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Language and Group Identity: the Case of Gamers Community

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## **PREFACE**

Modern technologies develop precipitously. It affects many various aspects of our life. Video games worth special mentioning. According to Spilgames research (2013) 1.2 billion people play video games. Moreover, 44% of Internet users play video games. It gives a right to assume that video gaming industry has become popular nowadays. It could also imply increase of popularity of online games specifically. MOBA, MMORPG and genres alike are getting more popular these days. It could be proven by examples of E-sports development and traffic data. Games like these augment community around itself and implicate a lot of communication within players in game as well. All of this communication takes place though a keyboard and a computer screen, resulting in interesting entomological developments. Electronic communication intermediation changes the way people use language, likely due to the tools used to transmit messages. Famed social psychologist Marshal McLuhan said the “medium is the message,” meaning that the medium used to deliver a message affects the message’s outcome (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). This leads to very interesting questions – Does gamers` language differs from Standard English? How? Is this variation universal for all the gamers? Is it a part of gamers` identity?

In the paper will summarize information about gamers, group identity and language as part of group identity. Moreover, the paper will analyze the language of gamers, especially gamers` vocabulary.

The research paper is aimed to investigate gamers` language, compare it to Standard English and to understand if gamers` language is universal for all the gamers. The research paper consists of four parts: the introduction, two chapters, and the conclusion. The introduction discusses the key issue of justification of the topicality of the subject, relationship between language and group identity. It also provides explanation of key terms related to the topic, in addition introduction provides an overview of previous researches.

Chapter I provides a historical overview of English language and factors influencing language change, analyzes contemporary reasons for language change. Moreover Chapter I describes changes in vocabulary and grammar of modern English. Besides, Chapter I provides historical overview of games and gaming and answers for question how gaming changed English language.

The empirical part (Chapter 2) discusses, analyses and compares the statistics of gaming, gamers` community and language.

The Conclusion sums up the results of the research and comments on the hypothesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Video games have always been popular within young people, moreover in course of time popularity of video games grows greatly. One of the reasons is related to technological progress – modern games use latest developments of the industry. As a result games look attractive and entertaining. Furthermore there is great choice of different games and different genres. In addition many games related online services like specialized sites, forums, chats, etc are created. For instance almost every popular video game has its own wiki source as an analogy to Wikipedia, but focused only on a game. As an example game called Defence of the Ancients 2 (Dota 2) has multiple sites like Dota 2 Wiki where basics of the game and mechanics of it are explained. Game streaming services is another issue which has to be highlighted. The most successful example is Twitch.tv. On twitch people can stream different games for other people and interact with them through chat. More than half a million people visit thousands of streams on twitch everyday (stats are taken from twitch.tv statistic service).

The Internet provides huge variety of opportunities for people. In this case the Internet plays key role in gamers` community life because it helps to connect the whole community together. Online games are very popular nowadays and act of communication frequently happens online.

At this point question of language appears. In the book “Language and the Internet” David Crystal describes how the Internet influences the language. Some theses can be applied to gaming since terms of the Internet and video gaming are connected in terms of language development. Gamers` language differs from Standard English and it is important to study and analyze it because this knowledge can be useful for educational purposes.

People who are unfamiliar with gaming as well as with sociolinguistics can find it difficult to understand some terms related to this topic. Therefore explaining key terms of this paper may help to better understand the issue and aspects of it.

To begin with, it is vital to classify term of video game because thousands of different games on different platforms exist nowadays. In that case term gamer becomes really superficial, so it should be defined. In this paper “gamer” denotes to a person who plays online computer games. Focus on mentioned gamers group has been made because playing those games requires in-game communication accordingly gaming experience and player`s impact depend on act of communication, so that language becomes important tool which helps to achieve players` goals.

Another key notion is “identity”. According to Oxford online dictionary identity is “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others”. In other words identity is what makes us unique. Philip Riley (2007) highlights that identity can be divided into two types: self and person. Therefore self identity is a private notion which is subjective. Self identity denotes to essential individual while person identity denotes to member of social groups and it is public and social. Riley declares that knowledge and language can stand in opposition to role and identity, but still those notions can be mutually defining. (2007:91) This paper focuses on a term person identity since object of the research is gamers` community as a whole and language which it uses.

Language is another important notion which stands equally important as well as identity. According to Hall (1997) language provides environment in which meaning of words is created and exchanged. For that purposes people use different sources like signs and symbols. It could be written, spoken, etc. or even placed in digital environment. These sources are used to represent meanings, ideas, feelings etc.

At this point, Hall mentions another term which is connected to language and identity – it is “culture”. By that Hall explains that “Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings – the ‘giving and taking of meaning’ – between the members of a society or a group” (1997:2)

Relationship of games and language is a demanded topic. Numerous works devoted to gaming and language. First of all, work of John Bobosh called “Slang and Communication Development in the World of Warcraft Gaming Community” (2008) is worth mentioning. Despite indicated paper focuses on another aspects of gamers` language it provides vital analysis of language as well as it provides some information which can be related to identity issue since it shows how many people use WoW slang outside the game.

