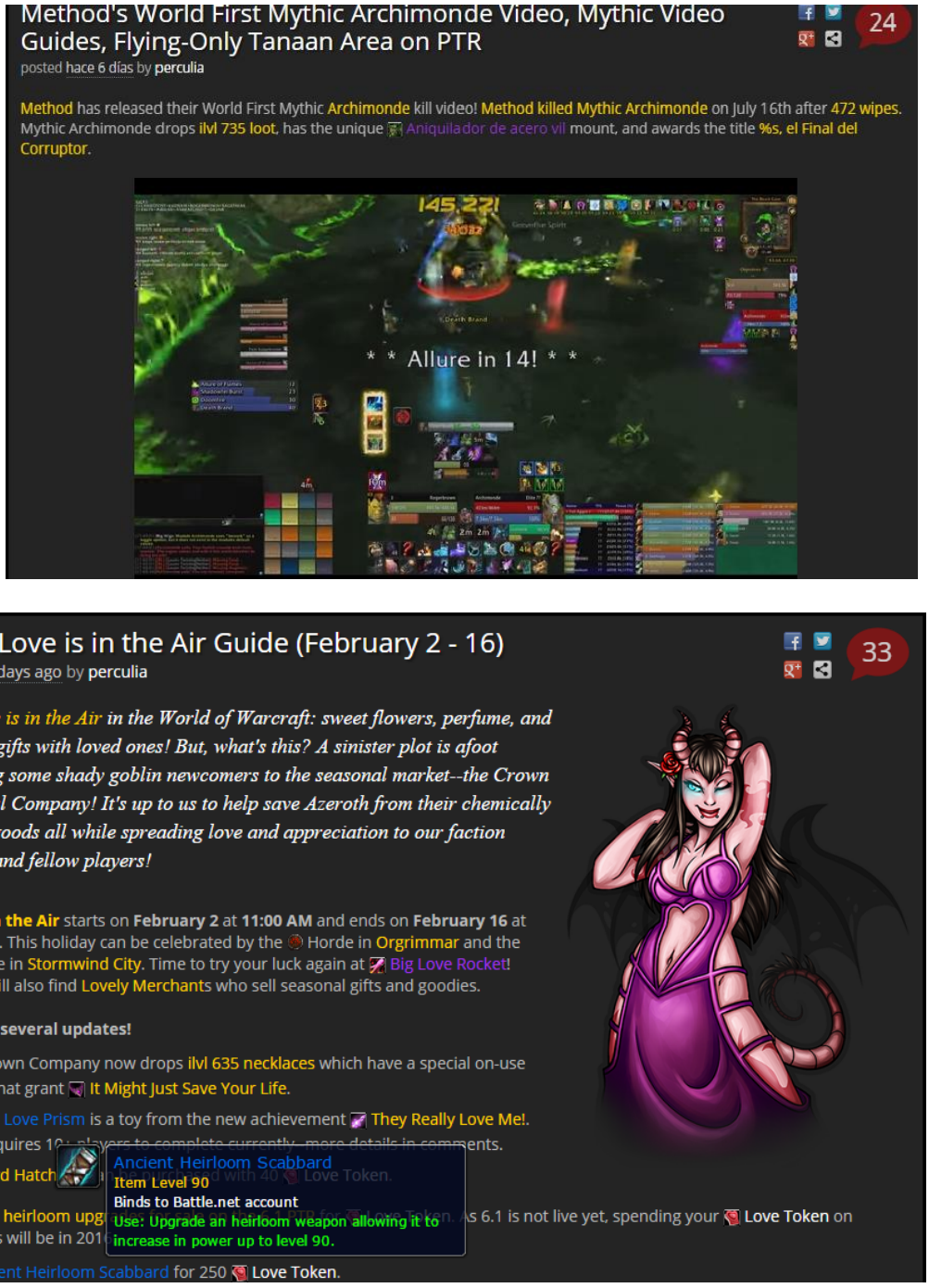


Figure 67. *Multimodal representations of Wowhead (videos, hiperlinks, images, sounds).*
Source: *Own*

Finally, Wowhead permits players to be updated about the latest items, weapons, mounts, potions, skills, pets, events and many other things which are directly related to the World of Warcraft. Every time Blizzard, which is the company that released the game, launches a new

patch or version about Wow the website immediately updates the information in it, so students find different and updated information every time the game changes, so does the data as well.

Another relevant event took place during the first big task which we carried out as an EFL community inside the game. The activity was called "A Tour Around Stormwind" and was basically designed with the purpose of simulating the process of living in the city of Stormwind. Students also had to locate different places inside the city and the use they gave to those places such as a bank, a barber-shop, a dock, among others (page 70).

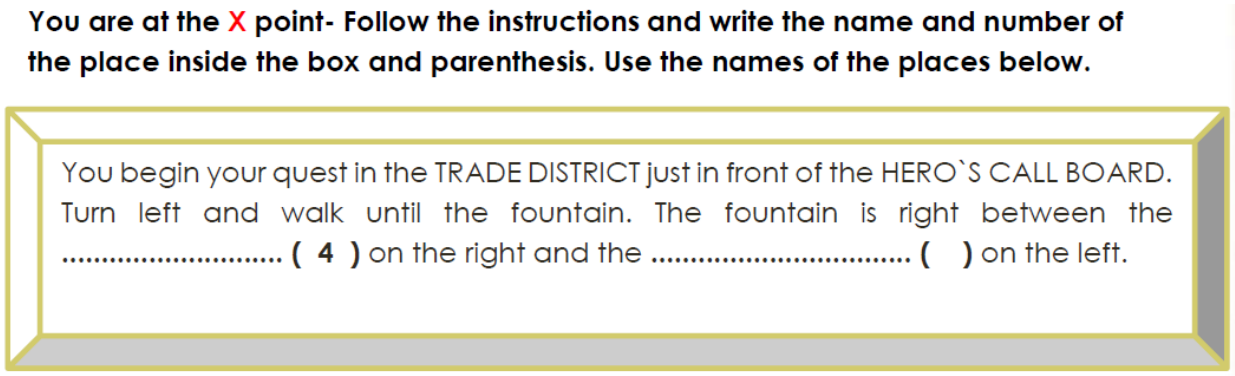


Figure 68. *An excerpt of the exercise from Challenge #1.*
Source: *Own*

Students had to give solution to a complete guide that I designed for them to reach the pedagogical goal mentioned before (pages 66-80). This means that students had to look at the guide and perform the actions with their avatars inside the virtual world at the same time. Once they finished with all of the instructions, exercises and tasks they were required, they published their productions in the Facebook Group.

