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Host: Today we're talking about new media. And our guest is Lisa Goodwin, a game developer. Ms. Goodwin is here to talk to us about interactive games. Let's start with popularity. How popular is gaming, compared to other types of media?

Game developer Lisa Goodwin: Very popular. Worldwide, people spend about \$100 billion every year on gaming. That's more than twice as much as they spend on going to the movies.

Host: Wow, that's incredible. Why is that? Why are games becoming so popular?

Goodwin: Well, the main reason is they're fun! But also, games are becoming easier to play. Nowadays most games are mobile games, so you can play on your smartphone. So it's easy to play anytime or anywhere.

Host: OK. So who plays games the most? Teenagers?

Goodwin: No. Actually, the average gamer in the US is 35 years old. Only 29 percent of gamers are under 18.

Host: Really! I'm surprised. Most gamers are males, I would guess.

Goodwin: Well, actually, more women are playing games than before. Almost half of American gamers are women.

Host: Huh! And how about the social aspect? Do most people play games alone or with others?

Goodwin: It is becoming more common for people to play together. About 40 percent of gamers play social games—games played with others online.

Host: Interesting. Well, what are the most popular games? Most popular types of games?

Goodwin: The top two most popular types of games are action games and shooting games. People like to play games that are fast-moving and challenging. Sports games are also popular. And so are role-playing games—games where players play the role of an imaginary character.

Host: I can see how someone could really get into that ...

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Speaker: Now, let's talk about some research in educational games. One recent study looked at the effects of interactive games on young children. Researchers studied nearly 100 students between the ages of six and eight. They divided the children into three groups. One group played an educational video game. The second group played a video game that involved movement. The children were active—moved around—while they played this game. The third

group mixed game playing with real-world learning activities. The study found that the third group—the students who mixed game playing and real-world activities—showed the most improvement. They remembered five times more information than the other groups. This study shows that teachers should combine game playing with real classroom activities.

WATCH the lecture page 66

Professor Julian Young: E01 In this class we've already studied a variety of media. And remember, by "media" we mean different ways that we communicate—including traditional media such as newspapers, television, and movies—as well as "new media," such as online newspapers and blogs, and social media. Today we're going to talk about one genre of new media: interactive games. This includes games you play on a game console, computer, or smartphone. All right then. It'll come as no surprise that video games have been one of the fastest growing types of new media. And as these games have gotten more popular, we have started to see more research on the effects of playing these interactive games. Today, we'll look at some of this research on these digital games and talk about some of the effects—positive and negative—of playing them. **E02** So, what are some of the potential benefits of playing interactive games? The first benefit is a cognitive benefit, improvements in how our brains work. One of these benefits is improved spatial ability. Spatial ability is the ability to understand the relationship between objects in space, like when you look at a map on your phone to find your way in an unfamiliar city. Or when you see relationships in a geometry problem. Spatial ability is especially important in math and engineering. One study of spatial ability looked at people who play action games—games like *The Legend of Zelda* or *Batman* or *Grand Theft Auto*. In these action games, the player moves through a three-dimensional world. Researchers took a group of people who had no experience playing these types of action games, and gave them a test that measured their spatial ability. Then the participants played an action game for 50 hours, and took the spatial ability test again. The study found that players did much better on the spatial ability test after playing the game. So this shows that playing action games can actually improve your spatial ability skills. **E03** Another cognitive benefit of video games is in motivation. In psychology, motivation is the desire to work towards a goal, even when you fail along the way. Motivation is the drive or energy inside us that makes us try again and again until we reach the goal. It's interesting—with engaging games, failure in the

game does not usually lead to feelings of anger or frustration or the desire to just quit. Instead, players feel excitement and want to try again and again. In other words, they feel motivation to continue. This aspect of interactive games can be utilized in education. Teachers can employ game psychology to keep students working on difficult learning tasks.

E04 Now, these are only two of the possible benefits. But I also want to mention potential problems. There are two main concerns about the effects of electronic games. One negative effect is game addiction. Gaming is an enjoyable pastime for many people. But gaming becomes an addiction when it starts to interfere with a person's relationships. Or when it interferes with their ability to accomplish other goals—like getting good grades or being successful at work. There are several signs that a person may have a game addiction. One sign is playing video games instead of spending time with family and friends. The person becomes so involved in the fantasy world of the video game that he or she doesn't want to spend time with real people. Another sign is the person feels angry, or anxious, or depressed when they are not able to play. It's estimated that about 10 percent of gamers have a true addiction, so it is a serious problem.

E05 Another area of concern is the effect of fantasy games on the player. In particular, what is the effect of playing violent fantasy games? Does playing a violent game make someone want to hurt another person in real life? Well, the answer to that is not clear. However, studies show that playing violent video games can cause people to be less sensitive to violence and become more aggressive in their real life. For example, a study of 13- and 14-year-olds found that those who played violent games were more likely to argue with their teachers and to get into fights with their classmates. But there really isn't enough proof—or evidence—to say for sure that video games directly *cause* this aggressive behavior. These studies only show a connection between violent games and aggressive behavior. In other words, aggressive kids may choose to play violent games. It's not clear if the games make them aggressive, or if they like the games because they already are aggressive.

E06 Well, there's something for us all to think about—the potential benefits and drawbacks of the increased use of interactive games in our society.

HEAR the language page 68

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- 2 Spatial ability is the ability to understand the relationship between objects in space.
- 3 The study found that players did much better on the spatial ability test after playing the game.
- 4 Instead, players feel excitement and want to try again and again.

- 5 Teachers can employ game psychology to keep students working on difficult learning tasks.
- 6 But gaming becomes an addiction when it starts to interfere with a person's relationships.
- 7 Another sign is the person feels angry, or anxious, or depressed when they are not able to play.
- 8 Does playing a violent game make someone want to hurt another person in real life?
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- 10 Well, there's something for us all to think about—the potential benefits and drawbacks of the increased use of interactive games in our society.

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Hugh: So I thought the lecture was really interesting. I especially liked the main point, that interactive games aren't bad for you!

Shelley: Wait. Are you sure? Aren't bad for you? I don't think the lecturer said that, exactly.

Hugh: No? I have it here in my notes—wait ... here: There are some *potential benefits* of interactive games.

Ben: Yeah. That's what I heard.

Kenzie: Right, like cognitive benefits, like spatial ability and motivation.

Hugh: See, I agree with that. When I was younger, I played a lot. And now, I study engineering. So, maybe games helped me with my spatial ability!

Shelley: OK. But it isn't *all* positive. What about the potential problems? Like, like kids who play violent games? And then they get into fights, and argue with their teachers.

Kenzie: Yeah, the lecturer did say that. And personally, I don't think parents should let their kids play violent games.

Hugh: Should or shouldn't?

Kenzie: Shouldn't. They *shouldn't* let them.

Ben: But it's unfair to blame the games. I mean, maybe there's a connection. But it's not necessarily cause and effect, remember?

Hugh: Wait, wait. Can you say that again?

Ben: Yeah, sure, so there's a *connection* between violent games and aggressiveness. But violent games don't necessarily *cause* violent behavior.

Shelley: Yeah. The way the professor said it was maybe some kids are *already* aggressive, And *that's* why they like aggressive games.

Kenzie: It's kind of like that expression. What is it—"Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Hugh: Hey, hey. "Chicken or Egg"! That's a good name for an interactive game!

Shelley: Chicken. Egg. Let's get back to the main points, OK?