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LUDOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN GLOTTODIDACTIS AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT: This paper aims to introduce briefly the basic assumptions of ludology as an academic discipline dealing with games research (including educational linguistic and communicational games in teaching foreign languages) and to present the achievements of the Games Research Association of Poland (Pl. *Polskie Towarzystwo Badania Gier*) being the first ludological association in Poland, and closely cooperating with the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The paper also summarises that cooperation and outlines the traditions of ludological research in glottodidactics and intercultural communication in the institute resulting in the recent foundation of the Center for Ludological Studies in Glottodidactics and Intercultural Communication and the foundation of the association's official journal "Homo Ludens".

1. The origin of ludology

The term *ludology* is a neologism resulting from the combination of two words, one derived from the Latin word *ludus* (*ludere*) - 'to play' which was used in ancient Rome to cover the entire, large area of games and playing, and the other - Greek word - *logos* among numerous other meanings referring to reason and science and in the contemporary form of '-logy' serving to coin names of academic disciplines. At the same time another term existed in Latin - *iocus* (*iocari*) - however it referred to the much narrower sphere of jokes and mischief. Yet, surprisingly, it is the latter that with time expanded its meaning to 'play' and 'to play' and was transferred to Romance languages and transformed into the contemporary *jeu* (*jouer*) in French, *giuoco* (*giocare*) in Italian, *juego* (*jugar*) in Spanish, *jogo* (*jogar*) in Portuguese and *joc* (*juca*) in Romanian¹. Incidentally, many European languages do not distinguish between 'play' and 'game', thus, there is one word - *Spiel* - for both in German, *spel* in Dutch, *igra* in Russian and - as mentioned above - *jeu* in French. Moreover, even if there are two separate words like in English or Polish *zabawa* (for play) and *gra* (for a game) their

¹ Examples after Siek-Piskozub 1995: 16.

semantic fields are not always identical (cross-linguistically). Besides, the meanings of both terms often overlap even within the same language causing misunderstandings among researchers within a single language, let alone across languages. Therefore, in the literature of cultural studies, psychology, sociology or pedagogy both terms coexist and very often are used interchangeably without defining either, in spite of numerous attempts from the perspectives of multiple disciplines². The famous Dutch historian and cultural-researcher Johan Huizinga in his classic work "Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play Element in Culture" (first edition in 1938) coined the title term (playing man/man at playing) to be complimentary to *homo faber* (creative man) after the original *homo sapiens* (thinking man) had turned out to be not complete enough to describe humanity. Huizinga justified his invention, explaining that *homo faber* was even less accurate than *homo sapiens* as many animals are also *faber*, and what refers to creativity refers also to play. He claimed that human culture is created and develops in play and as play. The very term *ludology*, in turn, which, as might be supposed, describes the science of games and play research³, was first used in the context of research into computer games/videogames (or broadly speaking digital games) only. Indeed, it was used by Gonzalo Frasca⁴ (1999) with the intention "to describe a yet nonexistent discipline that would focus on the study of game in general and videogames in particular" (Frasca 2003: 2). However, according to another famous games researcher Jesper Juul, the term had been used as early as in 1982, albeit rarely and with a different meaning. Finally, the term *ludologist* was first encountered in 2001 at the DAC⁵ conference held at Brown University and was applied to Markku Eskelinen, Jesper Juul, Gonzalo Frasca and Espen Aarseth, though it had never been used by the last one in any of his writings. Apart from that, the term has been applied to the crew of the "Game studies" journal composed mainly of the same people mentioned above. Other game researchers such as Aki Järvinen⁶ also define themselves as ludologists. Besides, the word *ludologist* has been popularised by the research weblogs "The Ludologist" by J. Juul and "Ludology.org" by G. Frasca. Among other eminent, contemporary games researchers one

² To mention the most eminent researchers: Huizinga (1985), Caillois (1973), Elkonin (1978), Sułkowski (1984), Znaniecki (1974), Okoń (1995), Piasecki (1922).

³ Świtalski in 1987 proposed the name 'symulogy' (Pl. 'symulogia') for a discipline which would deal with simulations and simulation games (Siek-Piskozub 1995: 27).

⁴ Gonzalo Frasca is a Uruguayan computer game designer, developer, researcher and entrepreneur.

