



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 development of expertise in a *World of Warcraft* player group.

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

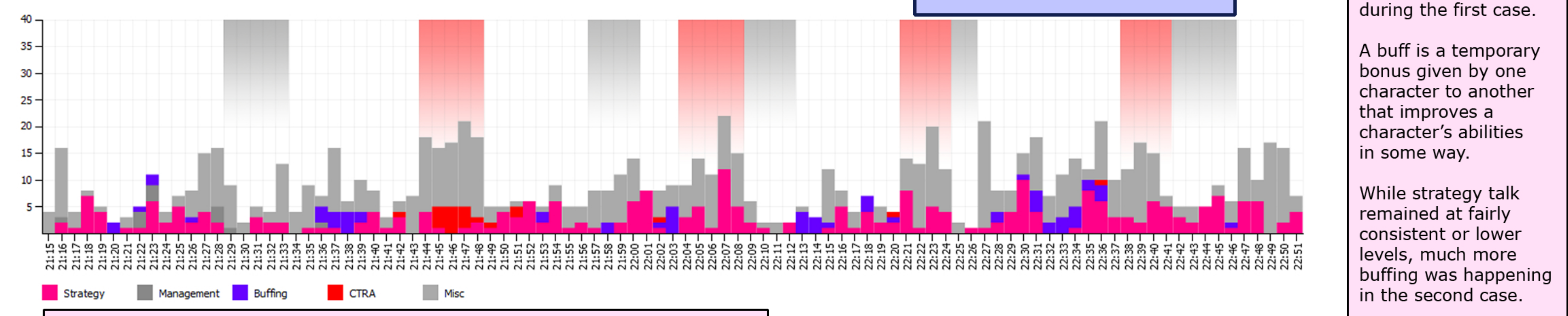
