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Faena: A Narrative-Based Language Learning Video Game

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LoboBites Thesis: Faena; Spanish Language Learning Video Game

In 2018, the Modern Language Association revealed that Spanish as a second-language higher education enrollment decreased by 9.8% and those who were enrolled in large part are not reaching minimal communicative fluency in Spanish. Both traditional classrooms and non-traditional methods such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone are part of the problem of failing to provide learners a successful path towards actually speaking and interacting in the target language nor do they successfully maintain motivation long enough for learners to have a chance to even reach communicative fluency. Usage-based, second-language acquisition (SLA) theorists and data on cognition and memory posit that learning is best written to memory and retrieved from memory if it is multimodal, highly contextualized, rich with sensorimotor processes, goal directed, and that it takes part in a socio-cultural script. So learners need to be exposed to the target language and interact it in many different modes (speaking, listening, etc), have it take place in situations where it would make sense to use a given construction, have it be almost a full body experience, have it be for a specific goal or purpose, and have it take part in meaningful human interactions. Understanding where work has been done on SLA cognition crossover, how can Spanish second-language education be improved? This thesis aims to design the overarching narrative, quests, and game systems that underlie the first 10 hour video game installment of *Faena*, a series of Spanish language learning video games that will house all second-language acquisition needs through a retro-futuristic narrative. *Faena* is organized into meaningful *Chapters, Quests* and *Side Quests,* ensuring that acquisition is always socio-culturally contextualized according to the goal and situation at hand. This innovation provides an entirely unique, immersive, and engaging language learning solution while remaining pedagogical backed by current, probabilistic usage based SLA theories, data on cognition and memory, and studies on the utility of video gaming in language learning.