

Assignment 3: Good Learning and Good Games

First of all, I need to apologize -- this will be lengthy -- but this is the OLTD course content that I am super into, and I'm going to selfishly enjoy it.

I think that when in person, I could probably ramble on about Game Based Learning and Design Principles for Gaming ad nauseum -- it's been a past-time for me forever to the point where I've formed a school-based club rife with discussions on character viability, choices, eSports, and everything kind of inbetween. For me, *Great Video Games* were always an engrossing past-time that happened to foster a love for literature and learning which eventually... well, lead me to teaching in the first place. I even started my first practicum trying to mimic the *Legend of Zelda's* coloured-text strategy for key terms and context clues simply because of the strong impression that simple game design element had made on what I understood as critical knowledge.

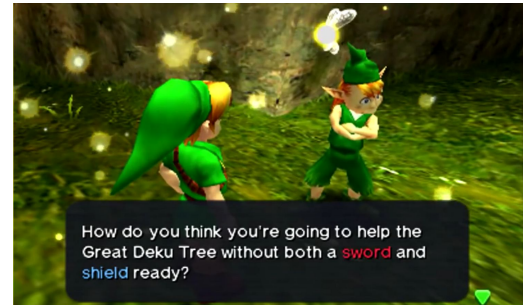


Photo retrieved from:
<https://dialoguemadeinteresting.wordpress.com/2015/11/20/text-in-a-zelda-game-the-good-the-bad-and-the-confusing/>

I know a *huge* part of this assignment is focused on differentiating my understanding of a few key categories in reference to educational value in game-based learning, so I'd like to start there before diving into Gee's *Principles on Gaming* as I tend to enjoy working backwards.

The way that I've started to see the difference between "Gamification" and "Game Based Learning" is pertaining more to the methodologies applied to the tools themselves. My first exposure with Gamification was from Avi in the Post-Bac program. He employed Rezzly's "3dGameLabs" and designed it to look "video-game like." Ultimately, it was a reskinned LMS.

This is not to knock the product in any way -- it was enjoyable and served specific, useful functions as LMS' are intended to do -- but one of the big

take-aways I had was that *the intention behind its use was to implement an*

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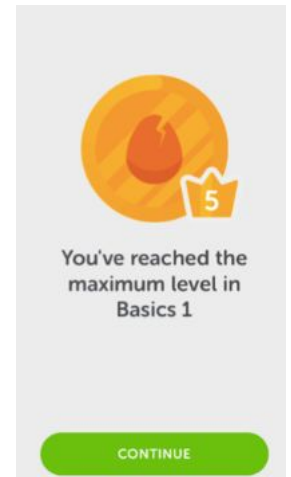
Rank 230

VIU: EDPB		Available 6	In Progress 3	Completed 50		
Name	XP	Avg Time	Rating	Category	Due Date	
ePortfolio 6: Gallery as Navigation	50	35 mins	★★★★★	ePortfolio	No end date	
Elemental 2: Classroom Management Strategies Curation I	20	53 mins	★★★★★	Elemental: Classroom Mgmt	No end date	
Power+ 1: Intro to Technology Integration	20	38 mins	★★★★★	Power+: Tech Integration	No end date	

Content credited to Avi Luxemburg.

LMS that wasn't hated or difficult to buy-into. To accomplish that, the system became 'gamified' -- or as I have come to think of it, it was 'reskinned or even *themed* with gaming elements'.

In this sense, certain game-elements were adopted as improvements or modifications of typical LMS systems: we earned experience points instead of grade letters, were given 'quests and quest trees' instead of assignment options, and had the option to employ less traditional ways to present our own learning. I think Gamification then, not only has a hand in loosely adopting game-design elements and principles into a working system but also is useful in 'recontextualizing' known and disliked quantities. I feel as though it is almost comparable to a company changing its logo and title to 'shake off' assumptions or opinions that had already formed.



Screenshot retrieved from <https://www.duolingo.com/>

Game-Based Learning then is a term that, in contrast, I only came to understand when misappropriating my long-term 'dream classroom' goals as Gamification in an earlier OLTD course. If Gamification is reskinning or applying gaming principles to other existing systems, Game-Based Learning is about *using Games as the tool to deliver meaningful connections and enriched learning*. Game-Based Learning would be about using board games, card games, video games, or *other game-based mediums* to be the vehicle in which a learning objective will be refined, realized, or imparted during and after the experience.



Photo by [Inês Ferreira on Unsplash](#)

Now, I feel *very strongly* that I need to be distinct and say this isn't a *new thing* in like, even the slightest. At its rudimentary level, I'd argue physical sports such as basketball, golf, hockey, etc. all *strongly* classify as Game-Based Learning as they're specific rulesets with imposed goals and limitations that are fun, engaging, and *still impart meaningful learning experiences innocuously to their learners*. Basketball, golf, and hockey all improve physical coordination, teach physical limits and boundaries in our bodies, teach refinement of fine motor skills, and have an insane wealth of communication, culture, self-regulation, and proper social conduct skills that are *imparted as part of the activity itself*.