⁵ Digital Arts and Culture conference, April 26-28, 2001, Providence, Rhode Island.

⁶ Aki Järvinen's PhD title: "Games without Frontiers: Theories and Methods for Game Studies and Design" 2007, Helsinki, Finland. He also runs a weblog under the same title: <http://www.gameswithoutfrontiers.net>.

should also mention Henry Jenkins (American media-researcher) and Lars Konzack (Danish video games and role-playing games researcher) running his academic blog "Ludologica"⁷. In recent decades numerous associations dealing with games research have been founded across the world⁸, and in Poland the *Polskie Towarzystwo Badania Gier*⁹, so far being the first and only academic ludological association in the country.

However, it would be erroneous and naive to claim that games research was born in 1999 or 1982, as Howard Edward Palmer, as early as in 1921 (so sooner than the fathers or even grandfathers of the contemporary ludologists were born), took up the subject of the academic research of games and their use in the educational context. Even sooner, because at the beginning of 20th century, in a much broader cultural context, Steward Culin¹⁰ wrote a comprehensive catalog of gaming implements and games from the Native American tribes north of Mexico. Johan Huizinga (1985)¹¹ and Roger Caillois (1997)¹², alternatively, explored the importance of games and play as a basic human activity that helps define culture and most often these two researchers are perceived to be the precursors of today's ludology. In Poland among the earliest game researchers the theoretical establishments of Florian Znaniecki (1974)¹³ and Wincenty Okoń (1995)¹⁴ should be mentioned. The beginning of the so called 'video games revolution' and academic interest of these games took place in the early 1980s.

Undoubtedly digital games, as the most dynamically developing and especially popular among younger participants of culture¹⁵, are the largest

⁷ <<http://www.konzack.blogspot.com>>

⁸ eg. in Finland "Digital Games Research Association" (DiGRA), in the UK "Society for the Advancement of Games and Simulation in Education and Training" (SAGSET), in the USA "North American Simulation and Gaming Association" (NASAGA), in Canada "The Canadian Games Studies Association", in Denmark "Spilforskning", in the Netherlands "International Simulation and Gaming Association" (ISAGA) and Simulation and Gaming Association" (SAGANET), "Association for Business Simulation and Experiential Learning" (ABSEL), Indian Simulation And Gaming Association" (INDSAGA), "Japan Association of Simulation And Gaming" (JASAG), "Australian Simulation and Games Association" (OzSAGA), "Swiss Austrian German Simulation and Gaming Association" (SAGSAGA), "Societ Italiana Giochi di Simulazione (SIGIS), "Society of Simulation and Gaming of Singapore" (SSAGSg).

⁹ Founded in 2004, registered in 2005 in Poznań, Poland, the history of PTBG was described in Surdyk (2007a).

¹⁰ Culin 1907.

¹¹ Huizinga 1985 (first edition in the original: 1938).

¹² Caillois 1997. (first edition in the original: 1958).

¹³ Znaniecki 1974. (first edition: 1934).

¹⁴ Okoń 1995 (first edition: 1987).

¹⁵ Obviously it does not mean that digital games are played only by children and teenagers - quite the contrary - this is an erroneous view which has functioned in society's consciousness. Digital games stopped being 'children's toys' many years ago.

and significant group of games that are the subject of ludologist research – yet one should not forget that they are not the only ones. Nevertheless, the few decades of development of this group of games (regardless of how popular and how large a group they are when it comes to the various kinds, subkinds and the numerous titles themselves¹⁶) cannot erase the thousands of years of existence and development of other games. It has to be admitted, however, that Gonzalo Frasca and other researchers to a large extent contributed to the popularisation of the name of the discipline (despite its hybrid nature). It is important that *ludology* (in English-speaking countries appearing interchangeably with *game studies* or *games research*), even if most often referring to digital games research, becomes a recognisable term and is more and more often cultivated. As a result there are more and more academic periodicals (mostly online, which incomparably increases their range and readership compared to traditional ones) devoted to digital games. Among the most popular ones there should be mentioned: “Game Journal: Professional Academic Forum for Games and Game Theory”¹⁷, “Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research”¹⁸, “Game Research: The Art, Business, and Science of Video Games”¹⁹, “Games and Culture: A Journal of Interactive Media”²⁰, “Eludamos: Journal for Computer Game Culture”²¹ and “Loading...”²². And in Poland – “Homo Ludens”²³, which is the first and at present the only Polish ludological reviewed periodical; moreover, unlike the others, devoted not only to digital games.

