VISUALIZING CHAT DATA IN A WORLD OF WARCRAFT PLAYER GROUP

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Expertise development and consequential learning can occur in all the settings in which people participate. Acquiring expertise is, as Collins and Evans (2007: 3) note, "a matter of socialization into the practices of an expert group..." The practices of an expert group, however, also change over time, especially while encountering new challenges. Looking at change in chat participation, this poster explores the

Charts were created for two different nights in the in-game dungeon Molten Core (MC):

- * First time we encountered Ragnaros, the last monster in MC
- * One of the first times we were able to defeat Ragnaros, 3 months later

What patterns in the chat data can be uncovered through visualization? How did the chat change between the two nights? How do these changes reflect a change in player practice?

development of expertise in a World of Warcraft player group. Method: Online games ethnography Setting: Role-play server Participants: Horde-aligned 40-person raid Research referenced: Games ethnography (Chen, 2009, Steinkuehler, 2007), distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995), situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), social dimensions of expertise (Bell et al., 2006) Talk in the rogue channel indicated confusion about fight 21:42:43.156 [madrogues] Thoguht: why do we start here again instead of on the other side? 21:42:44.500 [Raid] Maxwell: we go in 15 seconds positions, as seen the series of 6 shots, below right. 21:42:45.781 [Raid] Maxwell: <CTRaid> Maxwell has performed a ready check. 21:42:55.062 [madrogues] Rover: tis a mystery 21:42:56.531 [madrogues] Rebecca: no idea 21:43:08.750 [Raid] Maxwell: SUMMON RAGS areas of gray 21:43:13.968 [madrogues] Thoguht: are we supposed to melee on the west side? have voice chat about strategy indicate duration about rogue positions Case 1: February 24, 2006 9:15 to 10:51 pm First time fighting Ragnaros Four failed attempts most of the yells were Chat per minute by chat channel from the raid leader talk was about during fights party-specific buffs and enchants fghts are longer because we are not dying as fast raid group Ragnaros down! realizes it chat erupts with cannot revive cheers and congrats talking about itself dying Ragnaros and then began attacking stealthing to whispers regarding website tools the group before Ragnaros with another raider while raid all of the members leader talks strategy via voice had been revived Case 2: more emotes most of the party talk May 19, 2006 this time was about because we were more confident how fast we were dying 7:37 to 9:32 pm More on-task talk Finally killed Ragnaros happened during the chart by amCharts.com Success on third attempt successful case than during the first case. A buff is a temporary bonus given by one P. ben P. character to another that improves a character's abilities in some way. While strategy talk remained at fairly consistent or lower levels, much more buffing was happening Management Buffing in the second case. It is expected that, as a group develops expertise, they will need to talk about Chat per minute coded as On-Task or Off-Task coordination strategy less and instead will simply do whatever actions are needed to complete the task. lots more strategy talk during encounters on successful night and then began attacking stealthing to the group before Ragnaros all of the members

. The rogues run in to position after imping and swimming across the lava.

By the time the raid took down Ragnaros three months later, the rogues had learned where to position themselves without the earlier need for discussion and clarification.

Summary of Findings

Visualizations offer a quick way to see patterns happening in the data. Such visualizations should be seen as complementary to a careful analysis of the chat itself.

The battle with Ragnaros occurred

in timed phases. By the time of the

learned the timing of the fight, and

was able to call out specific events.

The raid also adopted the use of a

timekeeper (Mandy) who called out

how much time was left before each

next phase.

new practices had emerged. Maxwell

successful battle, the group had

More talk occurred during the second case, yet the amount of strategy planning talk did not rise. Instead, there was a rise in buffing and general chatter or banter, indicating that the group had more experience and expertise with the shared activity. Parts of the task had become automated.

During the second case, more strategy talk was spent on fight specific events and less was spent on clarification and negotiation of roles. There was less speculation and more automated, declarative responses to specific situations.

> Much of this increase during fights can be attributed to the new practice of the raid leader calling out specific events during the activity that elicited reaction by the other raiders.

Initial notions about the disproportionate talk by women have been confirmed. Unfortunately, it is unclear why this was happening.

Chat per minute by Gender In the first case, 11 women and 31 men were in the raid meaning that women constituted roughly 26% of the raid participants, yet, women account for only 16.7% of the talk. alking about and then began attacking stealthing to Ragnaros

21:13:03.000 Maxwell yells: ATTACK! 21:13:03.140 [Raid] Maxwell: ATTACK!

21:13:12.734 [Raid] Roger: 33%

21:13:56.921 [Raid] Paula: down 21:13:57.671 [Raid] Mandy: 1m 42

21:13:38.890 [Raid] Pall: out of mana

21:13:24.328 Rand has died

21:13:12.484 Ragnaros yells: DIE, INSECT!

21:13:07.421 Ragnaros yells: TASTE THE FLAMES OF SULFURON!

21:13:41.671 Ragnaros yells: TASTE THE FLAMES OF SULFURON!

21:13:20.937 [madrogues] Roger: dump on him, just dont draw aggro.

21:13:10.250 [Raid] Maxwell: *** Ragnaros has Emerged. 3 minutes until submerge. ***

21:13:07.671 [Raid] Maxwell: *** AE Knockback ***

21:13:38.343 Ragnaros yells: BY FIRE BE PURGED!

21:13:42.312 [Raid] Maxwell: *** AE Knockback ***

Women Men The second night shows an even bigger imbalance, with women constituting roughly 22% of the raid participants (9 women and 32 men total) yet accounting for only 7.5% of the participation.

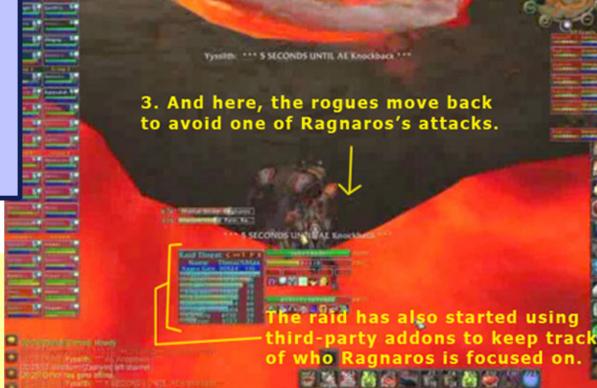
Collins, H., & Evans, R. (2007). Rethinking expertise. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ. Press.

In this second case, raid members have learned exactly

which buffs to cast or apply on each other, and they do

this buffing more or less automatically.

chart by amCharts.com



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