Finally, after this "Tour Around Stormwind" activity was over I decided to find out about the impact that the activity had on my students through an interview. In one of the questions

related to the possible use of any tool to give solution to the task proposed in the guide, "Woltrax", a 9th grade student responded to it as follows:

> Teacher: Did you use any tool that allowed you to solve this first challenge?
>
> Woltrax: (laughs) my brain and the dictionary.
>
> Teacher: Well, and what was the first thing you did when you found that difficulty out?
>
> Woltrax: Well, I carefully looked all the place, then I looked the name that was the most suitable. After that, I searched in the dictionary the meaning and I organized the words (interview transcription, Oct 11-2014).

The previous excerpt revealed that although EFL students were encouraged to read and write by using a strategic teaching activity such as an authentic material (workshop) they also looked for extra reading resources like dictionaries as a support to solve the challenge they were facing. From that view, looking for unknown words and reading meanings in a dictionary became the second event which confirmed that literacy practices, in a multimodal way, were taking place not only inside the virtual world of Warcraft but also beyond the game. More specifically, information literacy (NCREL as cited in Serim, 2004).

Warcraft as a space for Multiliteracies and EFL learning

The second category named "Warcraft as a space for multiliteracies and EFL learning" illustrates the language learning opportunities students faced through their participation in the Massively Multiplayer Online videogame (MMOG) likewise the pedagogical activities in EFL. This category explains the way in which an after-school context that included game-play situations and challenges encouraged the target language learning. Finally, this category outlines

the way students immersed in a virtual world which challenged them to develop multiple literacies in a digital and virtual environment.

In studies carried out in United States (Steinkuehler 2004, 2011) and Canada (Sanford & Madill, 2007) described how some news reports, academics and researchers had stated that students playing video games was not beneficial for the development of their literacy abilities, and that playing videogames was replacing meaningful literacy activities for their children such as reading aloud or reading printed media. Bearing this in mind, the fact that I also evidenced how many parents and teachers from Celestin Freinet school believed prohibition for students from playing videogames was the most suitable solution to literacy-related problems in different subjects such as English, Language arts, social studies and so on (See Chapter I) led to an important query. This fact brought up to the question whether what definition of literacy was being taken into consideration to support this statement.

First of all, let us try to consider a look at the traditional literacy definition provided by UNESCO (2006) for Colombia as "the ability to read and write simple sentences" (p. 157) which is usually associated with printed texts. Belonging to an EFL community of online-gamers as the one this study focused on demonstrated that gamers do read and write simple sentences. Students participating in all of the different activities of the project, as it was illustrated in the first category, generated different literacy practices in EFL. The artifacts collected from students´ participation in multiple pedagogical tasks (challenges) evidenced they were able to read and write from a traditional perspective.

On the other hand, in response to the changes that media brought to the ways we communicate a body of ten remarkable scholars and academics known as the New London

Group (1996) adopted a different definition of literacy that goes beyond the mere ability of decoding letters and symbols on printed texts. They defined multiliteracies as:

> the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial, the behavioral and so on… particularly important in the mass media, multimedia, and in an electronic hypermedia. (p. 64)

This new term therefore endorses the distinctive forms of literacy practices this research encountered as *in-game and beyond-game literacy practices* in the digital setting discussed in the first category.

Lankshear and Nobel (2003), the North Central Regional Education Laboratory (as cited in Serim, 2004), UNESCO (2006) and Woody (2008) determined different elements for the contemporary literacy or multiliteracies. Thus, these elements enlightened the findings of this research in terms of the multiple forms of literacy presented in Warcraft. Through analyzing these elements and the recording and observation of students´ artifacts during game-play guided me to discover four elements of literacy that characterized students´ language learning as shown in Figure 69.

