

RPGs to Enhance the Second Language Acquisition of Both Mandarin and English

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Abstract

Research Question: "To what degree can it be evidenced that interactive role playing games enhance the mutual second language acquisition of both Mandarin and English?"

- Small-scale side project to ascertain avatar interaction preferences based on perception.
- Pilot study will apply psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research knowledge to specifically designed game.

Hypothesis Questions

- Can games and education be effectively combined; to provide **mutual** learning platform to enhance production and comprehension of the written languages?
- Does the Proteus effect of using an avatar negate the interference of 'Face' for Chinese students?
- Does the choice of the interlocutor's avatar affect interaction in the target language?
- Will the target language learners who are involved in the supplementary game based learning experience higher levels of motivation for learning language?

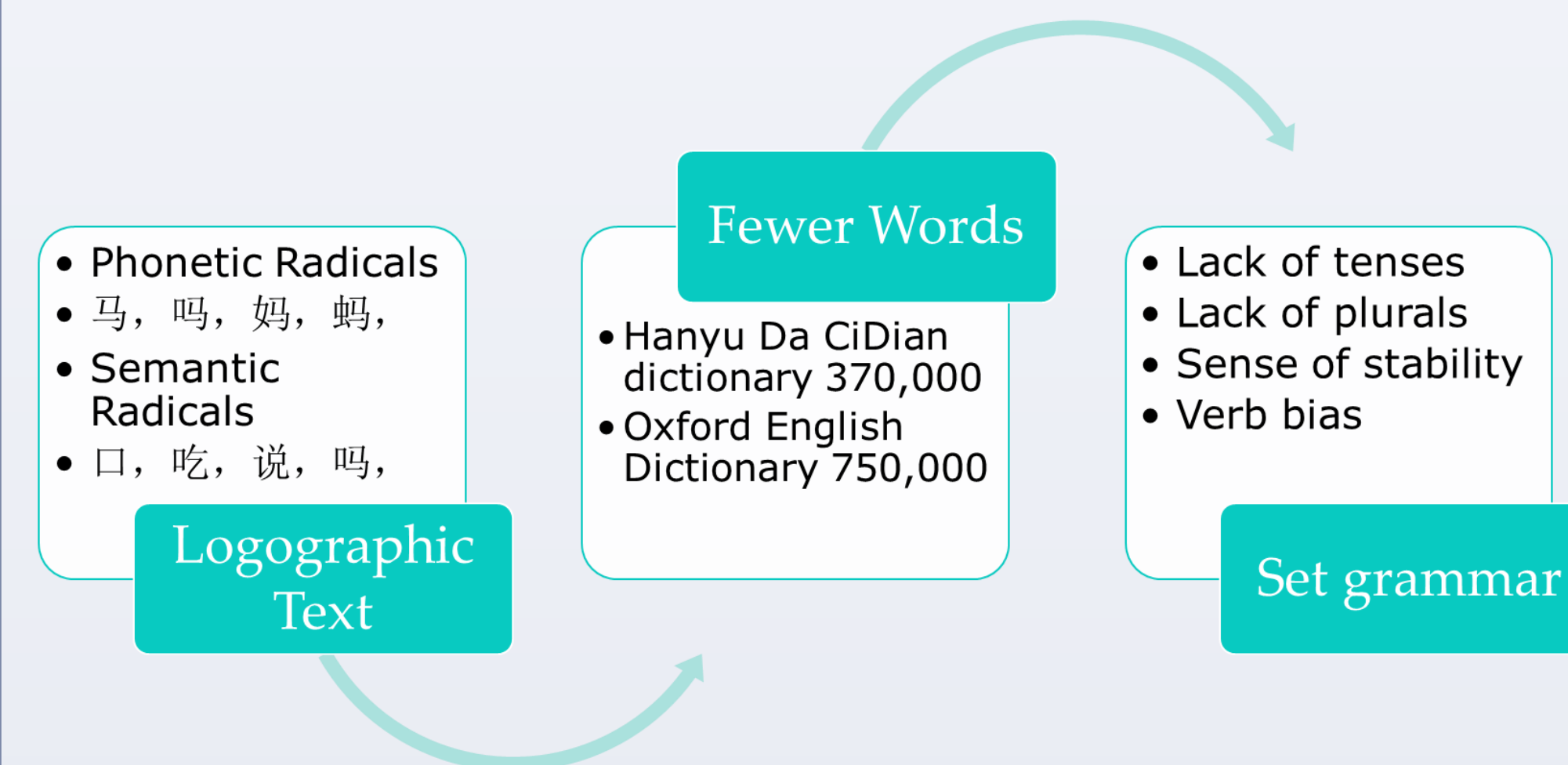
RPGs and L2 learning

- Provides deep immersion and motivation beneficial for second language learning (Cornillie et al., 2012).
- In game rewards system encourages both informal and implicit learning (Gee, 2003).
- Avatars can help negate the anxiety that a learner may feel within face-to-face conversation in the target language (Peterson, 2011).
- In game text second language learner can see and re-read their conversation, which can help identify errors and allow focus on speech (Peterson, 2011)

Serious Games

- Learning almost as by-product
- Balance between formal and informal learning
- Inclusion of both individual and social learning environments