Photo retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-ways-use-game-based-learning-matthew-farber>

Game-Based Learning then, I almost want to argue is anachronistic, since Game-Based Learning immediately draws an image of either Snakes and Ladders or a video game in my mind, when both examples are just *facets* of the term rather than flagships. Game-Based Learning, to me, stands firm as *using a decided entertainment system -- be it social, physical, electronic, or other -- as the main strategy for delivering the desired learning objectives*. It's about picking an activity or a tool that meets the learning objective in a high-interest, maybe not overt or direct method, to meet the same ultimate learning end.

Now, easy to ramble about the first two, but a lot more difficult for me to articulate my understandings of what a "Serious Game", Simulation, and "Commercial Off the Shelf Game" are. I feel like I had some trouble getting concrete understandings of these, likely because outside of the concept of Simulations, video-game related or activity related, and until now I've never realized there's a difference. Of course, the graphic you have included from [PlayfulPandas.org](https://playfulpandas.org) details "Serious Games" as a form of rhetoric and representation of learning through the procedure.

I have to admit, I waffle back and forth on this a little. Learning activities are generally 'rhetorical' in nature, and a lot of games are 'rhetorical' in the way they impart skills too. Tutorials exist in games, classrooms, and Ikea manuals because they're focused on representing the end-goal concept we're aiming to reach. That said, I pursued this deeper and found that EduTechWiki quotes authors Susi et al. in 2007, in that serious games are games that "[engage the user and contribute to the achievement of predefined objectives.](#)"

In this respect, "Serious Games" are an overarching umbrella for other categories of gaming which will naturally include both "Simulation" and "Commercial of the Shelf" games that are repurposed. I think a solid example of a "Serious Game" here would be *Elegy for a Dead World*. While not necessarily an Education Game, the clear design and intent of this game are to build and improve writing practice as it's marketed as "[a game about writing fiction.](#)" While it's cleverly designed and has definitive entertainment value, *at its core*, it's a *gamified*-video-game created acting as a reskinned writing prompt practice activity which could serve to add an extra visual quality in order to make the writing process more enjoyable or more approachable to players. They are still writing stories based on prompts, but it's sneaky and arguably more fun even though the core skill-building activity is the same as a general English classroom activity.



Gif retrieved from
<https://www.dejobaan.com/elegy/>

"Simulations" then, are games that are designed to simulate real-world activities. This, like my argument for Game-Based Learning, is pretty common in traditional education -- as it's not uncommon to have students participate in mock trials of literary characters and do simulated

elections and political campaigns in Socials. When pertaining to video games, we're gifted with a wide range of activities that are representative of the real-world activity. Some common popular examples would be things like *Truck Simulator*, *Google Expeditions*, and *Flight Simulator* and some less common/more game-play focused ones would be things like *Stardew Valley* or *Cooking Mama*. Simulation games are games dedicated to trying to recreate or remodel real-life activities and knowledge in different ways, which tend to impart some learning or roughly transferable skills *should* the learner pursue the actual real-world undertaking or deepening of their understanding.



Screenshot retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cooking_Mama

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I did not know initially what “Commercial Off the Shelf Game” referred to, but Google is telling me that games like Sid Meier’s *Civilization* for History, *Kerbal Space Program* for Engineering, and *City Skylines* for Planning are all good examples. My understanding then is that

“Commercial Off the Shelf” Games are gaming-products sold for entertainment, but *can find meaningful purpose and application within education*. This didn’t sit well with me at first, but in the process of trying to find an article to correct or

prove me wrong, I found an amazing quote from Marshall McLuhan in 1967 that kind of contextualizes how I feel about “Commercial Off the Shelf”, Simulation, and “Serious Games” on the whole. McLuhan states simply, “Anyone who tries to make a distinction between education and entertainment doesn’t know the first thing about either.”

And while kind of funny or arrogant (depending on how one wants to read into that) I have to admit that I really like the sentiment and feel like the harmony found in both quality games and quality education are profound, especially in relation to Gee’s Principles on Gaming. I think if I was forced to narrow my agreeance with Gee down into three primary principles, the ones that stand out the most to me as a learner are Agency, Skills as Strategy, and Situated Meaning.

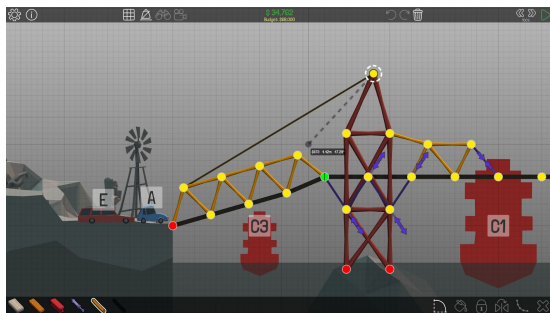
First off, Agency for me is critical -- I think it encompasses all potential issues with motivation, with finding relevance, and overcoming that element of resistance or ‘pleasant frustration’ that Gee explores. As I’ve mentioned on G+, I didn’t have a lot of Agency throughout my life -- I was very reliant on the expertise and pre-decided paths of others, be it in school or out. When I was healthy enough to have a consistent presence in classrooms however, I always felt that I was more willing and less resistant to challenge when I had a say in how that would go. In my own teaching practice, I’ve learned through teacher training that our big focus is to move towards become *facilitators*, and I realized early that I felt more comfortable and confident in the content that I was teaching if the students themselves could express explicitly what it was that they’d learned or develop. One of the easiest ways to have that happen is to give them a say in what they create -- I found the quality of assessment evidence that I acquired improved dramatically if I adopted a Standards-Based Learning assessment piece like a Single-Point Rubric, and allowed students to choose how they’d show me what they knew and could do. This sharing of agency and optional design opportunity isn’t quite executed in the same way