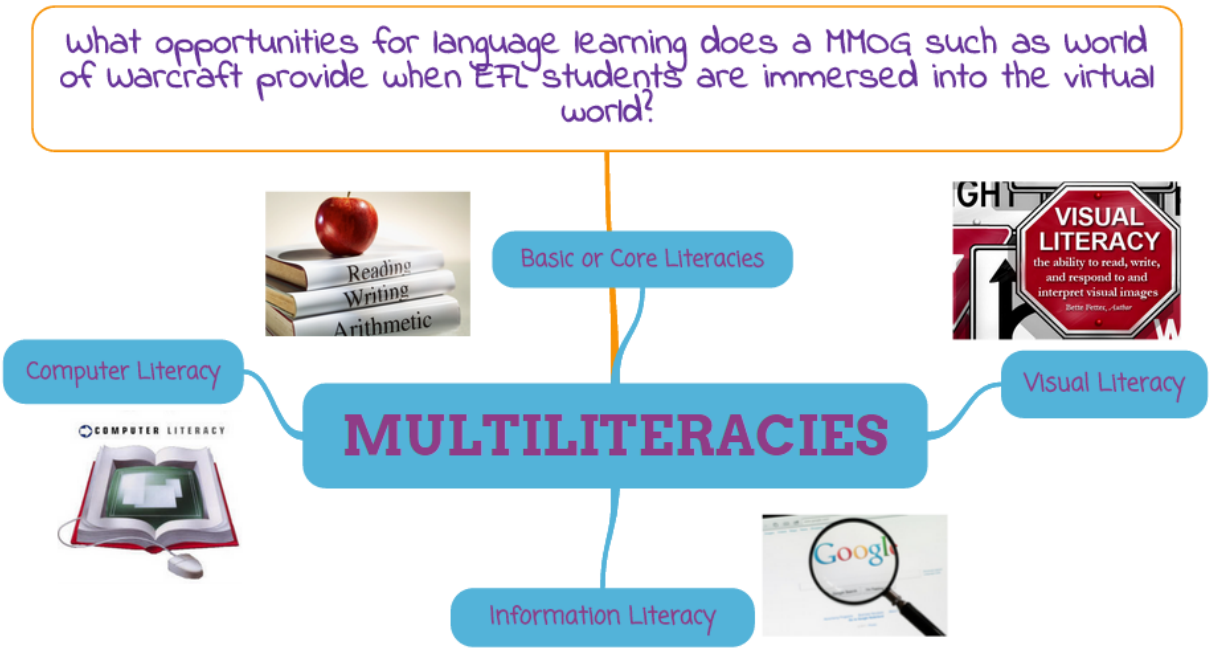


Figure 69. *Multiliteracies*
Source: Own

One of the most striking features of these works is the fact of recognizing that literacy must not be understood as merely the ability to read and write printed texts. For instance, in his influential work Forest Woody (2008) argues that "the reality is that literacy encompasses a wide range of individual functionalities" (p. 3), but also these functionalities can be measured in a scale of competency which goes from *beginner*, follows to *intermediate* and finishes with *advanced.* As a result of that, literacies are presented in different kinds and are interconnected.

Basic or Core Literacies

The first element that outlined students´ language learning was the practice of basic or core literacies related to the game. In a document published by UNESCO, the author Woody (2008) points out that *"this term still applies to the core or foundations literacies of learning*

how to read, how to write and how to perform simple numeracy tasks necessary in everyday life" (p.4). On top of that, these literacies are also known as "print literacies" because they were crucial to a society that was highly used to the print media. Eventually students developed core literacies during the first laboratory sessions through the reading and writing activities about the story of the videogame (Figure 70).

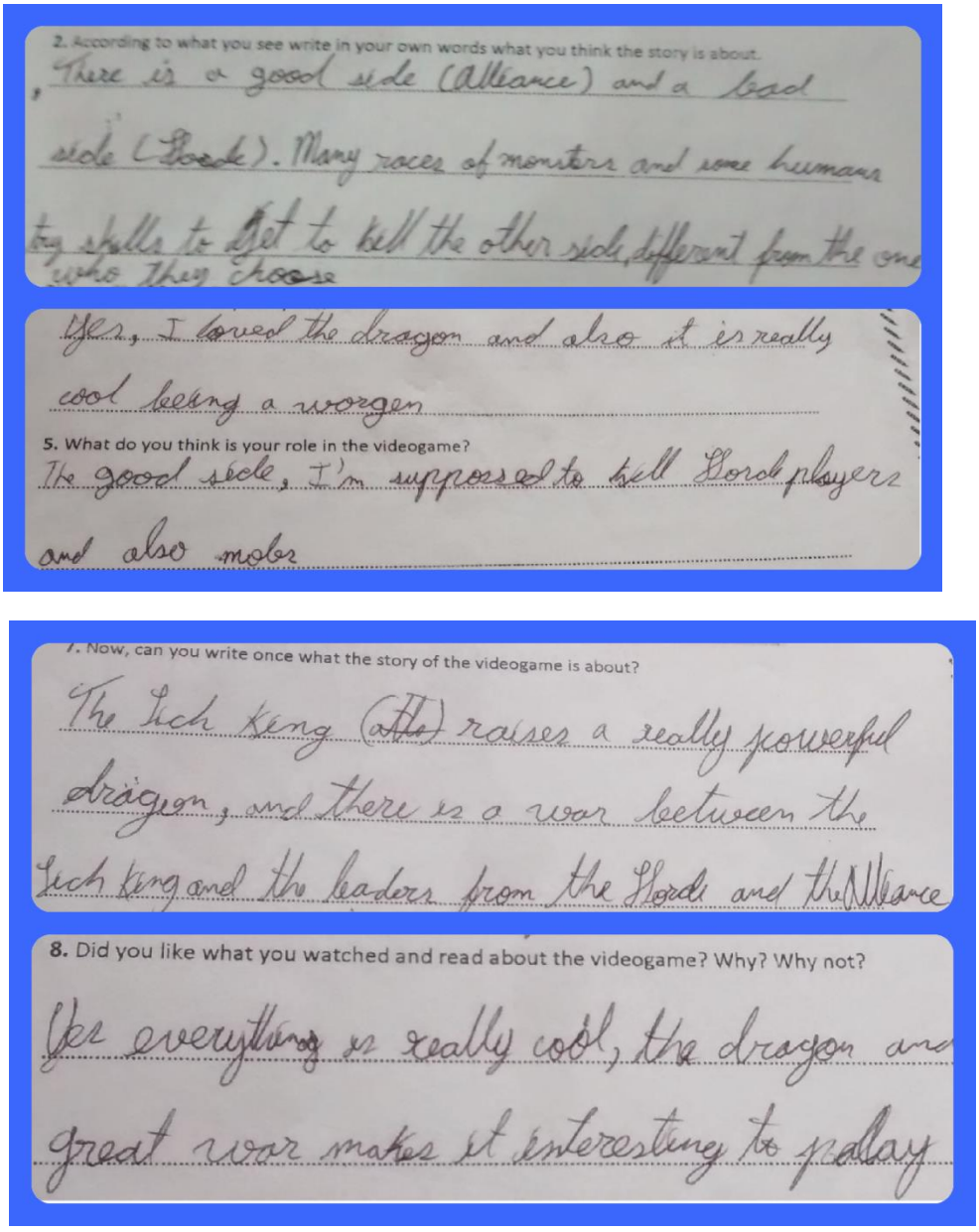


Figure 70. *Answers to the questions about the story of World of Warcraft.*

Source: *Own*

In Figure 71 we can observe students also emphasized on basic literacies when making the handcraft upon the physical description of their avatars.

