

Informal Learning: Ring Fit Adventure for the Nintendo Switch

Susan Suarez

Educational Technology Leadership, New Jersey City University

EDTC807: Implementation and Evaluation of Curriculum

Dr. Tracy Amerman

April 12, 2020

Informal Learning: Ring Fit Adventure for the Nintendo Switch

Informal education refers to activities outside the classroom that can include technology such as video, video games, internet applications, and social media. Such activities provide a wide range of learning opportunities, including general knowledge content, language acquisition, motor skills development, problem-solving, and social-emotional learning. While some applications focus on explicit instruction, such as language learning apps like Duolingo, others secondarily enhance knowledge or skills while the primary function is entertainment or gameplay (Greenfield, 2009). One application successful in encouraging incidental learning is Ring Fit Adventure, an active video game (AVG) or exergame system for the Nintendo Switch.

History and Context

While there is no consensus on the overall effect of video games (Ferguson, 2019), video game developers have established a market for personal fitness enhancement, combating stereotypes of vapid, lethargic gameplay. AVGs are a sound alternative to authentic gameplay or exercise for many, providing a secure environment for increasing physicality (George *et al.*, 2016). AVGs were first introduced with the Atari 2600 footpad controller in the early 1980s. In 1999, Dance Dance Revolution, a game in which up to two players dance on a footpad while they follow the on-screen arrows, became popular in North America. The updated game is still available for a variety of home gaming systems. In 2007, Nintendo introduced the Wii gaming system which uses remotes to measure user movement, thereby affording full-body interaction with the game. (Klein, 2009). While the Wii is no longer manufactured, many users were encouraged to bring them out of storage for use during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic that forced people to self-isolate in their homes (Hood, 2020; Tyrer 2020).

Nintendo reclaimed its footing within the AVG community through games developed for their came console: Nintendo Switch. Games such as Fitness Boxing, Zumba Burn It Up, Just Dance 2020, ARMS, and Ring Fit Adventure are all popular AVGs targeted at users seeking home workouts. However, Ring Fit Adventure is primarily a role playing game (RPG) “marketed as a game first and exercise second” (Hood, 2020). It is through this immersive experience that users become fitness literate, learning a variety of exercises, proper posture, muscular anatomy, and nutrition.

Informal Learning through Fun

The popularity of Ring Fit Adventure is a testament to its playability and enjoyment. First released in October 2019 for the Nintendo Switch, the game requires a Ring-Con (a pilates style ring which houses one of the game controllers) and Leg Strap (a Velcro strap housing the other game controller) to track how you perform the exercises. Despite the additional controllers necessary and the additional cost of the game, about \$20 over a typical Nintendo Switch, the game has limited after-market availability while Nintendo increases production. This demand may be related to the global self-isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (D’Anastasio, 2020; Sarkar, 2020). However, Ring Fit Adventure communities in Reddit and Facebook groups illustrate the engagement level of those who were able to purchase the game.

Ring Fit Adventure is fun and visually stunning. Players journey through beautiful worlds on a mission. To succeed, the player must assist Ring, the anthropomorphized Ring-Con, regain its powers and ultimately defeat the boss monster Dragaux. Players must complete mini gym battle missions and combat monsters through exercises that include lots of squats, yoga poses, jogging, abdominal- crunching, and arm-flexing. For each exercise, there is an animated guide whose movement the player follows. Additionally, the muscles worked light-up as if on fire in

the player's avatar, indicating the targeted muscle area. That area is also named and indicated on the animated guide. Based on the movements recorded by the controllers, Ring acts as a personal trainer and either praises the player ("You're doing great!"), indicates an adjustment ("Next time go lower."), instructs ("This'll really work your glutes."), or encourages ("Only five more!").

Targeted for gamers, Ring Fit Adventure's immersive RPG appeals to those who normally do not attend gyms (Hood, 2020; Tyrer 2020). While ostensibly gaming, users are learning muscle groups, proper form, and fitness habits such as staying hydrated or taking rest days. Additionally, the game begins with a dynamic warm-up session led by Tipp, the animated guide. During the warm-up, the voice-over instructs the player on the areas that the stretches target. At the close of the game, Tipp leads the user through a static cool-down session while the voice-over explains the stretch, what is stretched, and why it is important. While holding stretches, the player can read a tip of the day: a specific informational piece on muscles, exercise, nutrition, and health-habits. Tipp will also surprise the gamer with a quick quiz on a muscle group or exercise.

Conclusion

Ring Fit Adventure is an RPG that is also an AVG. While fun and engaging, raising the levels of dopamine through immediate positive rewards and exercise, it is also addicting. Playing this AVG is not only a workout, however. The player learns the proper form of many exercises such as squats, Russian twists, mountain climbers, and many yoga poses, including standing forward fold, tree, chair, and fan pose. In addition, while enjoying the post workout cooldown, players learn even more about muscles and nutrition. Ring Fit Adventure informally educates players while they have fun and get fit.

References

- D'Anastasio, C. (2020, March 10). Coronavirus fears spark a run on Nintendo's Ring Fit Adventure. *Wired*. <https://www.wired.com/story/ring-fit-shortage-coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Ferguson, C. J., & Colwell, J. (2019). Lack of consensus among scholars on the issue of video game “addiction”. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*. May 2019.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000243>
- George, A. M., Rohr, L. E., & Byrne, J. (2016). Impact of Nintendo Wii games on physical literacy in children: Motor skills, physical fitness, activity behaviors, and knowledge. *Sports*, 4(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/sports4010003>
- Greenfield, P. M. (2009). Technology and informal education: What is taught, what is learned. *Science*, 323(5910), 69–71. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1167190>.
- Hood, V. (2020, April 5). *Best fitness games 2020: top exercise games to make you break a sweat*. TechRadar. <https://www.techradar.com/news/best-fitness-games-2020>
- Klein, M. J., & Simmers, C. S. (2009). Exergaming: Virtual inspiration, real perspiration. *Young Consumers*, 10(1), 35-45. <http://draweb.njcu.edu:2066/10.1108/17473610910940774>
- Sarkar, S. (2020, March 13). Ring Fit Adventure is sold out everywhere, Nintendo confirms. *Polygon*. <https://www.polygon.com/2020/3/13/21177214/ring-fit-adventure-sold-out-stock-coronavirus-nintendo-switch>
- Tyrer, B. (2020, April 3). *Best fitness games to help you exercise indoors*. GamesRadar+. <https://www.gamesradar.com/best-fitness-games/>