2. Ludic strategy in foreign language didactics

The scope of research of ludology in foreign language didactics is limited to educational games which are basically divided into two groups (Hadfield 1987): linguistic games (used to teach vocabulary) and communicative games (used to teach speaking and communication). Another distinction divides educational games into cooperative and

¹⁶ Counted already in at least the tens of thousands, excluding online games (based on Java and Flash type engines) and browser games.

¹⁷ <<http://www.gamejournal.org>>.

¹⁸ <<http://gamestudies.org>>.

¹⁹ <<http://www.game-research.com>>.

²⁰ <<http://gac.sagepub.com>>.

²¹ <<http://www.eludamos.org>>.

²² <<http://journals.sfu.ca/loading/index.php/loading>>.

²³ Founding Editor and Editor-in-chief – Augustyn Surdyk. The journal is published by PTBG in the traditional version and available to download free online from the official website of the association <www.PTBG.org.pl>.

competitive ones depending on the kind of involvement of the students. However, the sphere is large enough to form an area which has been of increasing interest to scholars in the last thirty years. Among them there are also Polish academics dealing with the practical and theoretical sides of this area. In addition to the cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies recognised in the methodology of teaching foreign languages Siek-Piskozub (1995, 2001) distinguished, researched and described another one and coined the term ludic strategy²⁴ for it. It covers the use of techniques referring to the sphere of human ludic activities adjusted to and serving educational purposes. Among the ludic activities which find their application in foreign language didactics as ludic techniques there are: linguistic play, play involving physical movement, musical play, strategic games, games of strategy and chance, simulations (including various theatrical techniques), happenings, music and singing, which altogether significantly broadens the scope of ludological research in glottodidactics. Techniques result from the adopted strategy and have an instrumental character (Siek-Piskozub 2007: 17). On the basis of the research conducted personally and supervised²⁵ by Siek-Piskozub it can be stated that ludic strategy can considerably assist the process of teaching/learning a foreign language and ludic techniques can be applied in every phase of a lesson, although different techniques serve different functions.

In the first phase of the lesson, which is its beginning (also called a ‘linguistic warm up’), the techniques play a motivating role. They can help the teacher to gain the positive attitude of the students to the activities awaiting them and to establish contact with the students. The function of the warm up is very often underestimated by the teachers who prefer to begin the lesson with routines such as checking attendance or homework and by the same token losing the greatest potential of the students after a break of rest. Another value of ludic techniques used in the initial phase of a lesson is helping the students to switch from their mother tongue to the foreign language. Finally, in a heterogenic group of students (representing different types of learners), they can integrate the activities of the impulsive

²⁴ The terms ‘ludic strategy’ (Pl. *strategia ludyyczna*) and ‘ludic techniques’ (Pl. *techniki ludyczne*) comprising simulation, game, play (including music) and intermediate forms were introduced and analysed for the first time in Poland by Siek-Piskozub (1995, reedited and completed 2001). Printing the post-doctoral publication in 1995 was preceded by a paper read at 26 Linguistische Kolloquium in 1991 (published: Siek-Piskozub 1993) and a book for teachers: Siek-Piskozub (1994, 2nd ed. 1997), at present also translated into Romanian). Both books constituted the basic literature of the Postgraduate Studies of Glottodidactics mentioned in the third section of this article.

²⁵ Numerous research results from master’s theses supervised by Siek-Piskozub are referred to in Siek-Piskozub 2007.

learners with the reflexive ones. Additionally, when based on the material introduced in the previous lessons, the techniques can play a checking function²⁶, although in a less formal way. After the warm up, during the actual game²⁷ when the students are involved in it, having been instructed in advance by the teacher about the rules and aim of the game, the teacher can be partly released from constant supervision and can spend some time on administrative-organisational duties²⁸. This way the techniques can play an organisational function. Although the teacher does not have to be a direct participant in the activities certainly he should show interest in the result and the students' opinions. Only then will the activities be perceived by them as important for learning the foreign language and not only as useless entertainment or time fillers for the teacher to do 'more important duties'.