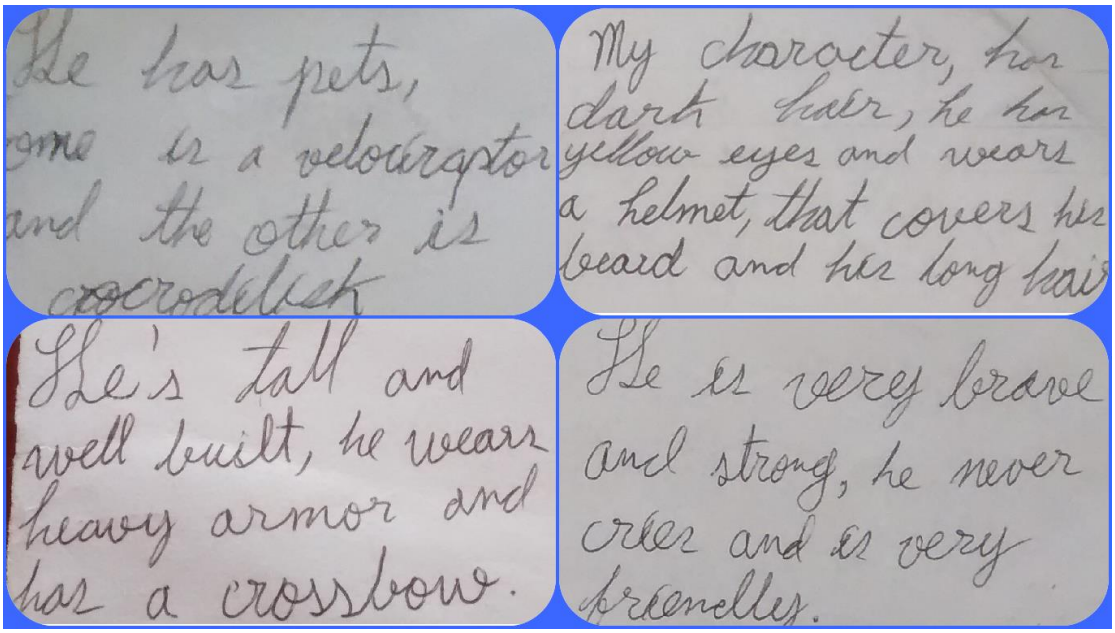


Figure 71. *Collage of a description of "Maxworgen", a student´s avatar.* **Source:** *Own*

Students´ participation in these activities induced the use of literacy practices in EFL. In the former, students responded to some open-ended and semi open-ended questions about the story of the video game based on some input, which were some videos and an assigned reading taken from the official website of World of Warcraft. In the latter, students provided a physical and personal description of their avatar or character in the game.

During the implementation of these tasks, students interacted with dictionaries, online applications and among themselves but they also asked for the teacher´s support and help. The questions were mostly related to vocabulary by using the prompt "Teacher, how can I say (Spanish word) in English?" or looking for my approval or correction to check understanding and a good grammar use.

There are grounds to believe that language learning and improvement in EFL took place during these sessions.

> "Well, I really liked the activity. I think it was a good exercise, it was very practical since we were not bored as a regular class but we were learning in an interactive way" (Jose, October 24th,2014).
>
> " Yes, it was something really good because we, young people who like videogames and English…is something very important and we have the two of them combined… it is a great way of teaching and learning" (Diego, October 25th, 2014).

Hence, students showed a big interest, commitment, willingness and attitude to accomplish their objectives. Despite the fact that they had strengths and weaknesses in regards to formal aspects of the language, their excitement and motivation played an important role. It seems to me that they felt so engaged that they did not want to do any mistake or at least present a very high-quality production of their game-related written tasks.

Visual Literacy

The second element that characterized EFL learning in the students were reading images and meaning making. The *New London Group* stated that literacy in the new century is the ability to identify and produce meanings in a particular semiotic domain, which in this case is a MMOG. Gee (2003) proposes a semiotic domain as a group of practices which are presented by multiple forms to convey varied kinds of meanings.

This definition can be connected and complemented to what the NCREL (as cited in Serim, 2004) puts as visual literacy when they determine it is "the ability to interpret, use, appreciate and create images and videos using both conventional and 21st century media in ways

that advance thinking, decision making, communication and learning" (p. 2). In other words, visual literacy has to do with making sense in a multimodal environment mediated by a technology device. In this case, WoW becomes the semiotic domain in which students interpret, appreciate and make sense of the virtual world they are dealing with.

In the previous element, we analyzed how this digital environment engaged students to read and write from a traditional perspective, which for the prodigious Brazilian educator Paulo Freire would be "reading the word". However, Freire & Macedo (1987) state that literacy has to go beyond that and students should learn how to "read the world". Hence, "every reading of the word is preceded by a reading of the world" (p.95). Taking Freire´s conception into consideration let us look at a picture about the initial interface of WoW and ask ourselves: How many people can read this world and make sense of each symbol, graphic or icon in it?



Figure 72. *Common interface of the game.*

Source: *Own*

In reality, if you are not a gamer or at least have previous experience with any Massively Multiplayer Online Game it is difficult to read this space. However, for those students who played in these virtual worlds all of these symbols, icons and graphics had a meaning and became a complete semiotic domain. To exemplify this concept I took Figure 72 and edit it by adding some titles to explain the process of sense making. This is how students read this world:



Figure 73. *Functions of all the elements presented in the interface of the game.*

Source: *Own*

In this sense, students get to master all of these functions and the use they give to each as a requisite to successful game- play in order to make appropriate decisions at precise times or events of the game (choosing an item, casting a spell, writing in the correct chat channel, etc.). For instance, in figure 73 (top left corner) the green and blue bars indicate all of the health and

mana points (blue bar) of the character. The mana points are necessary to cast the powers and especial spells of the avatar. Underneath, we can check the pet´s health and energy bar as well. Just to the right we can see a focus, which indicates exactly another avatar or object we are looking at to attack or interact with it. At the corner of the right top, we can see the "buffs", which are magic spells that mainly increase the avatar´s abilities and power when having a battle. Besides the "buffs" we can see the map, useful to have a sense of direction inside the different zones of the big World of Warcraft, to radar enemies or allies around and locating items such as mines or plants. In the bottom right corner, there are bags to save all of the items (potions, food and money), armor or weapon we consider useful for one's own avatar development. Next to the bags, we can find a micro menu used mainly to find information about your avatar such as armor, talents, achievements and spells. We can also use the micro menu to look for Dungeons and access to technical settings of the game such as graphics, sound, language, among others. In the bottom center of the screen there is a long bar with numbers from 1 to 9 including 0 and symbols (- =) which correspond to the spells bars where gamers can place the ones they consider suitable to attack or defend in a battle ground or duel. Above the spells bar we can find the experience bar, which displays the points we gain after killing a monster or completing a quest, also serves as a guide to determine how much remains to obtain the next level. In the bottom left corner is the chat box that provides access to communicate with different people through several chat channels.

