

Fortnite Battle Royale -online video game: a
fostering environment for verbal English as a
lingua franca communication

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Online videopelit on todettu useissa tutkimuksissa hyödylliseksi englannin kielen oppimisen kannalta. Menneinä vuosina online videopelit ovat olleet länsimaalaisten yksinoikeus, mutta nykyisin teknologian edullisuus, langattomien tietoverkkojen yleistymisen ja ilmaisupelimalin ovat mahdollistaneet niiden yleistymisen myös muualla maailmassa. Uusi joukko ihmisiä pelaa ensimmäistä kertaa online videopelejä ja kommunikoi englanniksi muun maailman kanssa. Tutkimuksen aikana kohdattiin pelaajia muun muassa Syyriasta, Kiinasta ja Brasiliasta. Miten globaali peliyhteisö ottaa nämä uudet tulokkaat vastaan ja kuinka heihin suhtaudutaan englannin kielenkäyttäjinä? Vastausta haetaan uudesta englannin kielen käsitteestä englanti lingua francana (English as a lingua franca, ELF), jossa englannin kieli nähdään kaikkien käytettävänä ja muokattavana ja jossa ennen kaikkea kaikilla englannin käyttäjillä on yhtäläinen asema.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää millainen maailma odottaa uusia online videopelien pelaajia. Hyväksytäänkö heidät osaksi globaalia ELF-yhteisöä, vai jyrääkö englannin opetusallakin vallitseva natiivikeskeisyys. Tuleeko uusista puhujista natiivikielen normeihin sopeutujia vai vallitseeko digitaalisessa maailmassa ihanteellinen ELF utopia, jossa kaikki englanninkielenkäyttäjät saavat oikeutetun asemansa? Tähän kysymykseen haetaan vastauksia asenteiden tutkimuksen kautta, sillä asenteita tutkimalla voimme saada selville mitä tapahtuu makrotasolla: kuinka hyväksytyä on puhua natiivipuheesta poikkeavaa englantia videopelejä pelatessa?</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu natiivi- ja ei-natiivipuhujien semi-strukturoiduista teemahaastatteluista sekä tutkijan etnografisista havainnoista Fortnite Battle Royale online videopelissä. Aineistoa analysoidaan sisällönanalyysin perinteiden mukaisesti ja sitä tuetaan tutkijan omilla havainnoilla. Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin neljää suomalaista pelaajaa sekä kolmea amerikkalaista pelaajaa heidän kommunikatiivisista kokemuksistaan.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että englannin käyttö Fortnite pelissä on hyvin yleistä, mutta vähäisempää kuin oli oletettu. Sekä natiivit että ei-natiivit puhujat identifioituvat osaksi globaalia peliyhteisöä, jossa kaikilla on oikeus puhua englantia riippumatta heidän taitotasostaan. ELF perinteen mukaisesti haastateltavat kokivat yhteisen ymmärrettävyyden tärkeimmäksi osaksi kommunikaatiota. ELF kommunikaation yleisyys Fornite pelissä on todennäköisesti vaikuttanut sen hyväksyttävyyteen ja arvostukseen.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Online video games, such as Fortnite, are on the frontier of global communication for people who usually do not have verbal communication partners outside their immediate local environment. English has become the de facto “common language” of the online society, and because people are communicating in such a global environment, they will likely be(come) more tolerant of English as a Lingua Franca (henceforth ELF) communication. Making ELF communication more acceptable would make people more equal, and thus it could improve well-being globally.

This study will focus on the communicative ELF experiences of native and non-native speakers, and their attitudes towards the speaking/speakers of ELF in the Fortnite online video game community. The topic of this study was chosen because of two previous findings confirmed by multiple studies. Firstly, video games have been found beneficial for the learning of English (Peterson, 2010: 436). Secondly, attitudes toward target language speakers are important factors for language learning motivation (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003: 172).

While language attitudes have been researched widely in the field of sociolinguistics, the research has not considered the vast newly emerged online contexts such as video games and their potential for ELF communication. Because such studies have not been done before, this study seeks to explore and discover further study opportunities in the context of online video games.

Fortnite was chosen as the context of this study because it is one of the most popular online video games at the time of the writing of this study, and based on the personal experiences of the researcher, Fortnite seems like a fostering environment for verbal ELF communication. Coherent verbal communication between teammates is almost crucial to winning in Fortnite, and thus it can be hypothesised that most players are likely to communicate with their best abilities and intentions.