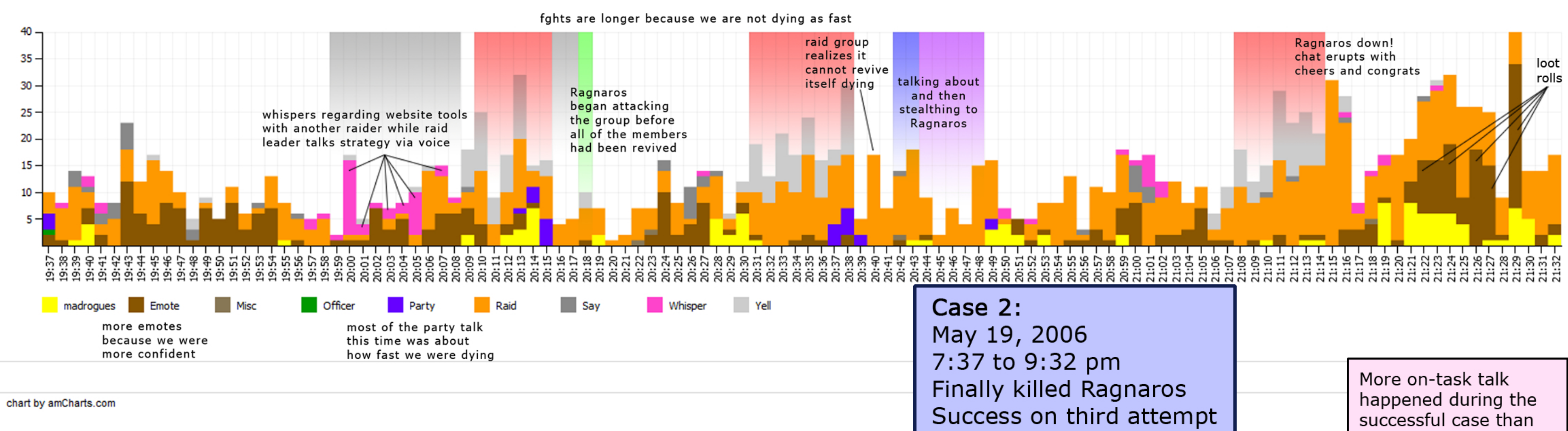
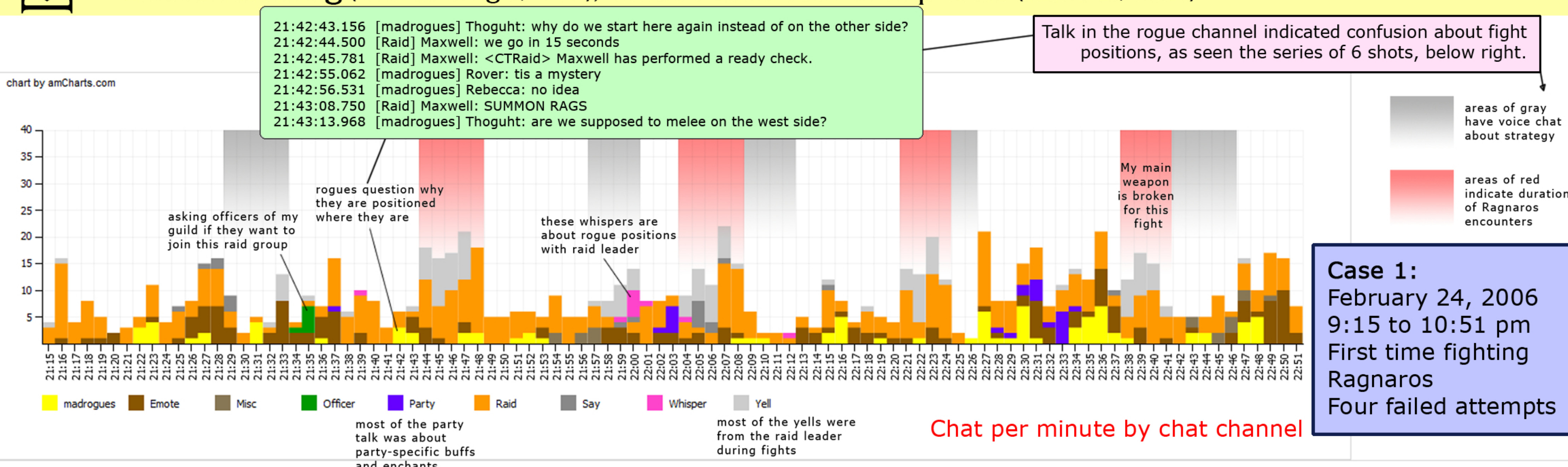
- * First time we encountered Ragnaros, the last monster in MC
- * One of the first times we were able to defeat Ragnaros, 3 months later