In another phase of the lesson distinguished by methodologists, which is the realisation of the main goal of the lesson, most often pre-communicative²⁹ and quasi-communicative activities can be used. In the former ones the students learn how to be oriented in using certain units of the language in communication, while in the latter ones the students use them in specific communication situations. Because of the dual goal of this phase, resulting from its didactic function (extracting the knowledge possessed by the students and introducing new units) it is possible to use various techniques³⁰. The goal of another phase of the lesson is to consolidate and check the level of mastery of new linguistic units and to correct if necessary.³¹ The teacher is only an observer helping pairs or larger groups of students to communicate. Mistakes are recorded and discussed later after finishing the communicative tasks. The students are given a problem to solve. Their openness in solving the problem releases the creativity of the students and provokes them to produce spontaneous utterances. The solution must be negotiated with the others which causes emotions and makes the situation more authentic. It should not be forgotten that the techniques recommended for this phase (music and simulations) apart from the didactic function undoubtedly also have a therapeutic function. The last

²⁶ Pl. *funkcja kontrolna*.

²⁷ Especially advisable in this phase are linguistic games and play eg. riddles, crosswords, diagrams.

²⁸ eg. checking attendance, writing the subject of the lesson, checking homework etc.

²⁹ Largely described by Littlewood (1994).

³⁰ Usually when the emphasis is on communication this is role-play in pairs based on a given scenario but if vocabulary is the main focus of the phase they can be also linguistic games or songs eg. filling gaps in the lyrics.

³¹ Simulations are perceived to be an especially useful technique in this phase.

phase of a lesson – the ending – is also a good opportunity to introduce a ludic technique³². Its purpose can be to make the students realize what they have learnt, to give them homework and instruct how to do it.

3. Ludological research in the Institute of Applied Linguistics

The Institute of Applied Linguistics of The Faculty of Modern Languages and Literature of Adam Mickiewicz University³³ in Poznań (formerly The Department of Glottodidactics and Translation Studies³⁴), can be proud of a long history of ludological research and academic activity in this area in teaching foreign languages. It was in KGiT where in the years 1987–1995 prof. Teresa Siek-Piskozub (an unquestionable authority in the sphere of ludic strategy) wrote her postdoctoral dissertation titled "Gry, zabawy i symulacje w procesie glottodydaktycznym"³⁵. The book became an inspiration for creating in the academic year 1999/2000 – on the initiative of the Head of the Department, prof. Izabela Prokop, and according to a syllabus designed by her – Postgraduate Studies of Glottodidactics³⁶ addressed to German teachers, within which two glottodidactic meetings were organised, both completed with publications³⁷. Soon after studies began at post graduate level, obligatory subjects discussing ludology and ludic strategy phenomena were incorporated into the B.A. and M.A. programmes of philology-applied linguistics courses (eg. "Fringe methods"³⁸), in which among other things general ludology and ludic strategy phenomena are discussed. There are also optional classes offered, presenting theoretically and practically the applications of the Technique of Role-playing Games³⁹ ("Role-playing games in a foreign language classroom – mastering in oral communication"⁴⁰) and educational computer and online games (eg. "Multimedia in foreign language didactics"⁴¹). Besides, it was

³² Usually the ones which do not require specific timing, eg. singing a song the students have learnt or listening to a new one to be introduced in the future.

³³ Pl. *Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej Wydziału Neofilologii Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu*.

³⁴ Pl. *Katedra Glottodydaktyki i Translatoryki (KGiT)*. The history of the institute is to be found on its official site: <www.ILS.amu.edu.pl>.

³⁵ Siek-Piskozub 1995. Eng. "Games, play and simulations in the glottodidactic process".

³⁶ Pl. *Podypłomowego Studium Glottodydaktyki*.

³⁷ Prokop 2001; Hostyński 2003.

³⁸ Pl. "*Metody alternatywne*" – lectures and exercises in extramural M.A. studies.

³⁹ Described briefly in Surdyk 2006, in detail in Surdyk 2003.

⁴⁰ Pl. "*Gry fabularne na lektoracie – doskonalenie się w komunikacji ustnej*" – in regular B.A. studies.