The thesis contains the following parts. The second chapter examines the previous research related to the topic. The third chapter describes the research aim and the research questions of this study. The third chapter also describes how the study was conducted: what methods were used in the analysis, and how the data was collected. The fourth chapter analyses the data and discusses the results. The last chapter summarizes what can be concluded from this study and what its possible future implications are.

2 GLOBALIZATION OF GAMES, SOCIETY AND ENGLISH

This section will provide an overview on the theoretical background of the study. The first sub-chapter will examine the field of sociolinguistics in relation to Fortnite. The second sub-chapter will focus on English as a lingua franca and the speakers of ELF. The third sub-chapter will examine the concept of attitude and the last sub-chapter will focus on the previous research about attitudes towards non-native speakers.

2.1 Sociolinguistics and Fortnite

Sociolinguistics is the study of linguistic behaviour as defined by sociocultural factors such as attitudes, cultural identity and regional differences (Spencer, 2011: 1). Sociolinguistics therefore seeks to describe society and all of its aspects from the language perspective: how it affects society and vice versa.

This study will focus on a narrow, but diverse sector of society, the multilingual group of Fortnite players. There are multiple languages operating within the community of Fortnite, ranging from local languages such as Finnish, Korean and Kazakh to more global languages such as English, Arabic and French.

Fortnite is an interesting case from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, because it is among the new generation of globally appealing, free-to-play, multi-platform games that have connected the online gaming world on a scale unlike ever before. Even China, which is known to be protective of its virtual borders, has opened its notorious Great Firewall for

Fortnite players around the world (Fortniteintell, 2019). In the past, online video games were an exclusive right of the developed nations, but now games can be accessed in more places than before because of affordable smartphone contracts and the mass adoption of wireless internet networks around the world. Fortnite Battle Royale is the first cross-platform game, which can be played on all major gaming platforms such as Android, IOS, Playstation, PC, MAC, Nintendo and Xbox. Fortnite is also a free-to-play game title, which means anyone with a device and an internet connection can participate in the game.

As of November 2018, Fortnite Battle Royale has been played by 200 million people from all over the world. The game has existed a little over a year and the number of users has grown exponentially since its release (FortniteInsider, 2019). Because of the exploding popularity of the internet and free-to-play games, such as Fortnite Battle Royale, there are large groups of people communicating in English who have not spoken English outside their immediate surroundings ever before. The attitudes of native English speakers toward non-native speakers in the newly emerged online arenas provide an interesting view into the role of English in the modern global society.

2.2 English as a lingua franca and its speakers

English users are traditionally categorized according to Kachru's (1986: 128) three concentric circles of the language: The Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. Kachru describes that the Inner Circle consists of English as a Native Language (ENL) speakers, the Outer circle consist of English as a Second Language speakers (ESL), and the Expanding circle comprises the people who speak English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Kachru (1986) explains that the different varieties of English are also referred to as World Englishes.

The communication between the different speakers of World Englishes is described as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication (Jenkins 2009: 202). Jenkins argues that native English is just another variety of English, and not a rulebook to how people should communicate in the ELF context. Jenkins also adds that while ELF is not reliant on native

English rules it does not mean that ELF has no rules. She hypothesises that there is fluctuation between the language skills of different ELF speakers, and not everyone can be considered as a valid ELF speaker. Jenkins (2009: 202) elaborates that “... they [the speakers of ELF] can also be learners of ELF or not fully competent non-learners, making errors just like learners of any second language.”

There has been a wide range of estimations on how many people can hold a conversation in English because language competence is hard to measure. Crystal (2012: 69) advocates that native speakers of English are in the minority of English users: he estimates that non-natives outnumber native English speakers 3 to 1. However, it is hard to estimate how much the Expanding circle has grown since 2012 and whether the estimations made by Crystal were accurate to begin with.

In a general sense, native speakers are often categorized as being born in a certain country populated by an English-speaking majority, but this does not guarantee actual language competence. As Kramsch (1997: 2) puts it “... native speakers are *made* rather than born”. It should be acknowledged that especially in the case of global languages, such as English, the actual language skills can fluctuate greatly between individuals. The disparity between individual non-native speakers of English can also be seen in their different levels of English education. In their study, Çakir and Demir (2013: 13) discuss how some non-native speakers might have received English education in a university while others might not have received any formal education, and instead have learned to speak English from their surroundings.