What patterns in the chat data can be uncovered through visualization?

How did the chat change between the two nights?

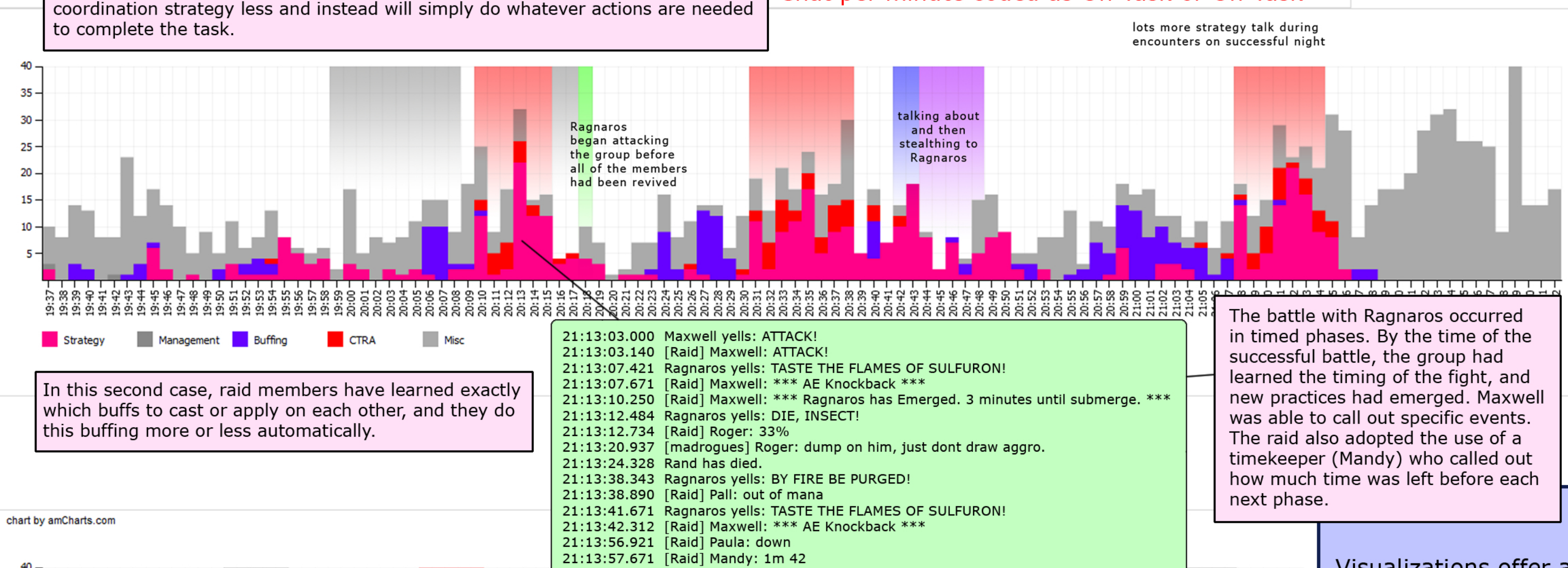
How do these changes reflect a change in player practice?

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)



It is expected that, as a group develops expertise, they will need to talk about coordination strategy less and instead will simply do whatever actions are needed to complete the task.

Chat per minute coded as On-Task or Off-Task



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.

The battle with Ragnaros occurred in timed phases. By the time of the successful battle, the group had learned the timing of the fight, and new practices had emerged. Maxwell 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.

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.

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.

