

Author: Lincoln Bain IV

Translanguaging in the Digital Wilds: Language Learning Through Video Game Streams on Twitch.TV

Twitch.TV has over 140 million monthly active viewers (Leith & Gheen, 2021) and is a dominant digital entertainment platform, fostering real-time, multimodal engagement between streamers and global audiences. While research on game-based learning highlights the potential of structured gaming environments for second language acquisition (SLA) (Reinhardt, 2019; Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008), fewer studies explore how informal, unscripted multilingual spaces contribute to language development. This research builds on previous work on translanguaging in digital spaces (Androutsopoulos, 2015; García & Li Wei, 2014) by examining how Twitch fosters spontaneous, multimodal language negotiation in gaming communities. This research explores Twitch as a digital wilds environment (Sauro & Zourou, 2017), where learners engage in real-time discourse, with translanguaging emerging as a key communicative practice for meaning-making, interaction, and engagement.

This study employs a qualitative ethnographic methodology to investigate archived Twitch streams and associated chat interactions from a cohort of ten multilingual native Spanish-speaking streamers. Data will be analyzed using discourse analysis (Gee, 2014) to examine interactional patterns and multimodal analysis (Kress, 2010) to explore how streamers and viewers co-construct meaning across text, voice, and visual cues. The analysis focuses on how streamers strategically employ translanguaging, how viewers negotiate meaning and reinforce learning, and how multimodal affordances (voice, chat, emotes, overlays) mediate SLA in an informal setting. Preliminary findings suggest that translanguaging clarifies strategies, creates humor, and enhances community-building, while chat participants engage in peer-assisted meaning-making, reinforcing new vocabulary and expressions.

Beyond its significance for informal learning, this study explores how Twitch.TV can be adapted for formal language instruction. This study examines translanguaging beyond code-switching, considering how multimodal resources (e.g., emotes, hashtags, memes) contribute to meaning-making in multilingual gaming discourse. This study proposes potential applications for integrating live-streamed discussions, student-led commentary, and multimodal chat engagement to foster authentic, participatory learning experiences. Findings will offer educators, researchers, and curriculum designers insights on leveraging digital entertainment platforms to bridge the gap between vernacular digital practices and structured language learning.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on

Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 185–205.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006913489198>

Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (Fourth edition).
Routledge.

Kress, G. R. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary
communication*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203970034>

Leith, A. P., & Gheen, E. (2021). Twitch in the time of quarantine: The role of engagement in
needs fulfillment. *Psychology of Popular Media*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000372>

Reinhardt, J. (2019). *Gameful Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: Theory,
Research, and Practice*. Springer International Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04729-0>

Sauro, S., & Zourou. (2017). Online Fan Practices and CALL. *CALICO Journal*, 34(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.33077>

Thorne, S. L., & Reinhardt, J. (2008). "Bridging Activities," New Media Literacies, and
Advanced Foreign Language Proficiency. *CALICO Journal*, 25(3), 558–572.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/cj.v25i3.558-572>