Another two surveys pay attention to image of modern gamers. “Adults and video games” (2008) by Amanda Lenhart, Sydney Jones and Alexandra Macgill and “Teens, Video Games and Civics” (2008) by Amanda Lenhart, Joseph Kahne, Ellen Middaugh, Alexandra Macgill, Chris Evans and Jessica Vitak has got some common points however these studies focus on different age groups. Mentioned works analyze who plays video games, what platforms are popular, how many time players spend playing.

One more article on related topic was presented by Lisa Galarneau and it is called “2014 Global Gaming Stats: Who`s Playing What and Why?” (2014). This study

is more recent and provides information about worldwide gaming while previous two produce information mainly about U.S.

However the most remarkable work is produced by Anna Vidlund and called “English in video and computer online games”. Author highlights specific features of language related to players who play different games like FIFA or World of Warcraft. Indicated work provides many examples of gamers` speech. As a result Vidlund concludes that gamers` language deviates from the norm.

According to Michael Byram (2006) every person has got multiple social identities since people participate in many different social groups. Language helps to identify certain social group consequently individuals acquire language features of social group which they belong to. Moreover language variety knowledge can indicate individual as part of a certain social group.

The aim of this paper is to collect information about features of gamers` language and to examine it. Moreover one of the goals is to try to find relationship between language and social identity of gamers. The hypothesis of this work is: Gamers as a community have got their own variation of English, it is part of their identity and gamers` language is universal for all the gamers. It leads to idea that person who plays computer games is able to use some of vocabulary in real life, outside of gaming and that gamers can understand each other despite gaming preferences and experience.

## Chapter I

### 1.1 Historical overview of English language

#### Old English

To start with, it is vital to understand what historical events led to language changes and development. According to Barber (2005) in the fifth century Anglo-Saxons settled in Britain. By the seventh century Anglo-Saxons became dominant in Britain. These events led to transition from Proto-Germanic to Old English.

Crystal (2002) emphasizes that according to surviving evidence Old English was divided into four dialects at those times: West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian and Northumbrian.

It is worth mentioning that Old English was affected by Celtic which was spoken in Britain originally. Crystal (2002:170) describes it as: “the Celtic language of Roman Britain had hardly any influence on the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons. Only a handful of Celtic words came into English at the time.”

However, not only Celtic affected Old English language. Crystal (2002) points out that Old English borrowed huge Latin vocabulary because of arrival of the Christian missionaries. Moreover, Crystal (2002) mentions that Old English had some loan-words from Scandinavian in late Old English period.

Barber (2005) suggests following features of Old English:

- Usage of symbols of the runic alphabet
- Four cases (nominative, accusative, genitive and dative)
- Word pronounced as it was written
- Existence of grammatical gender (feminine, masculine, neutral)
- Free word order
- Synthetic language
- Two tenses
- Three forms of inflection to number (singularity, duality, and plurality)

#### Middle English

Considering transition from Old English to Middle English it is important to mention one date. In 1066 Normans invaded Britain which greatly affected language. However, Barber (2005) emphasizes that it was a long process which started before because French influenced English in late Old English period. He explains that Edward

the Confessor was half Norman and during his rule close connections with France appeared.

These changes affected vocabulary greatly. Crystal (2002:192) notes that “the enormous number of French words came into the language – around 10 000, according to one estimate”.

Because of it many French word duplicated words from English which already existed. In this case, Crystal (2002:193) explains that “there were two outcomes”. New word replaced old one or both words existed, but with slightly different meaning.

Furthermore, according to Crystal (2002) in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries several thousand loan-words appeared from Latin.

Barber (2005) explains some changes in language of that period. These changes affected all the areas of language. A number of new consonant-symbols were introduced. Inflection system was reduced by loss and weakening of unstressed syllables at the end of words. In Middle English many endings became identical. Weakening of inflection system led to appearance of strict word order. Because of it, language became more analytical.

Crystal (2002:196) emphasizes that “many of irregular forms of Old English lost their irregularity and began to follow the pattern of regular constructed words”.

Moreover, according to Barber (2005) loss of case-distinctions affected adjectives and demonstratives. Taking into account the issue of morphology it is worth mentioning that according to Barber (2005:160) “both the adjective and the definite article had become indeclinable”. In addition, natural gender appeared because of grammatical gender disappearance.

Considering pronunciation it is important to mention lengthening of short vowels in open syllables in two syllable words. (Barber 2005)

### Early Modern English

Crystal(2002) states that in 1476 William Caxton introduced printing technology in England.

It is possible to assume that this event accelerated language development rapidly. By that time English was influenced by Latin greatly. Technologies were developing quickly, so that affected the language because huge vocabulary of loan-words appeared from other languages like Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Persian, Greek, etc (Crystal 2002).

Huge vocabulary of loan-words contributed inkhorn term which denotes to new loan words which had analogy in English already. This process forced word-formation changes (Barber 2005).

In Early Modern English period the Authorized Version of the Bible appeared which “introduced many idioms into the language” (Crystal 2002:216). The other key factor is works of W. Shakespeare who had a different approach comparing to Bible writers. He introduced newer forms and constructions.

In the same way it is vital to mention changes in pronunciation of Early Modern English period. Mentioned changes are called the Great Vowel Shift. Barber (2005:191) explains it as “all vowels became closer in quality, except for the two which were already as close as they could be. These two became diphthongized”. Moreover, strong and weak forms of words appeared.