Then, if we assume that visual literacy has to do with interpreting and making sense of language presented in a visual way in a situated environment. Then, there is a strong chance that Warcraft a Massively Multiplayer Online Game such as WoW encourages students motivated by videogames to read and write meanings using text, symbols, sounds, pictures, icons and gestures

that make up this type of videogame. Students who are video-gamers have demonstrated their abilities to not only participate, but also to become active literate members of these digital environments and complex semiotic systems, what the New London Group denominated in 1996 as "multiliteracies". In this process of becoming literate, students make sense of the world and themselves in that world, as can be evidenced in the interview I could have with "Woltrax" and "Maxworgen" who stated:

> I like this type of game because …as I explained just a moment… one creates the avatar as one wishes, as one likes it and also what one does with the character is mine, not like those games in which… let´s say.. a game in which all the world is just quests and only quests. On the contrary in role games there are many things to do, one goes around the entire map of the game, one can go wherever and whenever one wants to, there is no need to be in one place or another when the game says but when one prefers. (Felipe, October 25th, 2014)

> "I like role type games very much because you can do things you will never do in the real world" (Erick, October 18th, 2014).

Information Literacy

The third element that characterized EFL learning in the students was defined by their abilities to find and use information in an adequate way. A very complete definition of information literacy is provided by the NCREL (as cited in Serim, 2004) where it is denoted as: "the ability to evaluate information across a range of media; recognize when information is needed; locate, synthesize, and use information effectively; and accomplish these functions using technology, communication networks and electronic resources" (p. 3). Information literacy was presented in four strategies identified through recorded observations of game-play, teacher

field notes and interviews. First, students used dictionaries and digital translators to overcome difficult situations concerning language use presented during their game-play, for instance:

> "Sometimes I used the dictionary to remember words that I knew and had forgotten or some words I did not know" (David, October 16th, 2014).
>
> "I used the brain and the dictionary" (Felipe, October 24th, 2014).

When asked about the dictionary they used the majority of the students argued they used Google Translator as the main source of information to look up for meanings of unknown words. Second, students recognized people as sources of information, especially their teacher and peers in the project:

> "If I want to know something about the game I write to you [referring to me as a teacher] an e-mail and you respond the questions I have" (Erick, November 2nd).
>
> "I asked Diego [a peer from the project] about the information I needed about WoW" (David, November 5th, 2014).
>
> "When I was in trouble or I didn´t know something difficult like a quest or how to talk in the guild of the chat at the beginning I asked you [referring to me as a teacher] and I also bothered Santiago with some questions" (Diego, November 5th, 2014).

Students tried more than one thing when they needed information. However, one which strengthened the teacher-student relationship and enabled active participation in EFL was making questions to Vieri, the avatar controlled by the teacher regarding several situations students found in the game. In previous lines (page 104) Sicodelic sent a letter to my avatar in

order to solve his problem related to the armor of his avatar. Let me exemplify the language learning opportunities offered through information literacy in the context of Warcraft, a MMOG.

The example discussed in this section is taken from the data. In this exchange Maxworgen evidenced he had two main difficulties:

1. To get to the place where he could fix his weapons.

2. To understand and use some initial instructions about the correct use of the chat room.

1. **Vieri:** Hi! It´s me, your teacher! Answer by pressing "R".
2. **Maxworgen:** Where are you?
3. **Vieri:** far away xD. Need help?
4. **Maxworgen:** Where can I fix weapons?
5. **Vieri:** In the middle of the Gilneas city. Let me look for you. Did you already hange (spelling mistake) the game to English Language? Change* (correction)
6. **Maxworgen:** Yeah
7. **Vieri:** I am flying close to where you are. What are you doing?
8. **Maxworgen:** the quest of "by the skin of his teeth"
9. **Vieri:** Good! Let me get to where you are
10. **Maxworgen:** Completed the quest
11. **Vieri:** Talk to me in the other channel. Press shift + 7 and P
12. **Maxworgen:** My spellbook appears
13. **Vieri:** No, not only P. Press this symbol on your keyboard " / "
14. **Maxworgen:** My pet appears

15. **Vieri:** Ok, so, there is an icon on the left part of the chat which says “chat”, press the second option “party chat”.

According to the previous excerpt from my interaction with Maxworgen it is evident that literacy practices can be seen as a mean students used for solving inside-game problems. In this case the problem which motivated Maxworgen to use the language is that he needed to know a precise place where he could get his weapons fixed. In WOW, as you progress and kill “mobs” (monsters) to level your character up you might get damaged from monsters attacking on you. If you receive too many hits then you die, your armor gets weaker and you cannot fight well. Finally, you have to go to a special place where you can have your armor and weapons fixed to continue with the regular game-play. Then, the student needed to know this information and he could get it by using EFL literacy practices.

On the other hand it is evident how some technical difficulties arose as a result of the need of interacting, communicating ideas with another person inside the game, which in this case was I. The literacy practices that appeared in this part of the excerpt were given as a consequence of a need to solve an immediate problem: to know how to write in another chat room with a different purpose.

During the development of this activity, we could see how the literacy practices which arose were taken from a problem the participant had and a goal to be accomplished: to repair his weapons. In other words, Maxworgen was motivated to read and write questions in English related to information about the places as a means to achieve a personal goal.

The third strategy students used when looking for information in the game was to try repeatedly until they reached the goal. What is more, students reread to have success in the game or when they faced some obstacles such as being stuck:

"Sometimes I had to read carefully and read two or more times because I was doing wrong. I did not have to kill the mobs but talk to them in some quests" (Jose, October 24th,2014).

"I keep trying and trying until I can pass that part of the game" (Diego, October 25th, 2014).

On the one hand, students used rereading the information and trying many times as strategies. On the other hand, they did not perceive that "trying and trying" is a way of looking for information as well (Steinkuehler, 2004).

