Matej Popovski

Journal 1

Sunday February 16th, 3:00pm – 11:00pm, Week 5

Playtime: 8 hours including couple of breaks

Journal About League of Legends

It was a sunny Sunday, and after finishing most of my schoolwork, I headed to the E-Sports room at Bakke Recreational Wellbeing. I felt well-rested, energized, and excited to dive into some gaming. The game I chose was League of Legends, a game I've played since primary school but never reached a high division in. I was slightly anxious about finding an available computer, but luckily, there were a few open spots. I logged into my account and opened a document to take notes for this journal. Anticipating I might play beyond the six-hour computer limit, I reached out to a friend about potentially using their account later.

Game Overview:

League of Legends is an online PvP game with two main maps, the most popular being a 5v5 mode. Players select from over 170 champions, with 4–5 new ones introduced annually. The game offers Normal and Ranked modes; I chose Ranked, where consistent wins increase your division. My current rank is Bronze, leaving me with plenty of room for growth. There are five key roles in the game: Support, ADC (Attack Damage Carry), Mid, Top, and Jungle. I decided to play Support, a position I find more manageable since it focuses on assisting teammates rather than dealing damage.

Game 1 – The Highs:

I picked Vel'Koz with Comet runes and Flash/Ignite abilities. Vel'Koz is a long-range, damage-dealing champion but fragile when enemies get too close. I felt confident in my choice but a bit nervous since I hadn't played in a while. The game went well; I protected my ADC effectively and landed several successful skill shots. However, I realized I could improve by placing more wards to enhance map vision, allowing us to track enemy movements more effectively. Vision is crucial, as predicting the opponent's strategy plays a significant role in our overall game plan. Winning the game filled me with pride and excitement—especially during the chaotic 5v5 fights, when my heart raced with adrenaline as I tried to survive and maximize damage.

Game 2 – The Frustration:

Encouraged by my initial success, I picked Vel'Koz again with the same runes and abilities. This time, the enemy support played a hook-based champion, constantly pulling me out of position. After dodging a hook, I immediately respond with a full combo of spells, because enemy’s hook is on a cooldown. I tried to trick the enemy support by standing in one place and moving in the last moment right before the hook. However, that didn’t always work. I felt frustrated and helpless as I died multiple times, unable to protect my ADC. After the loss, I noticed feelings of anger and disappointment mixed with a strong urge to start another game. I also recognized the addictive nature of the game—losing left me wanting redemption.

Game 3 – The Comeback:

To address my weakness against hook champions, I picked Nautilus, a tanky champion with strong crowd control. I used the recommended runes and Flash/Ignite again. Nautilus' durability gave me confidence, and I found it easier to position myself without dying as often, which is why I felt more secure engaging in fights. One part of my mechanics was to hide in a bush, and then surprisingly jump on the enemy AD-carry. Most of the time it resulted in catching the enemies off guard and winning a fight. This aligns with Gee's Principles, as the sense of safety and control fostered my engagement and encouraged me to take more strategic risks, enhancing my learning experience. We won the game, and my frustration from the previous loss turned into satisfaction. I noticed how different my mindset was when I felt more in control.

Continued Play – The Rollercoaster:

I played a total of eight games, alternating between Vel'Koz, Nautilus, Thresh, Blitzcrank, and others, depending on the enemy team's composition. I won four and lost four, ending the session with a 50% win rate. Despite the even ratio, I still gained ranking points due to the system awarding more LP for wins than it subtracts for losses. Each game brought an emotional shift—joy after a win, frustration after a loss, but always a desire to continue playing. I felt particularly excited during team fights and when making game-altering plays. Here I can draw a parallel with school, meaning no matter how frustrated we are, we need to keep being persistent and that would eventually lead to success.

Reflection & Areas for Improvement:

Throughout the session, I realized I rely heavily on intuition rather than fully understanding the game’s mechanics. I often skip reading item, rune, and ability descriptions, which likely leads to suboptimal decisions. Next time, I plan to study these details more thoroughly. Additionally, I want to improve my champion selection by learning about matchups and counterpicks through professional guides and videos.

Connection to Gee’s Principles & My Thesis:

The addictive nature of League of Legends ties closely to Gee’s principles of learning and engagement. The game provides continuous challenges and opportunities for growth, similar to how educational systems are structured. Ranks resemble grades, rune choices are like preparing a study guide or a cheatsheet, and strategic planning is crucial for success in both contexts. The emotional highs and lows, along with the intrinsic motivation to improve, mirror the learning process.

This experience directly supports my thesis from the proposal, which explores how League of Legends uses game mechanics to teach players essential skills in real-time. The game implements learning mechanisms like combos, movement, and vision. Through repeated gameplay and real-time feedback, players develop strategic thinking, teamwork, and decision-making—skills that align with Gee's principles of situated learning.

In the end, my gaming session left me with a mixture of satisfaction and curiosity. Additionally, I noticed how my strategic decisions and movements improved my critical and logical thinking. For instance, I recognized patterns in enemy movements, which helped me predict their actions and successfully land skill shots—a skill that mirrors real-life applications like predicting outcomes based on patterns (very helpful in mathematics and computer science). Moreover, playing the game consistently has enhanced my reaction time, a form of intelligence that could potentially help me solve complex problems more efficiently.

My paper focuses on how the game contributes to learning and strategic thinking, so my notes show some the decisions I made and why, for example switching the champion, specific movement or unique combo of abilities. All those movements helped me learn something new, and how different choices might have changed the game's outcome.

(I experienced excitement, frustration, and determination—all within a few hours. These emotional shifts, combined with the game's strategic depth, demonstrate how effective game design can engage players, providing valuable insights into potential applications in educational environments.) - I would NOT consider this paragraph since my main focus isn’t the feelings.