#### Late Modern English

Scientific age affected English language. Barber (2005) provides examples of those changes, such as third-person forms disappearance from ordinary educated speech. “The pronouns *thou* and *thee* and the corresponding verb-forms had disappeared from standard usage” (2005:199). Also he notes that usage of auxiliary *do* became common as it is used nowadays. English language of that period was characterized by standardization of spelling and in general. Combinations of different marking of verb (perfect+passive, past+perfect etc) appeared by that time (ibid:208)

Considering pronunciation changes new terms like rhotic and non-rhotic appeared. Scientific writings affected scientific vocabulary, general vocabulary expanded (Barber 2005).

Paying attention to this information it is possible to highlight aspects of language change. Raymond Hickey (2010) describes that language change can have different “motivation”. He suggests to divide those motivations into two types: internal and external. According to Hickey internal motivations “lead to balance in the system, the removal of marked elements, the analogical spread of regular forms or the like” (2010:2).

As for external factors Nicole Mahoney in her report for National Science Foundation emphasizes areas which lead to language change. These are as she called it “pressures” denote to social, economical and political aspects. Furthermore author describes historical events which provide language change like invasion, colonization and migration. Another important factor, which she mentions is technological progress.

## 1.2 Language and identity

Peter Auer (2007) introduces two relative types of identities – collective and social. In case of collective identity, Auer emphasizes that language is natural reflex to a national identity. He declares that “collectives are treated as unique quasi-beings which express their identities through certain features equally unique to them” (2007:2). With this in mind, each nation expresses its own individuality by means of language.

Furthermore author adds that national language plays special role among those features. However Auer highlights that mentioned ideas were established in XVIII century and became popular in XIX century.

Considering social identities Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982) stated that:

“We customarily take gender, ethnicity, and class as given parameters and boundaries within which we create our own social identities. The study of language as interactional discourse demonstrates that these parameters are not constants that can be taken by granted but are communicatively produced. Therefore to understand issues of identity and how they affect and are affected by social, political, and ethnic divisions we need to gain insights into the communicative process by which they arise.”

Elinor Ochs (1993) suggests that people try to construct their identity by “performing certain social acts and verbally displaying certain stances. (1993:288)” By this author means that acting in a certain way which is socially recognized or sharing some point of view which is recognized as well may help to construct social identity. Ochs highlights that different factors depend on this process. For example, how certain or uncertain person about topic.

Another issue suggested by Ochs is that person can use verbal acts or stances in order to construct identity of other interlocutor.

Furthermore Ochs emphasizes important idea that:

“membership in a social group, whether it be a distinct language community or a distinct social group within a language community, depends on members` knowledge of local conversations for building social identities through act and stance display” (1993:289)

Moreover Ochs declares that:

“social identity is not usually explicitly encoded by language but rather is a social meaning that one usually infers on the basis of one`s sense of the act and stance meaning encoded by linguistic construction.” (1993:289)

This implies that knowledge of special emotes can be characteristic for gamers who use Twitch.tv, for example. However author mentions that “members of

community may use different kinds of acts and stances to construct themselves variably within some particular social status or social relationship.” (1993:290)

### **1.3 Historical overview of games and gaming**

Riad Chikhani in his article “The History Of Gaming: An Evolving Community” (2015) mentions that the first gaming device was produced in 1940 by Dr. Edward Uhler Condon and it was based on mathematical game called Nim. Since then there were some attempts to create gaming devices however the first notable effort was by company called Atari who developed one of the first gaming consoles in 1973. (ibid:para-11) The first competitive experience was introduced in 1973 with game called “Empire” where players competed on separate screens. (ibid: para-13) Another game called “Space Invaders” became extremely popular in 1980`s. Atari even held tournament with about ten thousands participants. This tournament can be considered as one of the first events which gave birth to E-sports. (Edwards 2013)

The 1990`s were age of computer gaming rise. In 1997 Quake (first person shooter) tournament was held with over than 2000 participants. Starcraft: Brood War (real time strategy) became extremely famous within gamers. Also in 1997 Cyberathlete Professional League was founded. Year later CPL announced tournament with 15, 000\$ prize pool which was considerable for that time. (Edwards 2013)

In 2000 World Cyber Games and Electronic Sports World Cup were founded. Those two tournaments were held every year and included multiple disciplines. Two years later, in 2002, North-American organization called “Major League Gaming” was launched. In 2012 tournament held by MLG have beaten number of views (about 4 million) online compared to “real” sports like NBA All-Star match. Another organization which is important to mention is Dreamhack. Dreamhack is a Swedish brand which organized and held many tournaments over the years. Another point which is worth to remark is Starcraft. Starcraft`s popularity has grown during years especially in South Korea. Moreover organization called the Global Starcraft II League (GSL) had extensive impact of E-Sports development. (Edwards 2013)

As Mark Overmars mentions in 2004 game called World of Warcraft was released. Game has had huge success. In 2008 game reached number of 10 million players - solid number of players who pay for the subscription in order to spend time in world of Azeroth.