2.3 Defining attitudes

In the past, the concept of attitude has been defined in multiple ways by different approaches such as the mental, behavioural and the mental-behavioural approach. The mental approach, described by Deprez and Persoons, (1987: 125–126), sees attitudes as a mental state and a tendency to view a thing, person, group, institution, action or a scene in a positive or a negative way. Whereas the behaviourist view, described by Mielikäinen and

Palander (2002: 88), highlights how attitudes are portrayed by the actions of the individual. Mielikäinen and Palander also define the mental-behaviourist approach, which takes cognitive, evaluative and conative components as the building blocks of attitudes. The researchers explain that in spoken language attitude studies, the cognitive component is the actual information such as individual's opinions about different varieties of language, language dialects or features. Evaluative components are the valuations made by the language users toward different language varieties, dialects and features. The conative component is how the previous two components influence actual behaviour, for example, what variety of language the users deem appropriate for a certain type of situation, and thus use it.

The traditional views of attitudes (mental, behavioural and mental-behavioural) equate the concepts of attitude and opinion. This view has been challenged by Van Dijk (1982:40), who argues that attitudes are formed by combination of organized opinions. A further critique to the mental-behaviourist approach has been given by Pälli (1999: 127), who sees that attitudes are created through language use in social situations, and therefore attitudes should be addressed as a phenomena of language use. Instead of using the mental-behaviourist approach, Pälli advocates a constructive model for addressing attitudes. He argues that different opinions are necessary for attitudes to exist. He also notes that an individual can have unconscious attitudes, and even multiple attitudes that conflict with each other at the same time. He highlights that it is not important what the speaker intends to say, but what meanings exist behind his words in the current context.

It is therefore likely that some research participants might sensor or over-correct their answers because they are not comfortable with or not aware of their unconscious attitudes. Therefore, this study will utilize the constructive model advocated by Pälli. Most importantly, the focus of this study is not to look at what the interviewees intend to say, but what are the underlying meanings behind the interviewee's words inside its' context.

2.4 Previous research about attitudes and accents

Previous research has shown that stereotypes towards different speaker groups, such as people with foreign accents, influence people's attitudes (Dragojevic et al. 2017). However, Dragojevic et al. (2017) also found that non-native English speakers with more prototypical accents were harder to understand than non-native speakers who had less prototypical accents. Difficulties in understanding the non-native speech resulted as more negative assessments of the speaker. The researchers concluded that listeners' difficulties of understanding non-native speech and the stereotypes associated with the speaker's linguistic group both affect the listener's attitudes towards the non-native speaker.

In a study combining an Implicit Association Test (IAT) and explicit reporting, Pantos and Perkins (2013) measured what preference people would show consciously and unconsciously towards non-native English speech. The researchers found that unacknowledged (implicit) and acknowledged (explicit) attitudes towards non-native speech can be contradictory to each other, a finding also hypothesised by Pälli (1999: 127). Pantos and Perkins (2013) found that in a hypothetical courtroom situation the implicit attitudes of the test subjects preferred the native speaker testimony, but explicit attitudes showed a bias for the Korean non-native speaker testimony.

From both the research of Dragojevic et al. (2017) and Pantos and Perkins (2003), it can be hypothesized that native speakers would have negative implicit attitudes towards non-native speakers, but they might censor or over-correct their answers in order to make themselves appear more tolerant of the non-native speaker out-group. However, taking into consideration the intercultural nature of online video games, participants could be more tolerant of non-native speakers and ELF communication in Fortnite.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

The following section will present the aim and research questions of the present study, as well as the data and methods used for analysis.

3.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of the study is to provide insights to what types of attitudes exist towards the speaking/speakers of ELF in online video games such as Fortnite. The hypothesis is that while some native English speakers enjoy playing with non-native speakers, others might try to avoid them, and while some non-native individuals might find online video games non-judgemental places to use English, others might not. The research questions are as follows:

1. What types of attitudes exist towards the speakers/speaking of ELF in online video games such as Fortnite?
2. Is Fortnite ELF favourable based on the attitudes towards ELF speakers/speaking?

3.2 Data collection & participants

The data of the study was collected in two distinct ways. First type of data was collected with semi-structured thematic interviews of both native and non-native English speakers while playing Fortnite Battle Royale with them (see Appendices). Second type of data comprised the observations of the researcher while playing and gathering the interview data. Therefore, the materials collected are a mixture of interview data and ethnographical observations of the researcher.

