

Gamer - Week 11, Sem 2

This passage serves as a tribute to my just-sold 6-year-old Minecraft account. I had some really wonderful days with my account - the foreign friends I met, the game sense I developed both inside and outside the game, and the playing experience I had over the years, were invaluable.

1 The wild gamer side of me

Excited to take on new gaming challenges, I am notorious for being an avid (erm... addicted I mean) gamer towards my inner circle. I spend hours playing games different genres every day, regardless of how busy it gets - I recall playing 3 hours of Minecraft a day during DSE (and probably 8 during F3/F4 - back then I was *addicted*). Games and the mindsets it provided to me have become an integral part of my life. From tangible card games like BS cards, puzzles like Soduku, MOBAs like League of Legends to sandbox games like Minecraft, different genres of games have repeatedly saved my mental self from collapsing into the troughs of depression throughout my secondary school life.

In form 4 to form 5, I made a YouTube channel that recorded my Minecraft gameplay, and deleted it with slightly more than 10 thousand cumulative views. For those who know me in real life, I have been giving myself a dedicated in-game nickname - '[TheSkillfulNoob](#)'. However as I step into university, I have been deliberately hiding this side of me to 'normalize' myself.

2 Games - 'fun', 'static' simulations of reality

For some reasons, most parents hate their children for playing games. Commonly, they quote the old Chinese saying of 勤有功, 戲無益 (By Confucius, meaning that we should be diligent instead of playing unproductively all day). But that is NOT always the case. Before going further, let's take a look at the several generally agreed primary components of games:

- Goals and challenges
- Rules
- Interaction
- Mental and/or physical stimulation

In each game, we are provided with certain goals (i.e. to win), and certain rules that we must adhere. Often, we are required to compete *against* rivals (as solos or teams) to see which of us are better. Interactions and strategies, including attacking, defending, trapping, or faking, thus comes into play.

Good rules, good strategies and players on an equal par make games rather interesting, as the outcomes of each game could be different - we humans would feel thrilled under uncertainty that we could potentially control. But games are surprisingly similar to reality - in fact, most situations in games have reference values in reality.

Games	Reality
Unrealistic, fictional	Realistic, happening around us
Constraints: Stamina, gold, attack speed, skill points	Constraints: time, money
Objective: to win (with <i>fixed</i> set of rules)	Objective: to win (in <i>OUR</i> own, changing, rules)
Strategies differ by people (Minecraft Survival Games - to be the last man standing, some prefer to be offensive and kill other players for armor to protect themselves; some prefer to be less aggressive, looting chests to gear up)	Strategies differ by people (SME businessmen 'making their ends meet' vs corporate businessmen's aggressive and ambitious planning)
Penalty: affecting our own lives indirectly.	Penalty: affecting our own lives directly
Players in more control Plots can be known	We in less control Plots are changeable

Games and reality are similar in terms of the given constraints, and the variety of strategies that each of us prefer. **Games are, indeed, 'static' portrayals of reality**, that we gamers have more control in. In other words, studying different game situations might help us in determining our decisions in real life with a case-by-case approach.

3 Games as teachers of life - experimental learning

Most games, especially those video games in the 1980s and 1990s, feature fixed plots and outcomes due to the static nature of programming codes (for example, Super Mario, Bubble dragons, visual novels). Each actions we made in games would lead to a predictable outcome - that affects our gameplay later on and determines whether we can 'win'. Most often, we start off games inexperienced - that we often are unclear of our objectives and make decisions that eventually result in unfavourable conditions.

And here is where the 'restart' or 'un-do' button come into play. Some video games allow the undoing or re-doing of our actions.

- In Super Mario, we can replay the levels after dying or completing them to get Star Coins.
- In LoL, we are allowed to respawn after dying.
- Most games allow replaying.

We are allowed to change our decisions, to see if anything is different. Given games' pretty accurate approximations of life and real situations in their static contexts, we may 'learn' more by doing and exploring different situations in the game. One example is that, we carefully investigate different placements of chess to find winning moves.

4. Life as a game of uncertainty

Viewed from another perspective, as decisions made in life are often permanent and unchangeable, decisions made in games may aid us in real-life decision making. Life is just a game of uncertainty. We all are gamers - except that we don't know the hidden outcomes of our behaviour, and that we bear real consequences.

Gamers often treat their in-game experiences less seriously because they know what they were encountering are unreal. But our 'games' of life are REAL. We all are 'gamers' that are responsible for our own actions - that cannot press the restart button of our lives.

We 'gamers' are born to experience life. So to enhance our 'gaming' experience, shouldn't we all pay our fullest efforts in living and making our days the brightest that we could make?

5 TheSkillfulNoob, the completionist gamer

This brings us to my identity as an experimental completionist gamer. Starting from the day I began to understand anything about life, I know that I have always understood too little about life and how everything - and everyone - works.

I was not good at socializing. I easily made offensive remarks and got myself into chaotic situations. I was sidelined by my secondary school classmates and stayed socially distinct. I might always be that 'noob' that always does everything wrong at the beginning. That curious 'noob' who always steps on traps and gets himself stuck easily.

But those numerous times of simulations (failures) and new situations that I encounter enrich my experience as a gamer. I explore new options, I think out of the box like the game developers, and I explore hidden paths in the questlines; I change by dealing with people using alternative mindsets to find the optimal ones. I am a completionist that wishes to see all the possible outcomes, be them good or bad. Traps hurt, but make me stronger By learning through doing, I become more and more skillful in making by decisions and managing this non-static game of life. And when I get stuck, I know, inferred from the game situations, that there are options that make me better off, or proceed to the next stage(s) of life or relationship. I also know that those 'players' who perceive me as a 'noob' would regret viewing me like that, when I acquire more and more 'skills' on my own and become well-off.

And I am not really afraid of changing any of those parameters. Reality? Just a changing game. Maybe I would get myself better relationships, or worse; maybe I would get heartbroken, maybe I will get rich, maybe I will die tomorrow. Whatever unknown outcomes I get by going on my way and making the decisions I deem, 'optimal'. I am a completionist that is not afraid in experiencing any alternative outcomes that go down my storyline.

I am TheSkillfulNoob, the gamer noob who would enhance his life with skills and continuous experimenting. Gaming is my life.