Another example of a really popular game is Sims, according to Overmars. He mentions that the first Sims game was released in 2000. Since then considerable number

of sequels were released. 70 millions of copies were sold during that time. (Overmars 2012)

In course of recent years another game genre appeared which became remarkably popular. Multiplayer Online Battle Arena or MOBA has started just as custom map in RTS game Warcraft III. This map is labeled as Defence Of The Ancients (DOTA). In 2009 MOBA game called League Of Legends (LoL) was already at its peak of popularity and it is still very popular (Edwards 2013).

In 2011 company Valve announced DotA2 tournament called The International with a prize pool of 1,000,000 dollars. Since then The International was held every year, furthermore prize pool grew every time. In 2015 prize pool was over 18,000,000 dollars.

#### **1.4 Gamers identity**

Considering gamers` identity specifically it is important to mention one problem which is related to this topic and was mentioned in a number of articles or blogs. Some authors suggest that it is hard to identify yourself as a gamer nowadays. For example, Dennis Scimeca in his article “Why I can’t call myself a gamer anymore” (2014) describes that despite having a positive experience in gamers` community he can’t call himself a gamer because of some inappropriate events which reflect the way community changes in a wrong direction. In the end Scimeca highlights that despite denying this identity he still enjoys video games.

Simon Parkin in his article “If you love games, you should refuse to be called a gamer” (2013) has some similar points as Scimeca. Consequently Parkin explains that image of modern gamer is negative because of several stereotypes. However author mentions some facts that could prove that things this image can be changed.

Alexander Leigh agrees with Parkin in his article ”Gamers don’t have to be your audience. Gamers are over ”(2014) and demands that modern gamers` image is “embarrassing”. He describes that image as “buying things, spackling over memes and in-jokes repeatedly and its getting mad on the Internet”. (Leigh 2014) More over Leigh explains how it became possible, which factors have led to it. Also he suggests gaming community ruined and unlikely to develop. Author suggest unpleasant outcome.

Rachel Kowert’s article “The gamer identity crisis” (2014) summarizes this topic and relies on previous works on that topic. Author agrees that there are stereotypes about gamers (she mentions “overweight, lazy, reclusive, aggressive”). However according to this article it does not mean that gamers individuals should act in a certain way.

## 1.5 How gaming has changed English

The Internet plays key role in gamers` community because it is the main source of connection with the community. All games considered in this paper require Internet connection and can`t be played without it. Moreover the most part of communication happens online. For that reason terms “Gaming” and “the Internet” are closely related. Therefore many characteristics of online users` language coincide with characteristics of language possessed by gamers. David Crystal mentions smiles or emoticons as one of unique features of the Internet communication in “Language and the Internet” (2001). Moreover Zoe Kleinman highlights some features of the Internet language. She mentions wide vocabulary changes. On the one hand it is related to rapid technology development which introduced many technology related terms. Considering gaming vocabulary growth related to usage of game mechanics terminology and games` story background (locations, names etc.) On the other hand Kleinman explains phenomenon called “Word Thief”. This phenomenon denotes to words which are not used in English frequently, but got new meaning in the Internet or in games. Another characteristic of the Internet language is text speak which denotes to usage of abbreviations and acronyms. However according to survey mentioned in the article only 10% of people use it. (Kleinman 2010)

Meme is another term which is worth disassembling. According to Oxford dictionary meme is “an image, a video, a piece of text, etc. that is passed very quickly from one Internet user to another, often with slight changes that make it humorous”. Memes are popular within gamers, moreover community generates gaming related memes a lot.

Moreover, gamers` variation of English has brought slight syntactic changes in the language. Usage of emoticons shaped sentence structure in a new way. Emotes can add meaning to a sentence, so that emote could be considered as a part of the sentence or even bring the message themselves. Considering case of Twitch.tv every emote has got own letter code (Kappa - ) , so code can be used instead of emote in an environment where emotes can`t be used.

## **Chapter II**

### **2.1 Aims and hypothesis**

The aim of this chapter is to gather information about gamers language`s features by collecting glossary of different areas of gaming like game World of Warcraft and online streaming service Twitch.tv. MMORPG World of Warcraft was chosen because of number of reasons. Wow can be considered as the most successful MMORPG project. Warcraft is one of the longest living projects (from 2004) with a great number of players (almost 12m at a peak). Lots of language changes appeared with assistance of Wow, since lots of terms which are still used nowadays were introduced back in 2004 by World of Warcraft developers and community. Presented glossary was introduced by Blizzard Entertainment in World of Warcraft first Game Manual in 2004. Another object of research is online streaming service Twiith.tv. Online streaming services relate to lots of games and involve gamers` communication outside of games. Twitch.tv is the most popular example of such a streaming service. This is the reason why it was chosen for the research. Furthermore Twitch has got unique medium for communication presented as emotes. List of emotes was composed from Twitch.tv and a number of twitch related services. Mentioned list consists of the most popular emotes of twitch streaming platform.

Chapter II includes short survey on gaming terminology which was published on reddit. List of terms for survey was composed from the Internet by means of game relation. Words from the list can be divided into groups: one group denotes neutral words, which not refer to any game in particular. However other groups could be connected to particular games. Specified method could help to investigate versatility of gamers` language.

Chosen activities should prove that gamers` language differs from Standard English and investigate if this variation of English is universal for all the gamers.