All interview participants received the study permission forms and the privacy notice about the study. The participants gave oral permission to participate in the study before the interview begun. There were seven participants in total: three native English speakers and four non-native English speakers (see Table 1). Three non-native English speakers participated in a group interview, while the rest were interviewed individually. Participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

Table 1. Participants of the study.

Name*	Speaker type	Age	Sex	Nationality	Interview type	English education
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Alex	Native speaker	16	Male	USA	Single interview	Not specified
Josh	Native speaker	15	Male	USA	Single interview	Not specified
Tony	Native speaker	15**	Male	USA	Single interview	Not specified
Jaakko	Non-native	16	Male	Finland	Single interview	8 years
Marika	Non-native	25	Female	Finland	Group interview	10 years
Aleksi	Non-native	24	Male	Finland	Group interview	12 years
Juhani	Non-native	24	Male	Finland	Group interview	12 years

*Names of the participants in Table 1 are pseudonyms.

**At least 15 years old. Exact age not specified.

The interviews were conducted verbally via Fortnite voice chat. The group interview lasted one hour, while the single interviews lasted from five to ten minutes each. The group discussion was used hoping it would lower the inhibitions of the participants and create dialogue which could provide, and possibly, create new information. The single interviews were used because group interviews were more difficult to arrange with the participants.

The interview questions varied based on whether the interviewee was a non-native or a native speaker. The study had four main questions for native speakers and four main questions for non-native speakers. There were also background questions for the participants such as their age, nationality, and their level of education in English (see Table 1). The questions presented to the native speakers were focused on their attitudes and experiences of people who speak with a foreign accent (see Table 2). The questions for the non-native speakers were mostly focused on their experiences of English communication in Fortnite (see Table 3).

Table 2. Questions for the native English speakers.

Questions for the native English speakers.
1. Have you played with someone who had a foreign accent?
2. Where was he/she from?
3. What did you talk about? Did you understand him/her?
4. What is your general attitude towards people who speak English with a foreign accent in Fortnite?

This study used non-native speaker and foreign accented speaker interchangeably to simplify the interview questions for the interviewees. It was assumed that the term ‘people who speak with a foreign accent’ was easier to understand by the interviewees than the concept of non-native English speaker.

Table 3. Questions for the non-native English speakers.

Questions for the non-native English speakers.
1. Have you spoken English while playing Fortnite?
2. Where was the other speaker from?
3. What did you talk about?
4. What is your general attitude towards speaking English and the speakers of English in Fortnite?

The group interview had four main questions around which the discussion mostly happened. The questions were asked to gather information about their level of experiences in ELF communication. Moreover, multiple matters not directly related to the study were also discussed, such as the role of online video games in English learning and the concept of online friends and friendship. Many of the topics discussed in the group interview would need a focus of their own, and therefore they will not receive much attention in this study.

3.3 Method of analysis

The collected data was analysed using Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) methods. QDA is an analysis of non-numerical data, and it deals with meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things and not their "counts or measures" (Berg and Lune, 2012). QDA was chosen for this study because it seemed convenient for analysing interview data.

Content analysis was chosen as the main method for analysis in this study. The analysis focused at finding different attitudes from the interviews/group discussions. The interviews

were transcribed and coded by the researcher. The coding of the interviews was determined by the collected data.

The analysis also includes some personal observations made by the researcher. The observations of the researcher bring an ethnographic style to the analysis. The researcher acts as a participant observer in the study because he “... takes part in the research situation as a genuine member of the group” (Guthrie, 2003: 109). Together the interviews and the ethnographic data form a hybrid method of analysis where the interview data is supported with the ethnographic observations of the researcher.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The first chapter examines whether people participated in ELF conversations over the Fortnite voice chat while playing. The second chapter analyses how ELF speakers identified themselves in relation to nativeness and nationality. The third chapter examines how non-native speakers view themselves as the users of EFL in Fortnite. The last chapter focuses more precisely on the attitudes of native speakers towards non-native speakers and discusses the reasons for such attitudes.

4.1 ELF communication in Fortnite

All but one of the interviewees had participated in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication when playing Fortnite. However, most of the ELF communication they mentioned was between native and non-native speakers. All three native participants of the study reported they had played multiple times with someone who had a foreign accent. The only instance of ELF communication where both interlocutors were non-natives was described by Jaakko when he mentioned speaking English with people from Sweden.