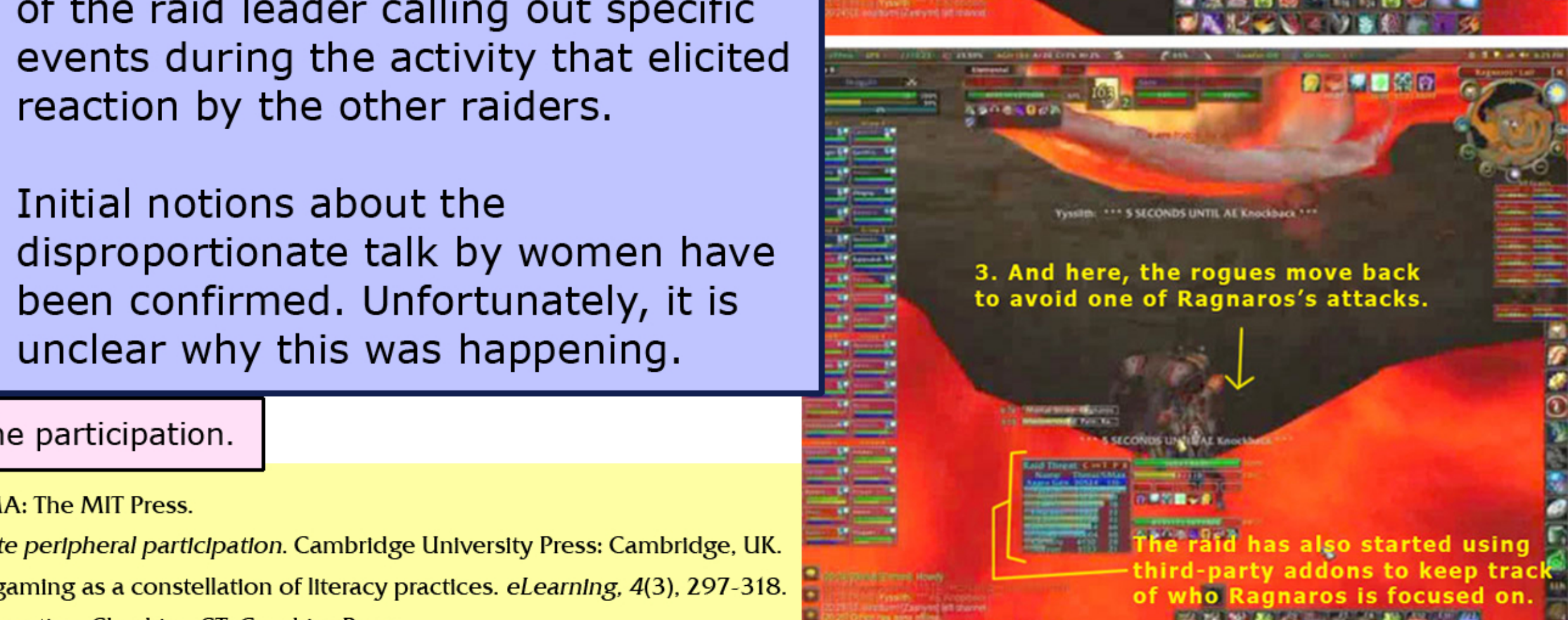
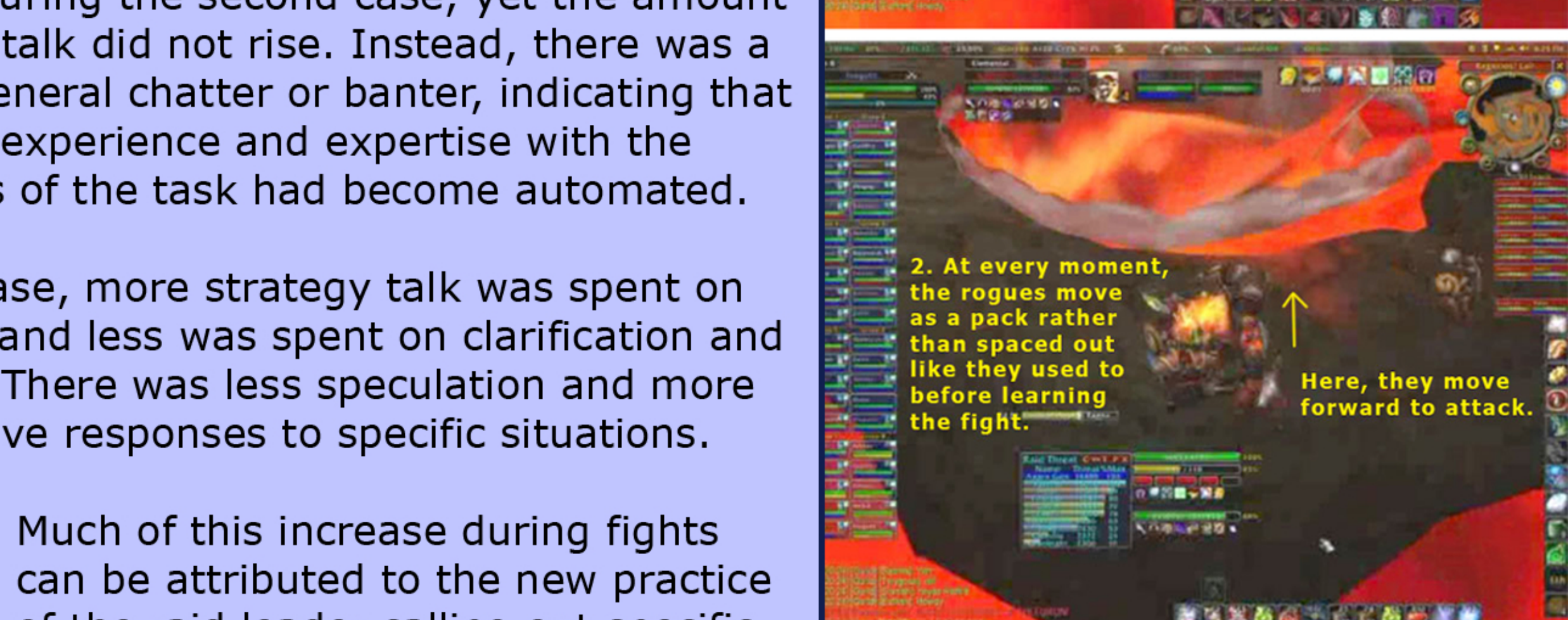
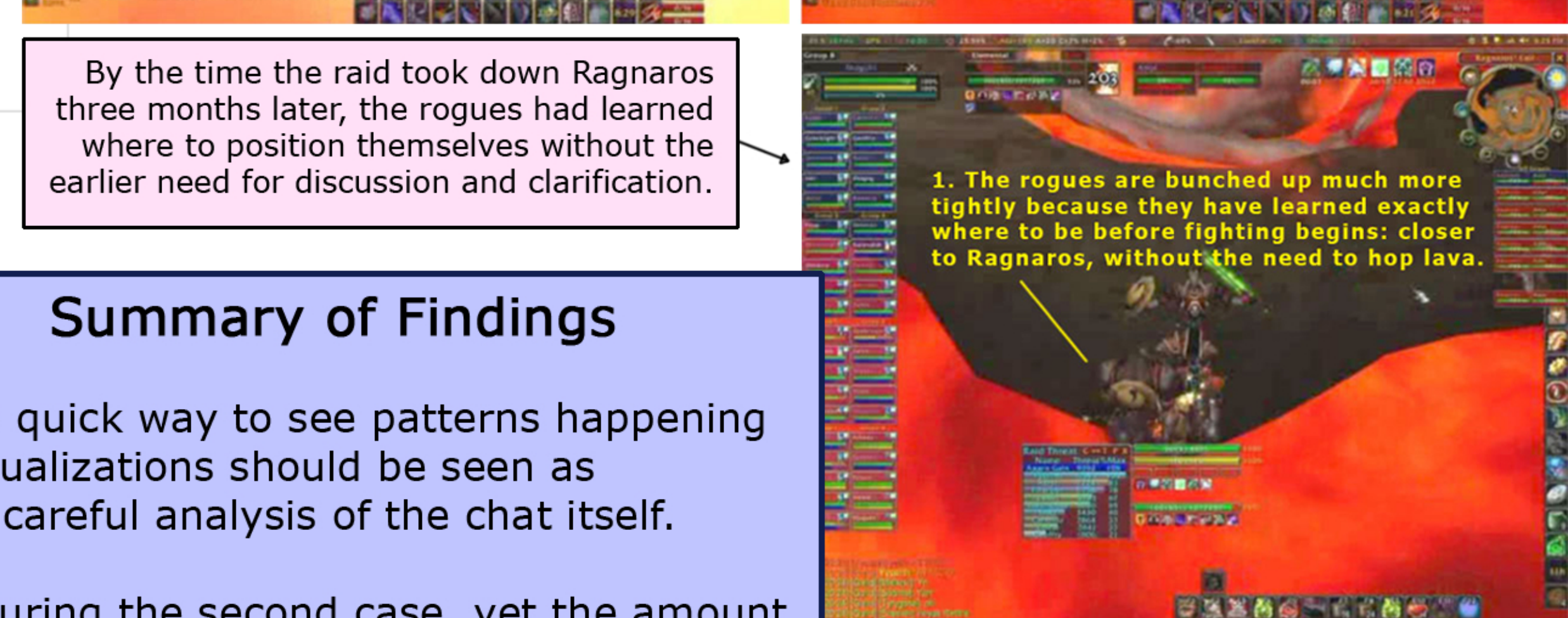
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- third-party addons to keep track of who Ragnaros is focused on