**From virtual to physical: Exploring the near transfer of grammatical constructions in online gaming and language learning**

This paper explores new means to encourage flexible language learning external to the traditional learning environment (Biggs, 1999). I examine data from research conducted at the University of Waterloo in which German language learners play and interact with online games, exploring what implications this has for their second language development. This study follows fourteen German language learners with varying levels of proficiency in German as they play the online computer game *World of Warcraft* over the course of four months. Throughout the study, groups of players meet up in-person in a group setting to discuss in German their experiences playing the game. All data, both from in-game interaction and group discussions, has been transcribed and analyzed to delineate the complex learning and gameplay trajectories which each player exhibits.

I specifically look at the role of near transfer (Barnett & Ceci, 2002; Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio, 2009) in digital game-based language learning. Examining the data collected in this research study, I will argue that language learners are able to successfully transfer language from the gaming context to non-gaming contexts by simply playing games in German; if given the opportunity to speak with other language learners, they can then reflect on and utilize the grammatical constructions that were encountered in the gaming environment in a non-gaming context. This then signifies that given free-reign to play in, interact with, and immerse themselves within a digital gaming world, language learners can develop proficiency in the target foreign language.