Finally, students used information sources inside the game and out of it. Inside the game they read the help info or hints provided by Warcraft. Out of the game they consulted specialized web-pages such as Wowhead and forums but also video tutorials from Youtube:

> "Well, when I wanted something very specific about Warcraft I entered into a webpage that is called Wowhead" (Diego, October 8th, 2014).
>
> "Sometimes I asked in forums or commented there to find for solutions" (Erick, October 11th, 2014).
>
> "I watched some videos in Youtube to watch how it must be done" (David, October 9th, 2014).

As stated before, one of the indicators that students are information literates is the ability to perceive why and when they need information (NCREL as cited in Serim, 2004). It is highly probable that students from the project recognized they needed information when they were

stuck in the quests of the game or the challenges designed for the pedagogical intervention to achieve different purposes.

Computer Literacy

The fourth element that outlined students´ language learning was the practice of computer abilities oriented to the installation of the game. Computer literacy is known as "the efficient ability to know how to use and operate computers" (Woody, 2008, p. 5). According to Forest Woody, hardware literacy explained as dealing with the tangible components plus their operations in a computer and software literacy defined as handling with the intangible procedures and instructions to carry out processes are categories that make up the computer literacy. These elements were evidenced in the following situation.

After the initial laboratory sessions students started logging in the game and having success with the installation. However, difficulties did not end at this point since there was a couple of students, who were Mac users and could not have the game yet. Therefore, I found an online article and told them to read it and follow the procedure explained in it (Figure 74).



Figure 74. *Finding out possible solutions for students who used Mac laptops.*

Source: *Own.*

David and Mariana tried again after reading the forums post that I recommended to them where it said they had to download some new files and replace them for the old ones.

Nonetheless, it was not enough and the game did not work on Apple Computers as can be shown in Figure 75.

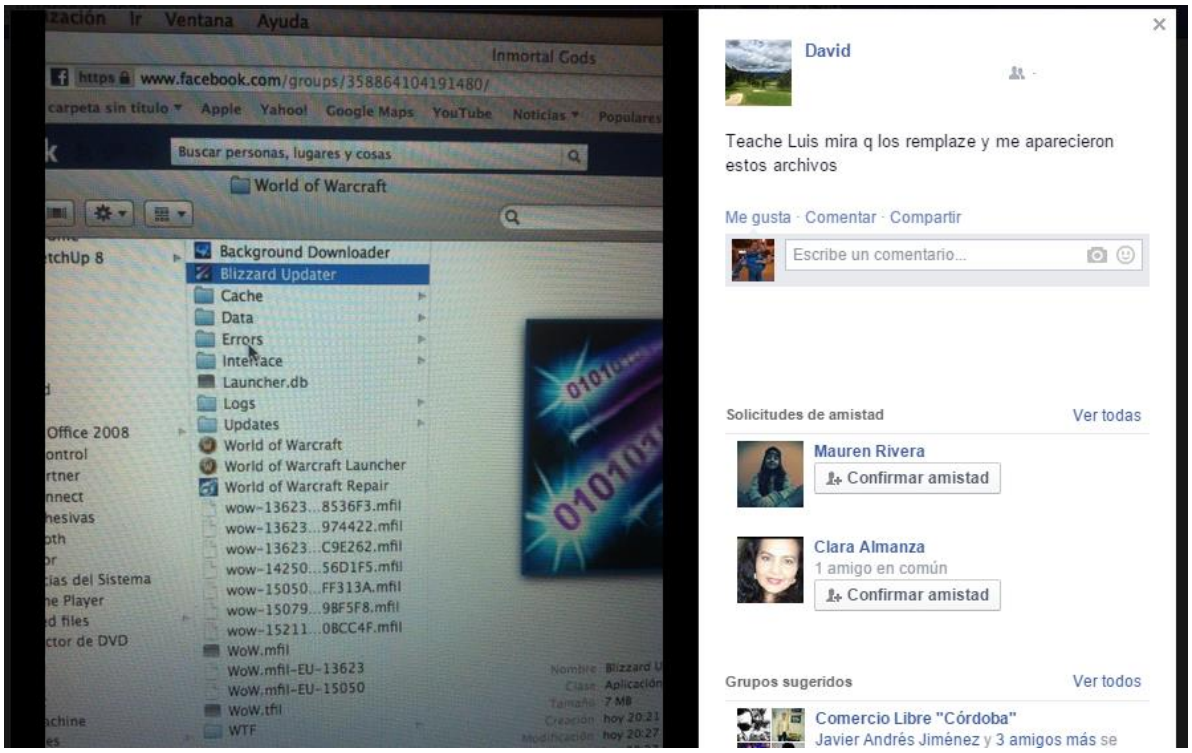


Image 75. *After reading the solution in the forum, the possible solution was not effective.*

Source: *Own*

We continued looking for a solution to this obstacle and it was very engaging and motivating to see how these two students perseverated and made efforts to solve this complication. I could notice their commitment and willingness to belong to the project and I asked them in an informal way, why there was so much interest on that. One of their answers really called my attention because they argued to find the comments about the game very positive, which meant, the experience of gaming in English was funny but also challenging to them (field note entry, June 9th, 2014).

It was when Mariana posted a picture about her gaming in the Facebook group when she told me by instant messaging that she finally could run the game in her Apple computer. Honestly, I felt surprised she finally could solve the problem by herself and was willing to share the solution with her classmates by sending it through a torrent file (Figure 76). Torrent is an online way of sharing files between many users at the same time.



Figure 76. *Mariana´s solution for Mac users.*

Source: *Own.*

Mariana could finally have the game and the way in which she got it demonstrated again that she really wanted to belong to the project. She even assumed the role of a leader to those ones who also had the same difficulty to start running the game (Figure77). All of this procedure and instructions revealed the efficient ability to know how to use and handle the computer and its software requirements to run the game properly. In other words, a level of computer literacy was developed.