The non-native participants took a while to start talking about their ELF experiences, whereas native speakers were more open about their communicative situations right away.

For example, the native speaker participant Alex reported without any hesitation that he had played with people from Iceland and Russia:

“Like you know he was um... One of them was from Russia and Iceland... Yeah, I’ve talked to people who are. A lot of the people are often Russian.”

Other native speakers reported playing often with Mexicans and with people who spoke Spanish. Based on their answers the community of Fortnite seemed quite diverse linguistically, as it was expected by the researcher based on his previous experiences. In general, native speakers could come up with multiple situations when they had spoken ELF while playing Fortnite, thus giving support to the assumption that Fortnite could be a suitable context for ELF communication.

However, the non-native group reported varying levels of ELF participation while playing Fortnite. One participant (Jaakko) reported speaking English “quite a lot” in Fortnite, while the other non-native speakers were more reserved about speaking English in Fortnite. Three non-native participants implied they only rarely spoke English while playing Fortnite. Aleksi said on behalf of the whole group:

“I have not played much, or we have not. We do not really talk to anybody that much. Just a few things here and there”.

It was an assumption almost underlined by the whole study that all people communicate in English while playing Fortnite. However, as more material accumulated from the interviews, it became clear that not everyone speaks English while playing Fortnite. In fact, almost half of the people encountered by the researcher did not speak any language at all. Most of the players who used their microphones would speak English, but the level of English usage among non-native speakers was still lower than expected. Even the level of exposure to English became disputed, as it became apparent that for some players the game was translated to their native language.

However, English was still the main language used in Fortnite. There was variation between how much different individuals had participated in ELF communication, but almost everyone had some sort of experience. Some participants expressed interest in ELF communication, but others were quite reserved from speaking English in Fortnite.

4.2 Identifying as an ELF speaker in Fortnite

It seemed that nativeness was a definitive trait of speaker categorization across both groups. Nationality was not deemed important in the identification between native and non-native speakers. In ELF discussions where both interlocutors were non-native speakers, nationalities were often discussed, and they were used to identify oneself.

Indicators were found that native speakers considered ELF communication ordinary in the context of Fortnite. For example, when Josh was asked whether he could usually understand people who speak with a foreign accent, he said:

“Some people yeah, some people no. Just it kind of depends if they are speaking in a different language or not, but I kind of understand.”

Josh's self-assured attitude seemed to represent the positivity that native speakers mostly expressed towards non-native speakers and ELF communicative situations. Josh was confident about understanding most non-native people, and even those who spoke in another language. His answers put emphasis on communication, and it seems he evaluates appropriate communication quite loosely. It could be even said that Josh is “ELF positive” in his communicative tendencies. When Josh is playing Fortnite, he is not reliant on native English rules, but instead assesses himself as being part of a linguistically diverse community where ELF communication is common.

While the non-native speakers also identified themselves as users of ELF, it seemed to carry (more?) importance for them to be identified as a member of some nation and a speaker of that nation's language. During the data gathering process, the researcher himself

was asked multiple times about his nationality by other non-native speakers. In fact, the most common non-game related question asked by non-native speakers in the beginning of a new game was “where are you from?”. Native speakers never asked such questions, not even after they heard the researcher speak with a foreign accent. It could be interpreted that non-native speakers considered nationality more important than native speakers, but such assumption need to be studied more in order to be validated.

As indicated by the research of Pantos and Perkins (2013), behaviour is not an accurate measuring tool of participants’ implicit attitudes. Therefore, we cannot accurately know what native speakers really thought about non-native speakers based on their actions. It could be that native speakers refused asking the other person’s nationality because they believed it would reveal their implicit attitudes and the assumptions they had made based on the interlocutor’s accent. Expressing any assumptions based on accent might result in a negative assessment of their own character.

It remains undisclosed why most of the native participants reported only guessing the nationality of the other speaker rather than directly asking their nationality. It seemed that all the participants of the study had made at least some estimation about the nationality of the other speaker. It could be that the native speakers were good at guessing where the co-players were from, but it is also likely that they contended to guessing nationalities for reasons that were unfortunately not clarified during the interview process.