### **2.2 Glossary**

World of Warcraft Game Manual:

Common terms:

Add – an extra monster that joins an existing battle. This often used as a warning by a group member: “Add!”

Alt – Other characters on your account besides the one you are currently playing. This is an abbreviation for alternative. Usually alt refers to any character other than your highest-level character.

Aggro – The act of a monster becoming hostile and attacking you. Often invoked when a player moves too close to a monster and unintentionally provokes it to attack. Aggro also refers to a monster`s aggression level towards you.

Aggro Radius – The radius around a monster at which point you will provoke it to attack you. Aggro radius depends upon your level and the monster`s level.

Agi - An abbreviation of agility.

Avatar – Your character.

Buff – A beneficial spell cast on a monster or player. An example of a buff is the mage`s Arcane intellect.

Carebear – A disparaging term for a player that prefers to help other players attack monsters rather than attack other players in a player versus player environment. Usually this term is used by players who prefer PvP combat.

Caster – A character that primarily stays away from the front of combat in order to cast helpful spells on allies and harmful spells on enemies. Mages and priests are two examples of casters.

Combat Pet – An NPC controlled by a player that can fight monsters and assist the player and his party members.

Cooldown – The waiting time before an ability, skill, or spell can be used again.

Creep – A monster.

Critter – A creature that doesn`t attack back, like a bunny or deer.

Debuff – A negative spell cast on monster or player that weakens it. An example of a debuff is the warlock`s curse of weakness.

Drop – The treasure left behind by a monster when you kill it. Used this way, it is synonymous with loot. Also a verb meaning the act of a monster leaving behind treasure.

Griever – A person who purposely tries to annoy or anger other players.

Grinding – Staying in the same area fighting the same types of monsters for a very long time.

Hate – The amount of aggression, or agro, a monster has built up against you. When a monster has more hate against you than any other surrounding player, it will attack you. Different actions, such as healing players or damaging the monster, will generate different levels of hate. Hate is synonymous with threat.

Incoming – It means an attack is incoming. Sometimes abbreviated as inc.

Instance - A unique copy of a dungeon created when you and your group enter that dungeon. Only you and your group will be in your copy of the dungeon. Another group that enters the same area will enter their own copy of the dungeon.

Int – An abbreviation of intelligence.

Kiting – A style of combat in which a player continually stays out of combat range of an enemy, while simultaneously causing damage to it.

Log – Logging off or disconnecting from the game.

Loot – To take treasure from a monster corpse or object, such as chest or box. Also used to mean the treasure itself.

Lvl – An abbreviation of level.

Mez – Any spell that temporarily incapacitates a target. Sometimes used as a verb to mean the act of incapacitating a target. An abbreviation of mesmerize.

Mob – Any computer-controlled character in the game, whether hostile or not. An abbreviation of mobile.

Newbie – Any new player to the game. Sometimes abbreviated as newb. Some players consider it a insulting term.

Pet – A non-combatative NPC, such as a parrot, dog, or cat, controlled by a player.

Pop – Respawn.

Port – To transport yourself or other players to another location in the world through spells or abilities. An abbreviation of teleport.

Pull – To draw a monster away from its current location and back to the party. Pulling is done so that the party can fight individual monsters and not groups of them.

Puller – A player that pulls monsters for the party.

Raid – A large-scale attack on an area by a group of parties and players.

Res – An abbreviation of resurrect or resurrection.

Respawn – The act of dead monster's spawning, or appearing, again. Also used to describe the respawned monster itself.

Spawn – The location or process of a monster or monsters appearing when they are created in the world.

Spi – An abbreviation of spirit

Sta – An abbreviation of stamina.

Stack – A number of identical items placed in a single inventory slot to conserve space. Only certain items can be stacked.

Str – An abbreviation of strength.

Tank – A character that engages in melee with enemies and can withstand a lot of damage. Warriors and paladins are two examples of tanks. Also used as a verb to describe the act of engaging in melee with enemies.

Taunt – To provoke a monster into attacking your character, thereby pulling its attention away from its current target.

Threat – See hate.

Train – To lead monsters so that they will attack another player.

Twink – A low-level character made more powerful by higher-level characters, usually through gifts of armor and weapons that the character would not normally have at such low-level. Also used as a verb to describe the act of giving low-level characters powerful items uncommon at their level.

XP – Experience points. Also called exp.

Acronyms.

AC – Armor Class

AoE – Area of effect

AE – Area effect

AFK – Away from keyboard

RBR – Be right back

DD – Direct damage

DOT – Damage over time

DPS – Damage per second

FH – Full health

PC – Price check

FM – Full mana

FvF – Faction versus faction

GM – Game master

GS – Goldshire

GTG – Good to go

HP – Hit points of Health points

IF – Ironforge

KS – Kill steal

LFG – Looking for group

LFM – Looking for member  
LOL – Laugh out loud  
LOM – Low on mana  
MMORPG – Massively multiplayer online role-playing game  
MT – Mistell  
NM – Nevermind  
NP – No problem  
NPC – Non-player character  
OOM – Out of mana  
PC – Player character  
PK – Player kill  
PST – Please send tell  
PvE – Player versus Environment  
PvP – Player versus Player  
RH – Razor Hill  
RR – Redridge  
SW – Stormwind  
TB – Thunder Bluff  
TY – Thank you  
UC – Undercity  
WF – Westfall  
WB – Welcome back  
WoW – World of Warcraft  
WTB – Want to buy  
WTS – Want to sell

