



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Child-Computer Interaction

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijcci

Emergent social practices of Singapore students: The role of laughter and humour in educational gameplay

Beaumie Kim ^{a,*}, Wing Ho ^b

^a University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 1N4, Canada

^b National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798, Singapore

HIGHLIGHTS

- Humour and laughter influence learners' interactions with the game, the teacher, and classmates.
- Learners constantly define themselves in the classroom with humour and laughter.
- Learners' laughter changed the weight of their conversations.
- Humour provided by the teacher, the game, or learners themselves changed their focus and practices in the gameplay.
- Incongruity humour had important roles in learners' pursuits.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 March 2016

Received in revised form 11 November 2017

Accepted 16 January 2018

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Educational game

Humour

Laughter

Playful learning

Social practice

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses our investigation of the role of humour and laughter when students interacted with *DinoPlates* in the classrooms of an all-boys secondary school in Singapore. *DinoPlates* simulates and lets learners control Earth's geological processes and search for dinosaur fossils to support playful learning of Earth science concepts. We contend that the learners transformed classroom social practices during gameplay, which exhibited their playful engagement by shaping their own activities in the classroom. Findings indicate that different pairs playing the game altered the intended goals and outcomes of the game; these instances are often accompanied by humour and laughter, and transformed the social structure and solidarity of the classroom. We discuss the opportunities that the design of *DinoPlates* afforded for emergent social practices in gameplay and the roles that learners' laughter and humour played in transforming their practices.

© 2018 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

We have built Everest! We built Everest! We defeated Everest!
Leon and Justin, during gameplay

The potential for learning with digital games has been of interest to researchers since 1960s. In *Simulation Games in Learning* [1], researchers reported on the contemporary state of art innovation in educational technology, and explored the representational power of computerized and simulated gaming environments. The interest in games for learning has continued with different ideas. Papert's [2] seminal work on Logo programming language provided an empowering environment for children to create games and build knowledge. More recently, Gee [3] asserted that learning

principles are evident in gameplay and advocated the application of digital games in education. To Gee, cultural meanings in the game environments, as well as learners' personal meanings, play an important role in learning with games.

In our research, we attended to how social practices emerged when learners encountered *DinoPlates*. When we discuss social practices, we do not focus on learners' appropriation of this educational game as intended for the classroom learning. Instead, we pay attention to how learners negotiate, shape, and transform their practices of this particular event of playing *DinoPlates*, drawing on their prior social practices of playing games and being in the classroom [4]. We concur with Thomas and Brown's [5] claim that learners' use and growth of their ideas, passion, and agency are most critical indicators of their engagement in school. Leon and Justin, in the above excerpt, had created towering mountain peaks in *DinoPlates*, an educational game for learning Earth science. They announced their achievement to their classmates with laughter, by referring to Mount Everest. This gives us a glimpse of their excitement and demonstrates the potential of digital games that

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: beaumie.kim@ucalgary.ca (B. Kim), fhwing@yahoo.com (W. Ho).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijcci.2018.01.001>

2212-8689/© 2018 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

ignites a passion for learning. While studying their engagement, we could not ignore the omnipresence of learners' laughter when playing the game.

In this paper, we present an exploratory and qualitative study of learners playing *DinoPlates* game in an all-boys secondary school in Singapore. We discuss the instances and roles of humour and laughter in the gameplay. We believe that the emergent social practices evident during gameplay may represent playful engagement that may not be actively promoted in school contexts. In particular, we draw on the literature that privileges learners' transgressions in the form of playful learning (e.g., [6–10]), as opposed to adult's notions of appropriate interactions in the classroom. Our findings showcase learners' transgressive interactions that were accompanied by laughter and humour, and we demonstrate how these interactions may give rise to student ideas, passion, and agency during their gameplay. The analysis described in this paper was guided by following questions:

- (1) What kinds of learner interactions and practices emerge during gameplay that exhibit emotional expressions?
- (2) What are the social roles of humour and laughter in expressing ideas and transforming practices?

Below, we review literature relevant to humour and laughter in learning and education, introduce the context and the analytical framework of the study, and present our findings with four emergent themes based on the learners' interactions with the game along with their peers and teacher. The last two sections focus on synthesis and discussion of our findings for learning in the classroom with educational games.

2. Humour, laughter, and emergent social practices in playful engagement

Our actions and thoughts are closely linked to our feelings. Knowing this, the entertainment industry identified how to effectively apply the work of media psychologists to provide immersive experiences for their audience (e.g., [11]). The entertainment experience engages us in an imaginative world, which evokes emotional reactions [12]. Entertainment media (e.g., movies and TV series) provide rewarding feelings (i.e., fun, thrill, and empathic sadness), and satisfy individuals' social and cognitive needs (i.e., contemplative emotional experiences, emotional engagement with characters, social sharing of emotions, and vicarious release of emotions) [13]. Laughter, for example, expresses our opinions (i.e., it is humorous, ridiculous, or embarrassing) about the content.