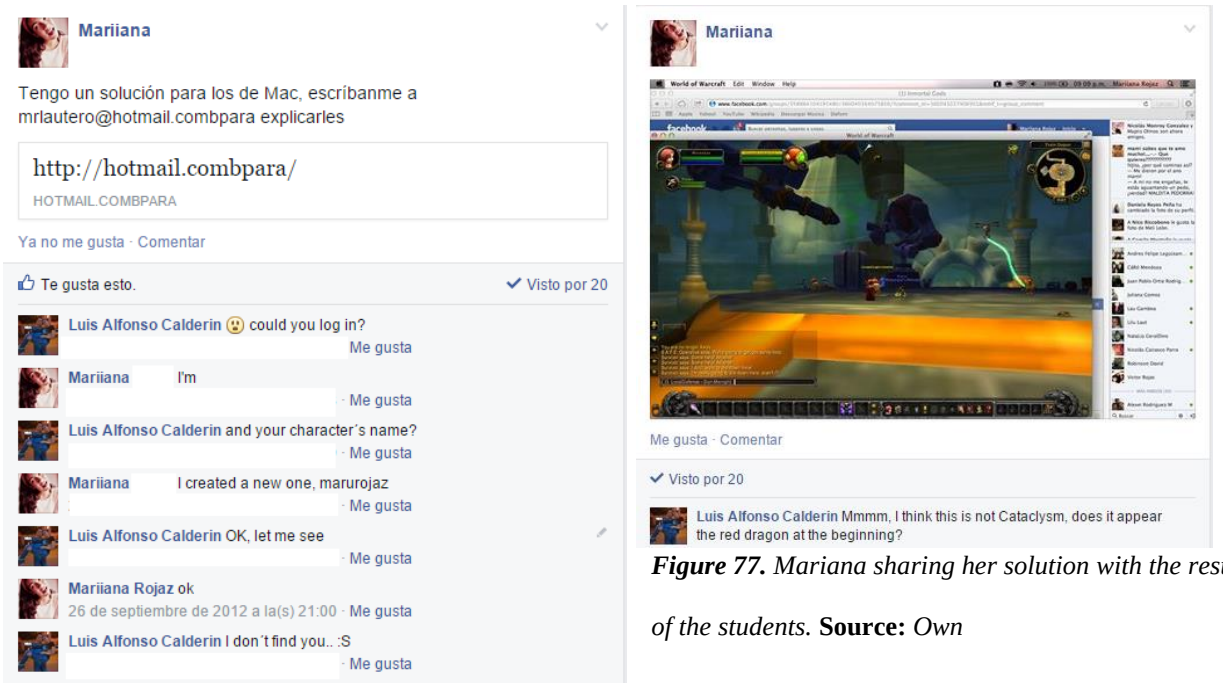


Figure 77. *Mariana sharing her solution with the rest of the students.* **Source:** *Own*

It was curious to see that Mariana´s first posts or announcements were in Spanish even though I said this Facebook group was a space to interact and keep improving our abilities in EFL. By the time, I approached her to ask the reasons she told me she always forgot to do it in English because she was not used to use Facebook to chat or interact in English (field note entry, June 9th, 2004). However, she also argued she immediately remembered to do it on that way when I posted or responded in English as well, which was true. Although the initial post was done in the mother tongue, she did code switching, provided the details, ideas and answered to questions using EFL.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

The main purpose of this research study was to analyze the literacy practices that students routinely engage when playing a videogame such as World of Warcraft, a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG). Furthermore, the language learning opportunities that a virtual world might offer to EFL learners. In this study, the process of using an after-school context with principles of game-based learning was studied using these questions as a starting point 1) What literacy practices emerge when EFL students participate in World of Warcraft: A Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)? 2) What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world?

In response to the first question, the observations, students´ artifacts and interviews revealed two types of literacy practices in which students usually engaged: *in-game literacy practices* and *beyond-game literacy practices.*

It is noticeable from the analysis of World of Warcraft and the impact that had on the students that this is an online game full of literacy practices. What is more, playing WoW is itself a literacy activity, just as many other massively multiplayer online games (Steinkuehler, 2007).

The examination of what children and young people actually do when playing this type of videogames revealed the hundreds of letters, words, symbols and texts students read and write during their game-time. On top of that, students used their understanding of the target language to carry out several processes such as comprehension, identification, interpretation, analysis and production of written and visual language to do numerous game-related activities. These

activities implied actions accomplished inside the virtual world but also situations that went beyond the boundaries of the game itself. In other words, students engaged in various literacy practices that took place outside of the game.

The engagement on these literacy practices was the result of the impact the different EFL pedagogical activities combined with those ones proper from the game caused on students´ minds. For instance, Felipe (*Woltrax*) stated: "I think the activity was highly entertaining, something different from the ordinary, I liked it very much, I would like to do this once again. It is the first time that I have so much fun in WoW and this activity is very useful to learn and review topics we already studied" (Interview, October 4th, 2014). Then, their reactions determine that when gamers feel challenged and what they do has consequences their motivation level increases (Gee, 2003). However, there are also other factors such as the ones stated by Juan (*Adhemi*) when he asserted "the game´s story, modality, races, mounts and the type of armor we find is what calls my attention from it". In this sense, we could claim that the story of Warcraft can be contrasted with the excitement we feel when reading a good novel or watching a satisfying story in a movie.

Regarding the second question of this study: What opportunities for language learning does a MMOG such as World of Warcraft provide when EFL students are immersed into the virtual world? It is reasonable to think that World of Warcraft can be regarded as a stimulant setting in which EFL learners are inspired to engage in a set of multimodal literacy practices. The results of the study showed that their language learning opportunities were characterized by the development of a range of multiliteracies: basic or core literacies (traditional reading & writing), visual literacy, information literacy and computer literacy. Students were exposed to multiple modes of representation of the information they consumed but also the one they produced in

different and diverse ways using the target language. After students interacted with the game, the researcher or other participants, they could accomplish a production process. During the production stage students could assume and alternate between different roles. Participants started as readers of the texts or input presented in the game such as quests or instructions then when they performed tasks they became writers or producers. Lastly, collaborative activities enhanced their roles as audience since they read each other´s productions to work on common goals.