Analysis:

Glossary shows that terms which are used by gamers differ from Standard English in terms of vocabulary. For instance some words from Standard English have got different meaning for gamers. As an example words “Spawn”, “Taunt”, “Drop” or “Twink”, “To Grind” can be considered. These words are not frequently used in Standard English and have got different meaning in gaming. Another point is that some words have similar meanings in both language variations however in gamers` language these terms acquire specific meaning like word “Loot” or “Stack”. Also abbreviations are characteristic for World of Warcraft. Game manual suggests many of abbreviations like “Agi”, “Res” or “Mez”. Another similar point is the usage of acronyms which are

really specific on World of Warcraft. Examples are “GS”, “IF” or “SW” which denote to in-game locations and which are familiar only to those who have got World of Warcraft gaming experience. On the other hand there are acronyms which are neutral and could be used by different types of players. Acronyms like “HP”, “KS”, “PC”, “NPC”, “PvP” do not denote to World of Warcraft in specific and can appear in other games.

“AFK”, “BRB”, “GTG”, “TY”, “LOL” or “NP” can be used by players in non-gaming related communication.

### **2.3 Twitch.tv**

One of twitch.tv`s features is emotes. Emote is a small glyph which can be used by viewers to express themselves or to reflect on events that happened. There are about 30000 emotes on this service according to Joan E. Solsman (Learn the secret language of Twitch's rogue emojis, 2015). Every streamer who get a certain number of subscribers can produce his own emotes which would be accessible only for subscribers of his channel. That is why this number is so enormous. However twitch itself produces own emotes which are accessible for every user. Among those there are some emotes which became really popular. Because of that those emotes got special meaning and could be considered as memes. And as Alex Magdaleno mentions in his article “‘Twitch-speak’: A Guide to the Secret Emoji Language of Gamers” (2014) the understanding of meaning of emotes makes person a part of community. As a result emotes usage can help to identify yourself as gamer at some extent.

Emoticons:

Kappa – the most popular emote of the service. Usually stands at the end of the sentence. Kappa has got sarcastic meaning.

PJSalt – refers to someone`s anger. Salty could be used as a synonym for angry.

FailFish – emote which refers to someone`s fail.

SwiftRage – emote is close to PJSalt in terms of meaning. It stands for anger as well.

Kreygasm – emote which stands for excitement.

PogChamp – emote which stands for excitement as well as Kreygasm, but excitement in that case has got an element of surprise.

BibleThump – emote which stands for sadness.

4Head – emote which refers to a joke which failed or was not understood.

ResidentSleeper – this emote equals “boring”.

OpieOP – emote which refers to someone who is being foolish.

DansGame – emote which stands for disquist.

MrDestructoid – this emote is mainly used when stream has got technical problems with sound, either with picture.

WutFace – this emote refers to something disgusting or surprising which just happened.

CoolCat – emote which refers to something cool.

BabyRage – emote which refers to someone not being satisfied.

## 2.4 Survey

Survey for this paper was prepared by means of Google Forms and published on reddit.com. Survey was divided into two parts. First part was dedicated to general questions. First two question were about age and gender. The third one was “Do you consider yourself as a gamer?” The second part of the survey was dedicated to the language. 31 gaming related terms were presented to respondents who had to choose terms which are familiar to them.

List of terms:

Ggwp – Good game, well played

Brb – Be right back

Buff – Spell that improves stats of a player.

Facepalm – Internet meme, refers to a gesture which expresses frustration or disappointment.

Frag – Kill. Frequently used in shooter games.

GM – Game Master in MMORPGs.

Griever – person who is trying to lose on purpose and harms his own teammates.

Idk – I don't know.

Inv – Invite .

Kappa – Twitch.tv emote which has got sarcastic meaning.

Lethal – term which is related to collectible card games. Lethal means that player has got enough damage to kill his opponent.

LFG – Looking for group. Usually used in MMORPGs.

Mulligan – collectible card games term which means the process of picking playing hand before the game.

Metagame – refers to in-game strategies by using which one team is trying to understand the other team`s strategy and beat it.

MLG – esports organization Major League Gaming. “MLG” became a meme because of some fail highlights from tournaments hosted by MLG.

Entry frag – terms is used in shooter games. It denotes to a first kill in a round.

GJ – good job

Nerf – change in a game balance.

OP – something is overpowered in terms of game balance

Smurf – word is related to Counter-strike: Global offensive. Smurf is a person who has got high rank in game, but plays on another account against players who has got lower rank.

Drop – terms which has got multiple meaning in gaming. In Counter-strike: Global Offensive word “drop” means a weapon which is given from one teammate to another who has got no money to buy it in current round.

AoE – area of effect.

Never lucky – meme which is related to random effects in collectible card game Hearthstone. It denotes to absence of luck.

Vac – anti cheating system produced by Valve. Vac became a popular meme after some professional Counter-strike players were caught cheating.

Adc – in League of Legends adc is a hero who is weaker at the start of a game, but becomes really strong in late game.

Topdeck – collectible card games related term which stands for situations when a player picks card which he or she needed from the top of his deck.