4.3 Non-native perspective on ELF communication

Both native and non-native groups mostly reported discussing about game related topics in Fortnite. Aleksi and Alex described their ELF communication as mostly consisting of “game related talk”. Also, Juhani described the topics he had talked about while playing Fortnite as:

“It was not like how you doing, but more like just where the enemies are coming... if coming”

Juhani reported that he avoided talking about non-game related topics because he felt shy and uncomfortable speaking English, even though he assessed himself as being “good in English”. Juhani's comments conform with Woodrow's (2006: 319) study about anxiety and speaking English as a Second Language which revealed that 43% of non-native speakers feel stressed when talking with native speakers. Juhani also commented that speaking English in Fortnite was “easier for him”, than in other contexts. This claim was also supported by Marika who named such reasons as personal interest in Fortnite, natural language use, freedom to make mistakes and the lack of focus on form as some of the main reasons why speaking English in Fortnite was easier than in other contexts.

While game related discussions were most commonly reported, there were also non-game related discussions as expected by the researcher. Jaakko mentions in his example how some Swedish players commented on his English skills negatively. Jaakko would remind them about how Finland won in the 2011 ice hockey championship 6-1 against Sweden:

“Hmm... one time some Swede's [would comment on my English], but I told them that six one do you remember?”

Jaakko's described situation was the only one where someone had directly commented on another person's English in Fortnite. Jaakko did not seem to mind the negative comments about his English and was laughing at the incident when he told the researcher about his experiences. It seemed his attitude towards ELF communication in Fortnite was quite positive.

The personal observation of the researcher was that he had multiple non-game related discussions with both native and non-native speakers while playing Fortnite. Some of these discussions happened with people who were participants of the study, but most of them were with people who were non-participants. Non-game related topics of discussion ranged from societal subjects such as educational systems and politics to personal beliefs and philosophical questions.

4.4 Attitudes toward ELF communication in Fortnite

Multiple different types of attitudes were invoked in the interviews. Corresponding with the findings of Dragojevic et al. (2017), difficulties understanding non-native speech arose in the interviews with the native speakers. Non-native speakers were also worried whether they would be misunderstood and named it as one of the reasons for why they avoided ELF communication with native speakers. Conforming with the theory of Pantos and Perkins (2003), contradictions between individuals' explicit and implicit attitudes were also found.

4.4.1 Communication problems

All native speakers mentioned communication difficulties with non-native speakers at some part of the interview process. When asked about his general attitudes towards people speaking with a foreign accent, Alex answered:

“Man, I think it is okay, no probably not the best thing you want to do because like I have sometimes trouble, if you know, understanding what they are talking about.”

Although Alex is being polite, his words imply that speaking with a foreign accent is not a desirable trait in collaborative games because foreign accents can lead to intelligibility issues which can impair the ability to play as an efficient team. Trouble understanding non-native English speakers was also mentioned by Tony:

“I was able to understand a couple things they said, and I had like he said like he back you know some simple stuff.”

The explicit, consciously formed, attitudes of Alex and Tony were rather negative towards people who they had trouble communicating with. Naming “understanding difficulties” as one of the negative effects of foreign accented speech conforms with Dragojevic et al. findings “that heavy foreign-accented speakers are evaluated more negatively than mild foreign-accented speakers because the former’s speech is more difficult to process” (Dragojevic et al. 2017: 13).

However, the implicit, non-conscious attitudes that could be interpreted from the actions of the native participants were contrary to their reported explicit attitudes. The interviewer himself spoke with a foreign accent and documented multiple communicative errors resulting from his speech. He was asked numerous times to explain and repeat questions by the native participants. Therefore, it was a surprise, that despite the interviewer's foreign accent and the experienced communicative difficulties, all three native participants wanted to continue playing with the researcher after the interview. From the interviewees' actions it can be assumed that the researcher's foreign accent did not aggravate the native speakers as much as expected based on their explicit attitudes that were interpreted from the interview.

The observations of the interviewer are analogous to the hypotheses of Pälli and the previous findings of Pantos and Perkins which suggested that individuals can have different attitudes that exist in tandem with each other (Pälli 1999), and that explicit and implicit attitudes can be contradictory to each other (Pantos and Perkins 2013).

4.4.2 Negative stereotypes

One of the interviewees presented an interesting view of non-native speakers being worse players in Fortnite than native speakers. When asked whether he enjoyed playing with non-native speakers, Tony answered:

“Honestly, I try to avoid like people speaking like that, but they not be like stay... standard American English. Even though I can understand what they are saying, because... well not standard Ameri... You know, I have to help them out if they get knocked, because I am a good player.”

