

Project 2: Collection and Analysis of Observational Data

I have chosen to collect observations on my subject, JT, playing the online game Final Fantasy 14 using his laptop and controller. JT begins by folding away his bed, tucking it into the corner of his bedroom leaving a sizeable open area in the middle. JT then fixates a large folding desk where the space resided and stacks his laptop with connected controller and an accompanying tablet device on top. After connecting into the game, JT takes slight hunch position in his seat holding the controller near his chin with his hands simultaneously propping up his head above the desk by leaning into it with his elbows. He starts greeting friends with his keyboarding typing with one hand while shifting through the menu screens using the controller in the other taking glimpses of the daily log. Soon within the game, JT recruits friends and warps into a dungeon. JT maintains this hunching position with the controller focusing on the laptop screen only setting the controller aside on the table when responding to a chat message. When JT's character skills load in-between delays while fighting monsters within the dungeon, JT quickly presses particular buttons corresponding to the onscreen skill map continuing his combo without looking in the moment of repeatedly pressing. At one point of the dungeon, JT chats to his party members, "Should I take the fruit at 2 stacks or 3?" in regards to a boss monster attack. In the end of completing the dungeon, JT rests the controller on the table and congratulates his friends in chat while using character emotes with button presses then typing, "We did it guys!" After about the 40 minutes playing, JT stretches his arms remaining seated then picks up the controller with his right hand and continues playing returning to the position of propping his upper body with his elbows perpendicular to the table and his hands resting on the bottom his chin with the controller.

Beginning my analysis on any blaring peculiarities, I first discover JT's ritual of priming his local environment by putting away space-demanding furniture like his bed to create an open area to play in. This might suggest JT requires degree of comfort, but can still keep a relative attention towards the game without dozing off if he were to play on his bed. Perhaps this ritual emerges from a claustrophobic setting enabling a behavior of tending to this anxiety. This suggests actions that change the attended environment account for the current attention about the environment. JT partitions the physical space of the arena by only focusing his spatial relation with the new space, the desk, and all the electronic gadgets he is using while playing. One notable aspect while observing JT's play with the controller is that he seldom focuses on his hands operating the controller, but is able to weave button combinations in a coherently rapid manner. A way approach this is by thinking how JT might filter out the computational complexity occurring between setting and activity.

In further viewing JT's quick precise pressing of particular buttons preparing to use skills in advance, the concept of a mental map of the controller matching with the onscreen interface intuitively develops quick recognition. This design of an inscription directly corresponding with the physical

layout of the controller enables JT to offload much of the memorization changing the task to more perceptual dexterity as incoming information is organized in an intuitive way (Goodwin 2009: 609).

In the event of traveling and map coordinating, JT swivels the map screen while simultaneously pivoting with his character in an attempt to find his bearings and locate his wanted position. To bring this into context, Jean Lave et al. provides us a theory on an existence of a dialectic relationship between the attended setting and the current activity. Lave supposes that meaning constantly influence the other, and cognition emerges from this interaction (Lave 1984: 75). A solution arises from this dialectic relationship between JT's surroundings and navigation. In a sense, the solution and problem are equal as JT changes his perceptual field by movement; he also changes his direction and trajectory towards a path. JT's action of moving about causes his bearing to change on the map, which in turn changes how he moves again. JT, who is embedded within an information rich world, we deduce cognition as this dynamic coupling that changes in real time, emerging from the interactions between the brain, setting, and activity influencing one another.