Implications for the ELT Community

The findings from this study revealed that a game such as Warcraft means more than a game and there is a strong chance that might be turned into an important pedagogical tool for teaching and learning purposes. Implementing spaces such as a MMOG are magnificent scenarios that inspire varied types of literacy practices and learning. However, it is not a secret that there are still parents and educators who see videogames as the culprit of students´ lack of success on literacy-related classes at the formal schooling context. In contrast to this, the results of this study showed that EFL students are really engaging into meaningful and considerable literacy practices. What is more, the results also provided evidence that students are gaining abilities through the interaction with the target language in an informal setting such a massively multiplayer online game. Nevertheless, in our country there is still the idea that prohibition for students to play videogames will be the solution for their academic failure and educators seem reluctant to the idea of implementing a video game in a formal school context. For my part, I have witnessed how important videogames have become in today´s young people´s lives and the pedagogical design and findings of this study revealed how powerful videogames such as World of Warcraft can become for the educational community: teachers and students.

I feel strongly that we are living in a 21st centrury where we still need a rethinking of the probable inclusion of videogames, at least Warcraft, as a tool oriented into pedagogical purposes for our students. The learning opportunities, literacy practices and literacy development which are happening in these online environments should be seen as sufficient reasons to pay serious attention to these types of scenarios. It is obvious no game will ever replace the role of the teacher in the classroom, but for the ELT community, computer games such as MMOGs need to be considered as an alternative option to bring our students into meaningful and entertaining ways of learning. According to Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) MMOGs are great laboratories, especially for EFL teachers, where there are new ways of teaching and learning, spaces with many free chances to explore language learning, multiple settings, language levels and natural interactions. Then, the invitation is to try to fulfill the requirements of the education of the 21st century by updating the methodologies, strategies and tools we consider pertinent for language learning among a rising young people´s gaming culture.

Chapter 7: Limitations and Further Research

Limitations

The school has all the necessary equipment to carry out a project such as this one (computers, internet connection and video beams). Nevertheless, it was not easy to get the permission to develop the study inside the school context. One of the reasons provided by the school authorities was because the computers had to be used for the technology class exclusively.

Time was another limitation of the study. The school required students to go in the afternoon shift to reinforce and recuperate the different subjects weaknesses on subjects such as Mathematics and Spanish mainly. Given the fact we started the project as an after-school context, many of the students did not continue with their commitment to the activities since they had to be in the school.

A second remarkable aspect was the time we met inside the virtual world. Sometimes it was difficult for some students to play on weekends or even afternoon because of family issues or plans at home. What is more, some students got behind with respect to the rest of the members of the Guild since they had little time to dedicate to the development of the activities.

Although many of the students were computer literate and faced with great success almost all of the issues they found when installing the game, it was impossible for Mac Users to be members of the project. We could not find a very suitable and definite solution for them to play in WoW Colombia server. Some of the participants tried but at the end could not participate.

Future Research Directions

Through all of the experience that I gained during the project and the literature and studies consulted about game-based teaching and learning, I consider relevant to study the effect that playing these types of videogames such as Massively Multiplayer Online Games might have on students´ identities. Since assuming a role such as a strong warrior, a powerful paladin or a very skilled hunter inside a virtual game it would be great how this fact possibly affects their identities when they log off the videogame and face the real world.

According to the experience I faced with my participants and the creation of their avatars (male and female). I feel strongly that more research has to be done to establish the relation between gender issues and MMOGs such as Warcraft. What is more, Castañeda-Peña et al (2013) suggest there is a need to cover the topic of gender and JMLMJ (term in Spanish) in our Colombian context.

It would be important to also consider the use of videogames as inspirations for creation of digital works such as narratives or poems. Gee (2003) defines this type of productions as fan fiction.

Finally, I am also interested in finding out about the effect that using a MMOG such as Warcraft with teachers as main actors might have in their teaching beliefs. The implementation of this tool can have a change of mind in our body of teachers and traditional school system.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form

COLEGIO DE EDUCACIÓN TÉCNICA Y ACADÉMICA CELESTIN FREINET

EXPLORACIÓN DE LAS PRACTICAS DE LECTURA Y ESCRITURA EN INGLÉS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN UN VIDEOJUEGO MASIVO EN LINEA

Estimad@ madre/padre y estudiante:

La investigación es una de las formas como se mejoran y consolidan procesos en el área de la enseñanza del inglés, por esta razón es de vital importancia incluir tanto a docentes como a estudiantes en proyectos investigativos que resulten en el mejoramiento de las prácticas de enseñanza – aprendizaje.

Por lo tanto, sus hij@s están invitados a participar del proyecto denominado **Exploring Students´ EFL Literacy Practices in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)** (Exploración de las practicas de lectura y escritura en Inglés de los estudiantes en un videojuego masivo en línea), el cual consiste en utilizar un contexto extraescolar donde los estudiantes lleven la práctica del idioma fuera de los bordes del colegio para mejorar su desempeño y desarrollo de las habilidades en la lengua.

Para participar dentro del proyecto los estudiantes deberán tener acceso a un computador con requisitos mínimos para este tipo de juego y conexión a Internet, además deben tener disposición y tiempo para responder a preguntas en entrevistas semi-estructuradas. De igual forma es indispensable entrar al juego entre 1 y 5 horas semanales en ciertos tiempos los cuales serán socializados con ustedes.

Estas conexiones al juego y la interacción con otros jugadores permitirán la recolección de datos por parte del docente para realizar el respectivo análisis y así contribuir al desarrollo de la investigación.

Es importante resaltar que la participación es voluntaria y las notas del estudiante **no** se verán afectadas en ningún caso. Además se garantiza que el proyecto se desarrollará teniendo en cuenta principios de responsabilidad, justicia, respeto y dignidad. Por último, se manejará estricta confidencialidad con toda la información expresada por los estudiantes.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para que el/la estudiante participe en este proyecto investigativo.

Cordialmente,

Luis Alfonso Calderín A.

Docente de Inglés Sección Bachillerato

Colegio de Educación Técnica y Académica Celestin Freinet

……

Yo _____ identificado con C.C. N° _____ autorizo a mi hij@ _____ del curso _____ a participar del proyecto **Exploring Students´ EFL Literacy Practices in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG)** (Exploración de las practicas de lectura y escritura en Inglés de los estudiantes en un videojuego masivo en línea).

Firma: _____ Fecha: _____