How To Use Digital Games To Engage Your Students In Learning Language

- Linda Forrest, Research Director, CASLS, University of Oregon, COFLT, 3 March 2015

Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS)
- University of Oregon, Julie Sykes, Director
- National Foreign Language Resource Center
  - 1 of 16 centers nationwide, supported by grants under Title VI of the Higher Education Act
  - promote the teaching and learning of foreign languages
  - home of UO Chinese Flagship Program

Collaborators
Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy (CERCLL)
Jonathan Reinhardt, University of Arizona

What are digital games?
- digital — played on a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, game console (Xbox, Playstation), handheld game console (Nintendo DS), or mobile device (iPod Touch, cell phone)
- game — any of a variety of games and genres involving action-adventure, simulations, time management; single, multiplayer
- Commercial, ‘educational’, teacher-created

Do games belong in classrooms?
- Claim: games are violent and addictive
  - Less than 5% of games are violent; they can be avoided. Some books are violent, but books are not excluded from classrooms wholesale.
  - Avid gaming is considered bad; avid reading is considered good.
- Claim: learning cannot result from play
  - research shows that many digital games can afford foreign language learning

How games can improve learning
- engage students
- provide continues feedback about learning progress
- afford new kinds of learning opportunities
- provide volumes of real-time data about student learning for teachers, administrators, parents
- augment (but do not substitute for) classroom learning experiences

- Explore
  - Experience: playing and observing the game
  - Analysis: noticing and collecting game discourses
- Examine
  - Experience: experiences game discourses
  - Analysis: analyzing targeted game discourses
- Extend
  - Experience: active creation and participation in game discourses
  - Analysis: reflective creation and participation in game discourse
Steps to implementing a game in your curriculum

- Plan for the game
- PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF
- Preview activities
- Explore activities
- Examine activities
- Extend activities

Plan for the game
- Consider student interest and background.
- Consider your institutional support and limitations.
  - Can games be loaded on lab/classroom computers or accessed through browsers on lab computers?
- Consider your curricular objectives and needs, and student maturity and proficiency levels.
  - Find a few games that align with your unit topic, or language point or the development of critical literacies.

Gardenscapes: Mansion Makeover™
- a casual, PC, single player, item collection-adventure game (Playrix, 2012)
- activities designed for adolescent or young adult Spanish language learners
- low novice - low intermediate level Spanish
- could be adapted for other foreign languages

Play the game
- Story: The mansion you inherited from your grandfather is in bad condition. Your friends are coming to visit, so you need to fix it up.
- Game play activity: Find objects hidden in scenes and sell them to invest in mansion improvements.

Sample Preview activities
- In pairs, students compare and contrast their houses with typical houses in Mexico. For example, compare and contrast
  - Rooms
  - Furniture
  - The most important electronic devices
  - The most important thing in the house

Sample Explore activities
- Play the game projected on a screen in front of the class.
- Class watches the introductory video.

Sample Examine activities
- Students sell enough items to buy a new chimney and a new floor.
- As they play, they note at least 10 new vocabulary items and 2 new game rules or events that they discovered.
Sample Extend activities
• Students write and present a formal paper.
• Students write a short game review.
• Students simulate the game in the classroom.

Games2Teach
• https://games2teach.uoregon.edu/
• ‘Publications’ tab
• Section A. Digital Game-enhanced Learning Materials
• Select A2. Gardenscapes: Mansion Makeover for Spanish by K. Lanser & J. Sykes

Mべんと！（“My Bento!”）
• http://serious-games.jp/bento/index.html
• Player creates his or her own bento.
• Japanese food related vocabulary with actual photographs
• 2nd semester learners
• Received a Kids Design Award
• English version available

Where to find games
• Google “Online Educational Games”
  – many free games available
• BigFish.com $, but low cost
  – available in multiple languages

Teacher created games #1
• ARIS (https://arisgames.org/)
• a user-friendly, open-source platform for creating and playing mobile games,
tours and interactive stories
• players experience a hybrid world of virtual interactive characters, items, and media placed
in physical space
• When students are at a particular location, they see a story character located at the same place. They
can interact with the character in various ways.

Teacher created games #2
• Scratch (https://scratch.mit.edu/ )
• Create stories, games, and animations
Share with others around the world
• Find a game or make your own.
• Click “For Educators” link at bottom of page.
• Example: Ni Hao - A Scratch Course in Chinese (Intro) by BBPUGA

This is just the beginning!
• Thank You!
• Linda Forrest
• lforrest@uoregon.edu