we would if we were play a game per say, but the overlap has felt like exceptionally good practice and minimized a lot of resistance and classroom management issues.

Second is Skills as Strategy. Having grown up as a pretty tech-enthusiast and hitting adulthood around the same time as the existence of mobile data, the ability to research queries in context, on-demand, and receive resources has been

invaluable to me as a person, let alone as an educator. I was

surprised that the ability to acquire knowledge on demand wasn't 'obvious' to my students as it came to me, and following conversations with mentor teachers, I understood that the line of thinking required to take initiative and begin research was, in its own, a skill. I'd kind of made a mistake that Gee lightly touches on -- that the point of employing Skills as Strategy is to accomplish a goal, not to develop the skill itself -- and I'd been taking for granted a wealth of research and critical thinking skills I'd been taught simply because I was focused on the objective itself.



An example of a Problem-Based Learning game called "Poly Bridge." Screenshot retrieved from <http://polybridge.drycactus.com/>.

I think then that setting up 'problems' to naturally solve is incredibly effective then, as I have had so much more success with telling students that "I don't actually know" and asking them how we should figure it out, rather than spitting out the answer. It's been especially helpful as a humanities-turned-Foods teacher too, since we're constantly facing problems involving ingredients and substitutions, but I can still engage in research and critical thinking in the middle of class. I have started to spot that students that get that permission to research and have those base skills become much more

independent and much more willing to share information with me about what they found, rather than coming to me with questions they could have answered themselves.

Finally, I think Situated Meaning holds special relevance. Games, in my experience, produce a ton of causal and repeatable interactions that help impart skills based on context. Likewise,

Below Target Criteria Feedback <i>Areas that Need Work</i>	Criteria <i>Standards for Successfully Completing This Project</i>	Above and Beyond Criteria Feedback <i>Evidence of Exceeding Standards and Creativity/Risk-Taking</i> -20%
<i>My Feedback for you will go in this space!</i>	Proof of Participant Consent -20% <i>Successful Completion:</i> You have included a draft of your Consent Form and have included 10 signatures from your participants that show you've given meaningful thought and care into ensuring no lasting harm comes to your participants. Please attach these 10- signatures to your final project to meet this criteria.	<i>My Feedback for you will go in this space!</i>
	Detailed Project Outline -20% <i>Successful Completion:</i> You included a detailed project outline that clearly and concisely explores... 1. What you were looking to prove/disprove (hypothesis) 2. How you conducted your experiment 3. The steps you took during your experiment's process (Operational Methods anyone could follow to copy your experiment)	
	Data Collection -20% <i>Successful Completion:</i> You include a copy of your data, labelled what data came from your control group and what data came from your experimental group . As long as you collect information in an organized way , I am happy. Make sure it's easy to present!	
	Conclusion and Presentation -20% <i>Successful Completion:</i> You include a write-up on what your group thinks the data tells us, what you would like/would do differently if you did this another time, and you present it to the class . Don't worry, this presentation <i>does not need a powerpoint</i> and can be very fun. The whole class should know the cool experiments that went on!	

Example of a Single Point Rubric created and used for my Psychology 12 class.

now that I'm teaching ADST curriculum, I've been exposed to a wealth of research arguing in favour of hands-on and experiential learning which I can anecdotally agree with when comparing students that cook daily with those that do worksheets. It means a lot more to explain the process of yeast growth and their developmental needs for baking when there's a puddle of fermenting foam getting mixed in with flour than it does to have students read and recite out of a textbook.

For me personally, I've always felt that I had an easier time retaining information and applying it later on if I had a chance to tinker first-hand rather than read and practice at a later date. Right now, I'm thinking that First Aid training does a marvellous job at demonstrating this, as it's far more valuable to have individuals practice compressions than to see infographics or videos on the same action. Learning is something we do naturally based on contexts as they unfold, in which we make meaning from them. If we want learning to happen in our classrooms then, it makes the most sense to ensure that we bring that context forward first so our practices can be authentic to real world problems.



Foods classroom. Photo retrieved from [Shannon Roae on Meadville Tribune](#).

Now, I know you did say to keep the descriptions brief, so again, I want to apologize for the reading duration. On a personal note, I've been waiting for an excuse to look into educational valuing on gaming and I'm grateful I could dip my toe in the water here.