

# Multimodal analysis of using video game Minecraft to study BA-construction in Chinese

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This study studied the process of using a video game Minecraft (Mojang 2009) to facilitate teaching ba- construction in teaching Chinese as a second language.

In the field of teaching Chinese as a second language, Ba-construction is a vital language point for it is commonly used in daily life. However, it is a challenge for teaching Chinese as a second language. Because there is no direct translation in English, and the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics is too complicated for students to master. There is even no agreement between researchers. Since most Ba-construction can be changed into SVO order sentence, some instructors will use a typical transformational presentation of the Ba-construction, where it is collocated with its SVO counterpart in classroom teaching. The advantage of this teaching is students can figure out the structure of Ba quickly and relates it with the SVO order which they are familiar with. However, a big problem with this approach is learners might misconceive that the Ba-construction and its SVO counterpart are interchangeable. As a result, students would try to avoid using Ba-construction, because they can use the SVO order instead. Another result is students will over-generalize the rules, they will use Ba-construction in all verbs. Several new research provided new teaching method for this construction. However, all new ways of teaching are still limited in the classroom, although the instructors are intended to use authentic input, but because of the limitation of the classroom environment, all the input could not be real. Also, the analysis of data mainly is students' output which includes students' oral output in class or students' essay. They did not pay attention to other aspects such as gestures, expressions, body language, situations etc. which might also show students' understanding. They treated language learning and teaching only focus on linguistic framework, a micro level, and do not pay attention to learners' body, identities, value etc.

In the larger scope of the project, six numbers of participants were recruited. The six participants were divided into three groups, they need to cooperate with their partner to finish a task in the video game Minecraft. According to multimodal approach (Baldry & Thibault 2006), language analysis should not be limited in linguistic field. It should also extend beyond the linguistic semiotic to include other meaning-making modalities. By using multimodal analysis through the software ELAN, this research aimed to find out whether a video game can provide a more natural situation for students to produce the target ba- construction, what the characteristic of students' learning is through this process. The result showed that all target structures of ba-construction showed up in the real communication and real problem-solving situations. The participants communicated and cooperated to finish the task in the

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Minecraft. Nevertheless the real communication and real problem-solving situations were missing in classroom teaching situations. The study also revealed that ba-construction is most frequently triggered in instruction and exposition, especially when responding to “how” questions. Students were motivated in this learning experience according to their self-report and the high quality final project in later classroom learning. Also, this research indicates that the task design is essential for the learning process, the tough game environment is not helpful for language producing.

This research showed that video games do provide a more natural problem-solving situation to use the target language, which is absent in classroom teaching. Also the finding of this research supported the argument that language education should not only be at a micro level (Van Lier 2002 2004). Using video games to facilitate language learning promotes language education to a macro level. It also provides students with various things which includes experiential, contextual, emergent, and activity-based quality driven experiences. Therefore, the current research argues that quality driven experiences are sources of human inspiration and aspiration, which should not be taken away in educational situation.

### **Keywords**

Video game, Minecraft, Chinese language learning, Ba- construction

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