Safelane – MOBA related term. Safelane is the most comfortable, well guarded lane for one of teams.

RNG – acronym for “random number generator”. It is used in collectible card games like Hearthstone or Magic The Gathering.

Stack – group of players who gathered to play together.

Gang – MOBA related term which means that player or group of players search enemies on map in order to kill them.

Feed – term which refers to dying too much in a game.

The last question of the survey was: “Could you imagine using these words (if you familiar with it) in real life?”

#### General questions

To begin with 112 people took part in the survey. However some people have not answered for all the questions. 67.9% (76) of respondents were male, this means

that 32.1% (36) were female. Age groups were divided into sections: 15 or younger, 16-18, 19-21, 22-25 and 26 or older. As a result the biggest section was 26 or older with 31.3% (35). 22-25 section was the second one with 27.7% (31). Age group 19-21 got 20.5% (23) and got third place. 15.2% (17) of respondents answered 16-18 about their age. And the smallest section 15 or younger got only 5.4% (6).

Another point of the questionnaire was “Do you consider yourself as a gamer?” 88.2% of respondents answered “yes” to that question. This implies that the majority of respondents identify themselves as gamers. Gathered information contradicts opinions mentioned in article “The gamer identity crisis” and shows that despite all the problems related to this issue the majority can identify themselves as gamers still.

### Language

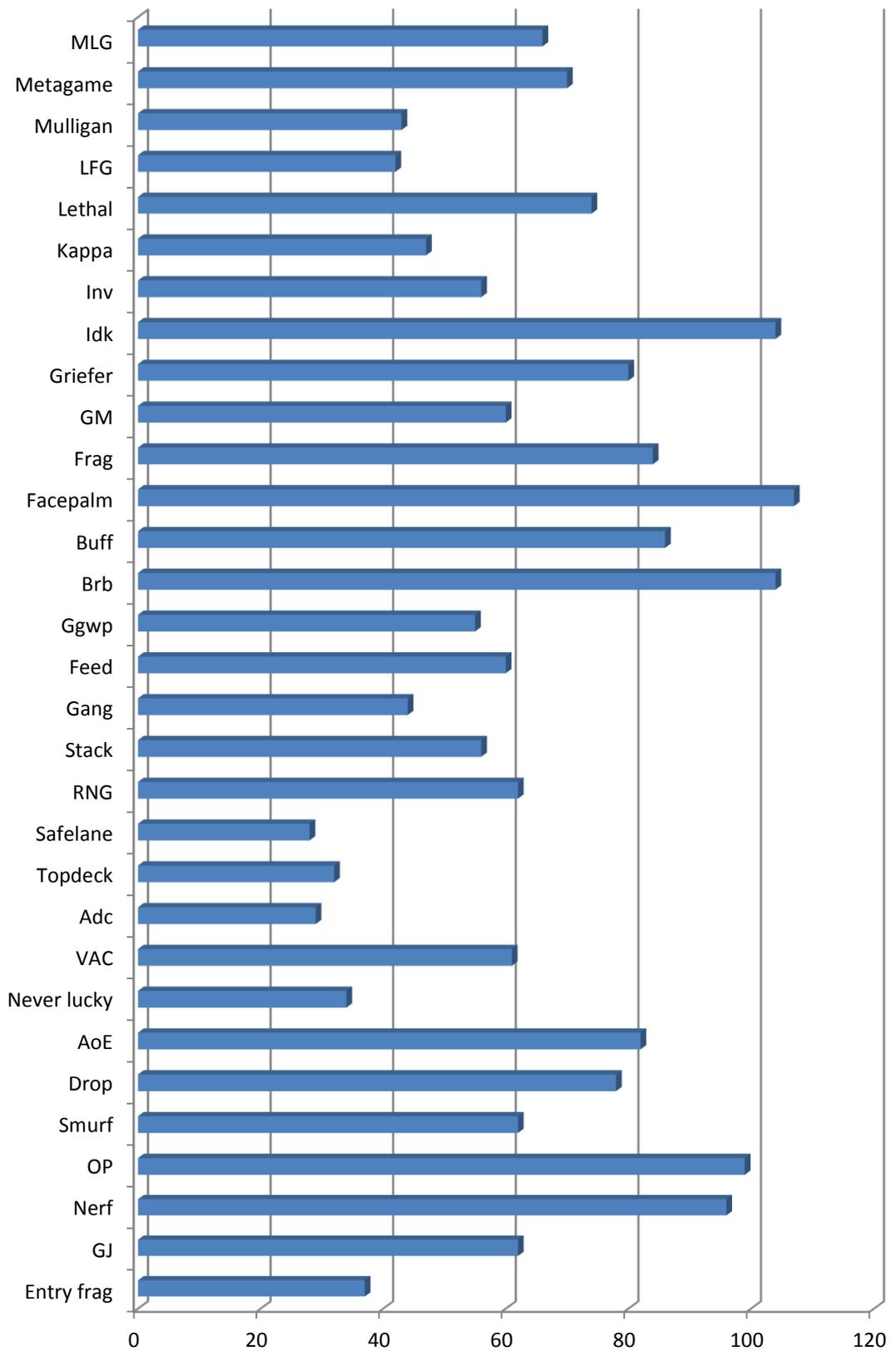
For the “Language” part of the survey 31 terms were randomly picked. These terms were related to online computer games or to act of online communication itself, like acronym Idk (I don’t know) or Internet meme Facepalm. The most known words among suggested were words which are not related to any online game in particular, but could be used in various games. Word which was chosen the most times is Internet meme “Facepalm”. It got recognized by 95.5% (107) of respondents. This term is related to a gesture which expresses frustration, disappointment, embarrassment etc. It became really popular online because of a character of sci-fi series Star Trek Jean-Luc Picard who was played by Patrick Stewart. This character expressed frustration by using this gesture. Pictures of it became popular online. Acronym Brb (Be right back) is not related to gaming however it is widely spread across gaming community. 92.9% (104) people recognized this term. Another acronym which was chosen by the majority of respondents is Idk (I don’t know). Words of that type are not related to gaming directly nevertheless acronyms like those are used frequently by gamers. The next two terms which were picked by greater number of participants are OP (89.2%) and Nerf (86.5%). These terms are related to gaming in general since those words can be used in different games and different game genres because indicated words refer to game balance or game mechanics.

