

# User-Experience



We draw from a wide domain of practical knowledge that is unmatched by other firms:

- \* Information design, programming & computer hardware
- \* Game design, user interface & user experience design
- \* Behavioral psychology, engagement & motivation
- \* Interaction analysis, participatory design & activity theory
- \* Cross-cultural communication & regional cultural dimensions
- \* Collaborative gaming, distributed work & online communities
- \* Human-computer interaction & cognitive mental models

# Game Research?

Situated Research offers in-depth video game analysis, accomplished by recording and analyzing player interaction within situated gaming environments. Techniques will be presented which uncover user practices and behaviors, aimed at uncovering a balance between aesthetics and functionality while maximizing interactive experiences. Research will be presented that outlines how to unpack gameplay experiences, so designers can design situations that yield intended, meaningful outcomes with lasting results.

The cutting-edge research approach described draws from a multi-disciplinary background to construct a very detailed picture of actual use, which informs the design process. Existing literature supports the idea that games can communicate complex ideas through exploration and play-testing, using constant feedback and assessment, by observing players' behavior through interaction with other related objects in an environment. The design of specific visualizations, rules, and behaviors will be discussed, with impacts on human interaction and game play. By studying relationships among game interfaces and player behavior, patterns can be found that help to maximize motivation and flow, a feeling where one loses track of time and their surroundings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

In addition, research outlining the importance of role specialization and complimentary virtual identities in games like MMORPGs is presented, highlighting the importance of role-specialization, where group participation is required for success: such as guild formation, where characters of different ability work together towards mutual goals. Research methods addressing group activities and specialization (assuming roles) will be described, with effects on engagement: e.g., social ties to play games.

A blended method drawing from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Clayman & Maynard, 1995) and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2005) will describe how to go about finding patterns in gameplay, helping to design situations that yield intended, meaningful outcomes with lasting results. This open-ended approach allows observation of game players while they act in their natural environment, "in-situ", obtaining information that is highly relevant to the players themselves. Applying these results to game design can yield more effective, fun and playable games.

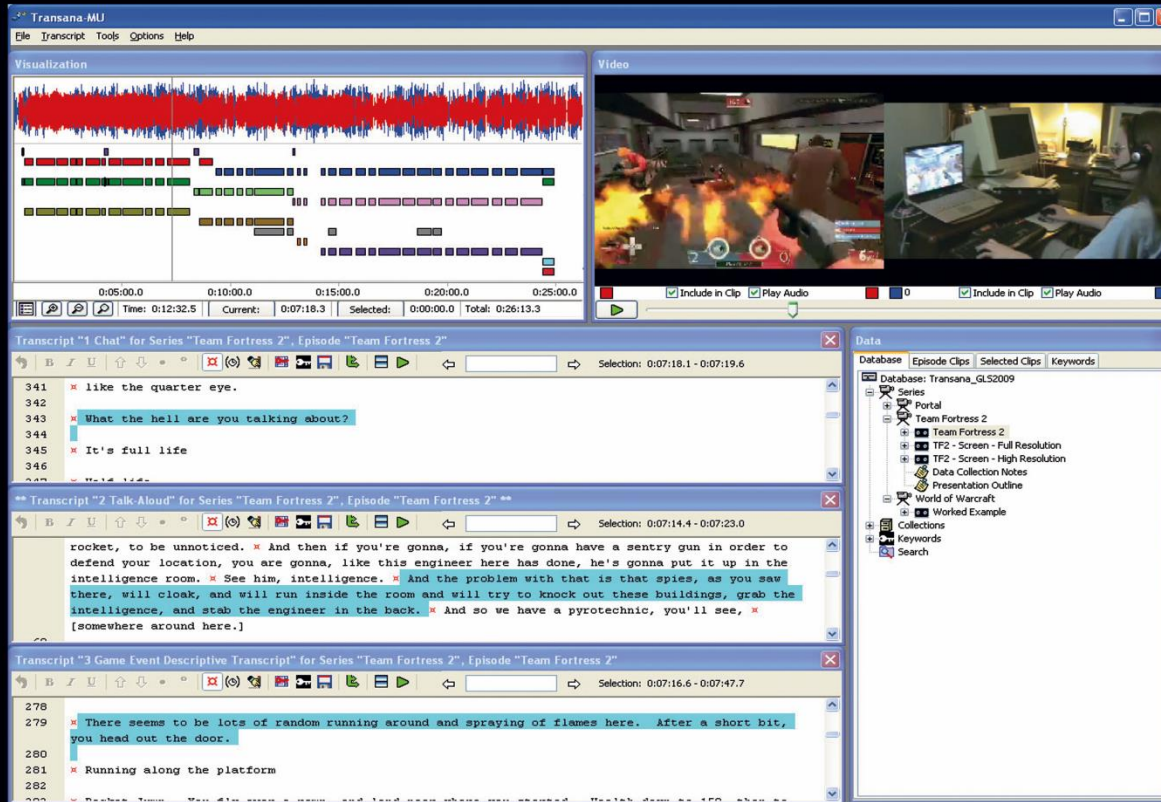
# Data Analysis:

Several levels of data reduction  
(Qualitative study: VERY rich data gathered)

- Original game play
- Video tape:
  - Selected 'episodes' (clips) transcribed & analyzed
  - Particular pieces of transcripts for further analysis

Transana MU:

- Multi-user, distributed video analysis tool
- Transcription / annotation and time-stamping of gathered video



## Our process involves:

1. Investigating current and potential use of your game & target audience
2. Gathering data and footage of game players, in actual gaming environments
3. A rigorous in-depth interaction analysis of player behaviors & interactions
4. A succinct report describing issues that require resolution or further redesign

Our cutting-edge approach draws from a multi-disciplinary background to construct a very detailed picture of actual use, which informs the design process: resulting in well-formed hypotheses about game player interaction. Findings will summarize game use patterns, interaction and collaboration with supporting video clips to best illustrate designs requiring attention.

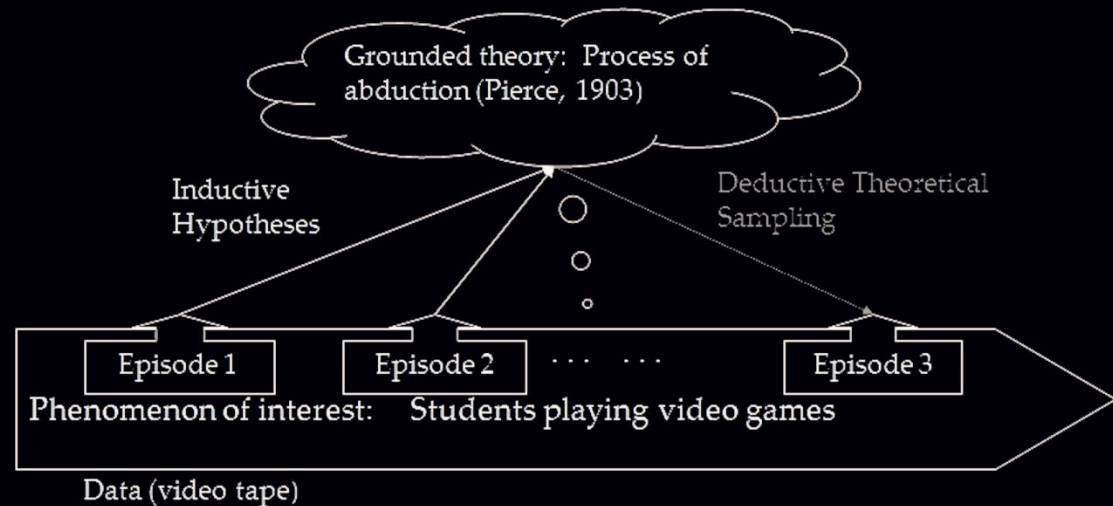
## Short Transcription Example from *Civilization IV*:

R: Press Enter.  
 L: ((Presses 'Enter' on keyboard))  
 R: What!? ((Trader window pops up)) (.)  
 L: 'I am (unclear speech)' ((Reading from pop up window of a leader who has something to say)) He's Greek.  
 R: He's gonna declare war against us.((Laughs))  
 L: ((Laughs)) Oh.  
 R: We should probably -  
 L: We should probably go start building an army. ((Uses a shortcut on the keyboard)) ((Highlights 'Farewell'))

'When another leader makes you an offer, you must choose to refuse or accept the offer. If you accept, the trade occurs immediately. If you decline, the other leader may ask you to make a counter-offer, may end diplomacy, or may declare war on you.'  
 (Civilization IV Manual, p. 101)

'The gamer has four options to choose from when the trader screen comes up. They can accept the trade, decline the trade, talk about the other leaders, or say farewell and leave the trader for now.'  
 (Civilization IV Manual, p. 101)

Emerging 'grounded' theory via episodes of learning



Initial entry to data: problematization (Koschmann, et. al, 2005)

- Start of episode: the discovery of a problem
- End of episode: when the problem is resolved

Our open-ended approach allows us to observe game players while they act in their natural environment, "in-situ". This allows us to obtain information that is highly relevant to the players themselves. Applying these results to game design yield more effective, fun and playable games.

Whether you would like to independently verify the work of your own usability team, or you could use usability specialists to supplement your design process, we assure that we will uncover the often-overlooked details of game player behavior.

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