⁴¹ Pl. "*Multimedia w kształceniu obcojęzycznym*" – in extramural M.A. studies.

in ILS where the first scholarly circle of PTBG⁴² was created, and the institute has been a co-organiser of the association's conferences cycle titled "Culture-generative Function of Games"⁴³ since its beginning i.e. 2005, an international workshop⁴⁴, and numerous guest lectures and workshops for workers and students of ILS have been organised. Also here, within the first two issues of the new series of the institute – "Language-Culture-Communication"⁴⁵ – a two-volume publication containing papers read at the first conference was released⁴⁶. Finally, in 2009, on a motion put forward by the author of the present article, the Center for Ludological Research in Glottodidactics and Intercultural Communication was founded⁴⁷. It is the first academic unit with 'ludology' in the name, in Poland and most probably in the world⁴⁸. Its workers deal with ludological research collaboratively or individually, in their doctoral and postdoctoral dissertations and in didactics (in practical language classes, B.A. and M.A. seminars and other philological subjects). They are interested especially in the area of ludic strategy within the title field of research⁴⁹ as well as in broadly perceived ludology as game research. The center cooperates with PTBG and among its workers there are members-founders, members of PTBG, members of Advisory Board of "Homo Ludens" and regular guests of the association's annual international academic conferences.

Beginning with the academic year 2009/2010 there have been introduced two post-graduate mastering courses for foreign language teachers: "Constructing educational games in teaching foreign languages" and "New

⁴² PL. *Poznańskie Koło PTBG przy ILS UAM* founded in 2005; members founders: mgr Mikołaj Czechlewski, dr Paweł Hostyński, Stanisław Krawczyk, mgr Bartosz Kuczyński, Magdalena Michalina Misiak, dr Augustyn Surdyk, mgr Szymon Tworowski, dr inż. Jan Zych. Since then four next circles have been founded in Warszawa, Bydgoszcz, Gdańsk i Kraków (more information at: <www.ptbg.org.pl>).

⁴³ PL. "Kulturotwórcza funkcja gier". So far five conferences have been organised – see Literature for their internet addresses.

⁴⁴ In 2007, on "Educational games in prevention of infectious diseases" with guests from Health Education Department of Ashanti Regional Health Promotion Centre (Department of Ministry of Health) from Ghana, Africa.

⁴⁵ PL. "Język-Kultura-Komunikacja" - edited by prof. Waldemar Pfeiffer – Head of ILS (2005–2009) and the Honorary President of the Organisational Committee of the conferences (2005–2008), Honorary Head of Advisory Board of the journal "Homo Ludens" (2009–).

⁴⁶ Surdyk (ed.) 2007, Surdyk, Szeja (eds.) 2007.

⁴⁷ PL. *Pracownia Badań Ludologicznych w Glottodydaktyce i Komunikacji Interkulturowej*. More information about the Center: <www.ILS.amu.edu.pl>.

⁴⁸ Despite the fact that ludological research, games research, game studies are more and more popular and widespread at different universities in the world.

⁴⁹ e.g. didactic games, communication/linguistic games and other ludic techniques in teaching foreign languages and intercultural communication.

technologies in teaching foreign languages"⁵⁰ which will be conducted by specialists from PTBG. The foundation of the center is a crowning of the long-lasting academic and didactic activity of individuals and groups of workers of the institute in the sphere of ludology, with strong connection with glottodidactics and intercultural communication or intercultural glottopedagogy⁵¹.

To conclude, bearing in mind that ludology is a young and continuously forming discipline but glottodidactics, despite a few decades of its formal existence, is still unfortunately often underestimated, generalised and diminished to linguistics or, at the most, applied linguistics, perhaps both paving their way to being widely accepted and respected, through mutual support and cooperation, one day will lead to the birth of another solid common field of research – ludological intercultural glottopedagogy.

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⁵⁰ Respectively: PL. "Konstruowania gier edukacyjnych w nauczaniu języków obcych" and PL. "Nowe technologie w nauczaniu języków obcych", both initiated and co-designed by the author of the article.

⁵¹ The term 'intercultural glottopedagogy' (PL. 'glottopedagogika interkulturowa') was coined by prof Pfeiffer to emphasise that the aim and mission of glottodidactics is not only to teach foreign languages interculturally but also to bring up students in and through foreign languages.

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Date of retrieval of all internet sources: 13.11.2009.