Background to Mandarin



Radicals

	Radical	Meaning	Pinyin	Example
1	亻	person	rén	你 you (nǐ)
2	辶	road, walking	chì	街 street (jiē), 往 toward (wǎng)
3	氵	water	shuǐ	河 river (hé), 洗 wash (xǐ)
4	冫	ice	bīng	冰 ice (bīng), 冻 freeze (dòng)
5	火	fire / burning	huǒ	灯 lamp (dēng), 烧 burn (shāo)
6	灬	fire / fire from below	huǒ	蒸 steam (zhēng), 热 hot (rè)
7	日	day, sun, time	rì	时 time (shí), 晴 sunny (qíng)

- The key to understanding the written Chinese Language
- Used to find new words in the dictionary
- Semantic or phonetic

Research Materials



- Nothing off the shelf fitted exact needs
- RPG Maker MV could be used to create a RPG that exactly reflected the language input needed
- RPG maker is single person, so a work-around was needed
- Same game created twice; once in Mandarin and once in English with mutual chat blog utilised to encourage cooperative game play



Avatars



Which avatar:

- Player would feel uncomfortable speaking in the target language with
- Player would choose for themselves as second language speaker
- Player would feel comfortable speaking in the target language with

Results

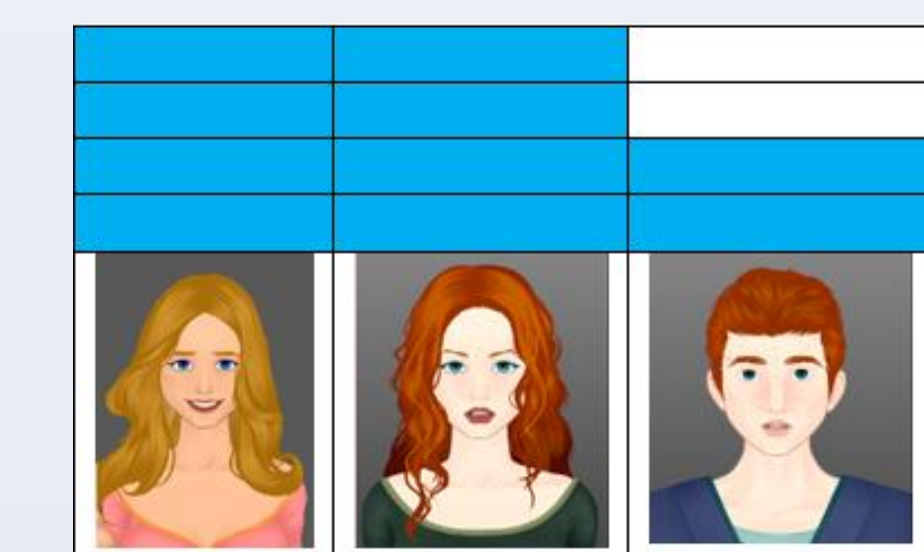
The results part way through the Avatar experiment have proved interesting and surprising:

- Chinese participants who are learning English as a second language have chosen the Asian male, Alien male and Celtic woman avatars to represent themselves.
- Chinese participants have demonstrated that they are highly driven by aesthetics of the avatars when expressing the desire to interact or not.
- It is expected that the Western student preferences will match those of the Chinese student's.
- The results will be tied to socio-cultural and psychological theories attached to 'face' and second language acquisition.
- The findings of the small-scale avatar study will go to inform the avatar choices in the RPG.

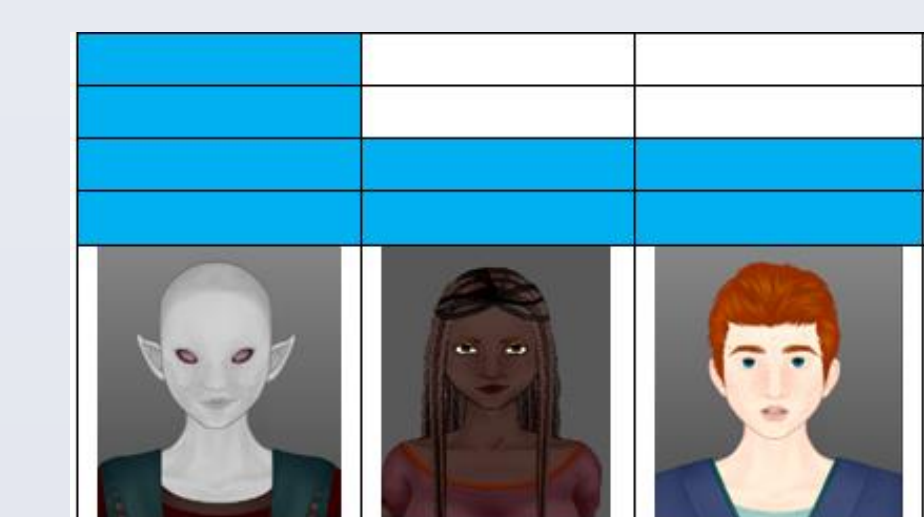
Small-Scale Research Early Findings



Most popular choice for own Avatar



Most likely to interact with



Least likely to interact with

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