Episode 20: Building Minds with Scaffolding

Show Notes

I'm joined again by the resident developmental psychologist, where we talk about scaffolding, a learning technique where help and assistance are removed bit by bit until the full skill has been learned.

Game References

My Little Scythe, Scythe, Sleuth, Sushi Go, Ticket to Ride

Research References

Flavell, J. H. (1963). *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*. D Van Nostrand, Princeton, NJ.

Wertsch, J. V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Transcript

Hello! This is Episode 20 of the Cognitive Gamer podcast. I am your host, Steve Blessing. I am joined today with a guest, Dr. Jennifer Blessing. Jenn was a guest on Episode 9, where we talked about how games can promote counting strategies. Jenn, welcome back!

Jenn: Thank you! Good to be back!

Steve: If you listened last time, you might remember that Jenn is a developmental psychologist, meaning she studies changes in how children think. During our last discussion, we spoke about how kids count, and how playing games can help promote more sophisticated number sense. We would like to continue that discussion by talking about how playing easier games can enable play of more complex games later on. If you are playing games with your kids, you are not going to sit down and play Twilight Struggle or Terraforming Mars right away. Instead, you are going to start simple with something like Sushi Go or maybe Kingdomino. There appears to be a progression that works maybe not only with kids but also with adults in terms of starting with simple games and gradually adding in complexity. So Jenn, as a developmental psychologist, what might explain this?

Some games are overwhelming

Two developmental theories tie into this: 1) Jean Piaget: as grandfather of theories of cognitive developmental gave us great insight into how children's thinking changes across time. Maybe we'll talk about Piaget some other time. 2) There's another theorist who's work bears on this issue, Lev Vygotsky.

Known for socio-constructive perspective

Development comes from: interaction with others and tools of their culture

Limited by Zone of Proximal Development
Escape rooms and the ZPD

Parents who are in tune with their kids can scaffold in ways without being deliberate about it.

But, with games you can maybe more deliberate about it.

Talk about Scythe and My Little Scythe.

My Little Scythe was designed by Hoby Chou, a Dad, and Vienna, his daughter. Hoby really liked to play Scythe by StoneMaier games, and wanted to share that experience with his daughter. But, he knew it would be beyond her Zone of Proximal Development. With Vienna's help and her love of My Little Pony, they designed My Little Scythe, which has been picked up by StoneMaier Games as a commercial product which is now available. So Jenn, what does My Little Scythe do right with regards to scaffolding and the zone of proximal development?

Streamlines the experience. Takes out the fiddly bits.

Amorphous end. Do I trigger end game or get more money

Little too long

Conflate hero and mech

Easy to forget powers (like +1 move)

NOT Just Trivial pursuit v. Trivial pursuit Jr.

Other examples of this happening. Ticket to Ride Kid Edition. Nintendo Pooh Bear example.

Can talk about gateway games in general and how that works with adults.

And thanks to you all for listening to this episode. As always, I welcome any comments or questions you may have, so please email me, steve@cognitivegamer.com and also visit my website, cognitivegamer.com. Also, you can like me on Facebook, Cognitive Gamer, or follow me on Twitter, @cognitive_gamer.

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discover the podcast. I appreciate those 5-star reviews! Until next time, remember to think about what you play, and have fun doing it.