Within the context of learning, researchers assume that learners, intentionally or unintentionally, judge their learning situations and contents based on their feelings about similar experiences, in order to think and act on them [14]. The emotional linkages to learning, as well as the social nature of emotional expressions (in this case laughter), are in line with sociocultural perspectives on learning (e.g., [15]). Emotional expressions as social constructs in diverse sociocultural settings have been of interest to researchers. For example, Roth and his colleagues [16] studied laughter in science classrooms and found that laughter was integral to learning and understanding. Laughter in science classrooms not only challenged the serious nature of the scientific discipline but also had a "social function of reproducing and transforming intimacy, part of the learning environment that fosters engagement, interest, and thus learning process" [16, p. 456]. Similarly, Dormann and Biddle [17] advocated using humour to resolve any contradictions between game and learning objectives and to support the interplay between play and learning.

Humour in Roth and his colleagues' [16] work (i.e., a teacher's joke about scientists) was a mediating tool to emotionally and

intellectually engage learners, whereas laughter was learners' expression of how they felt about the humour (e.g., agreement and amusement). In gaming, players constantly judge what is presented in the game, immerse in the emotional scenarios, and act accordingly to resolve dilemmas and achieve goals [18]. Similarly, learners' ideas, emotions, and actions are sociocultural practices that often emerge in context. Learners' emotional engagement, in turn, becomes their resource for playful learning: when learners find their activities personally meaningful, they direct their attention towards them, and may invent practices that could make these activities more enjoyable [19,20]. Playful engagement denotes learners shaping their own activity within a structured setting, which includes their problem-solving as well as the invention, modification, and transgression of its rules [8–10,21]. Play, therefore, creates the situational demands for change in learners' ways of being and doing things, and such changes are accompanied by their feelings [22,23].

Laughing is a universal human expression, whereas humour and play are sociocultural constructs that may bring about laughter if the actors understand their sociocultural context [24]. While humour and laughter are not prerequisites for play [25], they signal the invitation to play [26]. The production of humour and laughter through play can engage its actors on social, cognitive and emotional levels. Similarly, educators' interest-driven approach to learning (e.g., popular culture) may produce mirth for learners and potentially heighten playful engagement [6]. This supports learners' playful engagement and helps them connect emotionally and meaningfully with the content. It privileges the ways in which learners make sense of who they are and the world around them [10]. The mirth and laughter that arise from these emotional experiences may bend rules, spoken or unspoken, and jeopardize teachers' pedagogical intentions. Further, gaining agency that serves learners' interests may mean circumventing or challenging the established system of the institution. Learners' play that emerges within the school setting inevitably highlights its paradoxical occurrences that Zimmerman [8] pointed out – institutional arrangements become a game, within which learners improvise their acts. Grace and Tobin [6] saw that open communication between the authoritative group (i.e., teachers and school) and the subordinate (i.e., students) would offer room for "satire, parody, and social laughter" and pave a way to uncharted pedagogical grounds.

The classroom, therefore, is a venue where the sociocultural practices of learners could flourish. It is also a conflicting site where work, boredom, play, fun, and the negotiation and contestation of power co-exist [7]. Grace and Tobin [6] likened the tension of a classroom to the carnival realm described in Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. In the world of carnival, the spirit of festivity and laughter reigns with peasants possessing great power, while the ruling class is reduced to subjects for mockery with their authority stripped. It is a celebration of feasting, taboos, crudities, and laughter, momentarily liberating the people from oppression. This subversive world is based on "ritual spectacles" (feast, pageants, and marketplace festivals), "comic verbal compositions" (oral and written parodies), and "various genres of billingsgate" (curses, oaths, slang, and profanity) [27, p. 5]. Play is similarly perceived as a constructed world alternative to reality, which occupies its inhabitants in entirety with no tangible returns. It dictates and lives by its own terms, builds its own communities, and the way it operates is a mystery to outsiders. Huizinga [25] called this aspect of play "the magic circle" (p. 210). Although these moments of pleasure and playful resistance confront the present state of affairs, Bakhtin suggested that these actions harbour no ambitions to overthrow the established system of order [28]. Play that emerges within the established system ceases to exist if power rests completely in the hands of others to dictate the terms of what an activity is [9]. Allowing a good measure of flexibility in classroom activities may

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6795273>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6795273>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)