“A knocked player” in the context of Fortnite means a player is down on the ground unable to fight until his/her teammates come to rescue him/her. Tony states that he avoids playing with people who do not speak American English (AE) because he believes they are not as good in Fortnite as people who speak AE.

Tony's comment gives proof to the traditional view "that people's attitudes toward different language varieties reflect, at least in part, their stereotypes toward different linguistic groups" (Dragojevic et al. 2017: 17). Tony's comment is an example of how attitudes towards people with foreign accents are still shaped by our personal observations and experiences, and not just accent prototypicality and communicative difficulties.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the attitudes that exist towards the speaking/speakers of ELF in Fortnite are manifold. From the answers of the interviewees and the observations made by the researcher, it can be theorized that Fortnite seems to be a favourable environment for ELF communication and ELF speakers. Firstly, ELF communication seemed popular among all participants who used their microphone. Secondly, most recognized the status of ELF and its importance in Fortnite. Lastly, most experiences of ELF communication were positive across the native and non-native spectrum.

The explicit attitudes of native speakers ranged from negative attitudes (e.g. avoiding non-native speakers) to neutral attitudes (e.g. not minding non-native speakers). A clear explicit preference to non-native speaker players was not found in any of the interviews. The results indicate that native speakers' explicit attitudes were negative rather than positive towards non-native speakers. However, the actions of the native speakers indicated that their implicit attitudes towards non-native speakers were more positive than their explicitly reported attitudes. As expected, based on the previous research of Pantos and Perkins (2003), implicit and explicit attitudes of the native speakers were quite contradictory with each other.

Non-native speakers had positive attitudes towards English communication with native and other non-native speakers. Some of the non-native speakers reported being shy and avoiding communication in English: they would rather play with people who spoke their native language. However, others were open to verbal English communication in the

context of Fortnite. Also, the non-native participants who were avoiding English use in Fortnite would report that speaking English was much easier for them in Fortnite than in other contexts such as school and travel.

While an Implicit Association test could not be performed in this study due to the lack of time and resources, the chosen method of explicit thought provided an access to the interviewees' both explicit and implicit attitudes. By using the constructive model of addressing attitudes, the researcher gives his own evaluations of the possible meanings that are behind what is said by the participants. The observations of this study are, therefore, subjective and should not be generalized.

While the results of the study are not generalizable, they strongly indicate that ELF communication is a common practice in the world of online video games. ELF research has focused on many different contexts, but mostly ignored online video games in the past. Because ELF communication is so popular in online video games, it should be researched more. Some parts of this study indicate that verbal English communication in online video games should be viewed from an education perspective: for example, it could be researched why the non-native participants reported they felt more comfortable speaking English in Fortnite than in a classroom setting, and whether there is a similar trend among other English learners who play online video games? Another research topic that arose because of the positive attitudes is the possible link between playing online video games and a heightened intercultural competence.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview frame for the non-native speakers

1. Basic info:
 - a. Age?
 - b. Sex?
 - c. Location?

2. Warm up questions about playing habits.
 - a. How much do you play Fortnite? (estimation)
 - b. How about other online video games?
 - c. Why do you enjoy playing Fortnite?

3. What is your history as an English speaker?
 - a. When did you start speaking English?
 - b. How many years have you studied English?

4. Relationship to English in general.
 - a. What is your attitude toward speaking English?
 - b. How would you describe your speaking confidence?

5. English use in Fortnite
 - a. Do you speak English while playing Fortnite?
 - b. Where was the other speaker from?
 - c. What topics do you usually speak about?
 - d. What language do you prefer to speak while playing Fortnite?
 - e. What is your general attitude towards speaking English and the speakers of English in Fortnite?
 - f. Do people comment your English? What types of comments do they make?

Appendix 2. Interview frame for the native speakers

1. Basic questions:
 - a. Age?
 - b. Sex?
 - c. Location?
2. Warm up questions about playing habits.
 - a. How much do you play Fortnite? (estimation)
 - b. How about other online video games?
 - c. Why do you enjoy playing Fortnite?
3. English use in Fortnite
 - a. Have you played with someone who had a foreign accent?
 - b. Where was he/she from?
 - c. What did you talk about? Did you understand him/her?
 - d. What is your general attitude towards people who speak English with a foreign accent in Fortnite?