Considering versatility of gamers` language the most recognized words are not related to any game in particular since it can be used in multiple games or these words do not denote to games. Words Idk, Facepalm, Brb, OP and Nerf could be considered as universal. Words Safelane, Topdeck, Adc, Never lucky and Entry frag were chosen less

times than other words. Those words were picked by less than 40 respondents and those words denote to certain games.

The last question of the survey was “Could you imagine using these words (if you familiar with some) in real life?” 58.2% (64) of people answered “Yes” for that question. That means that more than a half of respondents could use gaming terminology in real life.

# Terms



## Conclusion

English language has got a long history. This paper emphasizes main periods of English language and characteristics of it. Furthermore it includes factors which lead to language change. Considering topic of this work external factors of language change are the most vital. On the other hand gaming history is not that long. Moreover rise of this industry has started just lately.

Another important aspect of this work is identity. Chapter I provided overview on this topic. Special mentioning worth works of Elinor Ochs who describes processes of social identity and introduces tools for that like verbal acts and stances. Considering gamers` identity number of authors emphasize that this social group`s identity is in its crisis. However research of the Chapter II shows that it is possibly not that true, since the majority of respondents (88%) still could identify themselves as gamers. In addition Chapter I highlights changes which were brought into English language by gamers. These points have got common points with the Internet users, since the Internet is the main source of connection in gamers` community.

Chapter II includes examples of gamers` language. World of Warcraft Game Manual provides some examples of gamers` vocabulary which could help to show some tendencies within mentioned community. Wide use of acronyms (especially in case of World of Warcraft), word thief, usage of emotes (case of twitch.tv especially) – these are characteristics of gamers` language. However survey doesn`t give clear answer about versatility of the language. 17 terms were picked by 60 or more respondents. 17 words out of 31 is a debatable result. The most popular words do not denote to any game in particular which is vital as well. However only 5 words were picked less than 40 times, so it could allow to speculate that gamers` language can be considered as universal. Important to mention that this survey is not enough to make clear conclusion and this topic needs further study.

58% of respondents declared that they could use words from survey in real life. Because of that, it is possible to assume that language is a part of gamers` identity.

All things considered it is hardly possible to suggest how this information can be useful in educational purposes. Nevertheless this topic need further study in terms of sociolinguistics.

## Summary in Estonian

Minu töö võtab informatsiooni mängijate, nende rühmaidentiteedi ja keele kui identiteedi osa kohta kokku. Peale selle see töö analüüsib mängijate keelt, eriti nende sõnavara. Uurimistöö on suunatud ka sellele, et võrrelda mängijate keelt inglise keelega ja aru saada, kas mängijate keel on universaalne eri riigi mängijate jaoks.

Antud töö koosneb neljast osast: sissejuhatus, kaks põhipeatükki ja järeldus. Sissejuhatuses on arutletud uurimistöö teema aktuaalsus, üldised suhted keele ja rühmaidentiteedi vahel. Samuti seal on esitatud olulisemate terminite seletused ja olemasolevate uurimiste ülevaade. Esimeses peatükis on kirjutatud lühidalt inglise keele ajaloost, faktoritest, mis mängivad rolli keele muutustes ja mis nendest faktoritest on tänapäeval olulisemad. Lisaks selles peatükis on kirjeldatud kaasaegse inglise keele peamised gramaatilised ja sõnavara muutused. Samuti esimene peatükk annab arvutimängijate kogukonda arengu ajaloo ülevaade ja ka vastab küsimusele kuidas arvutimängude areng mõjutas inglise keelt. Empiiriline osa(teine peatükk) koosneb sõnastikust, mis on koostatud World of Warcraft põhjal, ja selle analüüsist. Samuti on selles osas esitatud Twitch.tv kasutusel olevate emoticon'ide nimekirjast, mis on mängijate suhtlemise erisuse näitajaks. Teises peatükis on ka esitatus uuring, mis koondab informatsiooni mängijate identiteedist, keelest ja selle mitmekülgisusest.

Järelduses on näidatud uurimise tulemused ja ka kommentaarid hüpoteesile.

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